

Recent Publications

S a b d a

In 1927 Sri Aurobindo wrote the six chapters of his definitive work, *The Mother*, which holds a special place in our understanding of the Mother's role in this manifestation. In the final chapter he describes the four manifested aspects or powers of her personality—Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, and Mahasaraswati. He then adds that among her other personalities is one that embodies “that mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda which flows from a supreme divine Love...the Ananda that holds the key of a wonderful divinest Life”. Sri Aurobindo urged us to put ourselves “in the hands of the Mother and her Powers without cavil or resistance and let her do unhindered her work within you”.

In 1954 the Mother talked about the descent of this Ananda personality and agreed that it was likely to have occurred in 1946. Seventy-five years later, our lead article considers the import of the Mother's pronouncement.

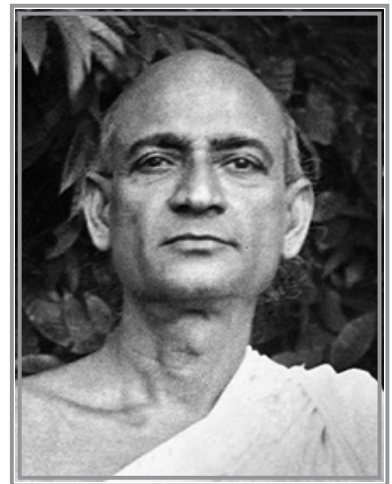
Two new books from the Ashram Publication Department are also featured in this issue: an introduction to *New Correspondences of the Mother* and Anilbaran Roy's account of Sri Aurobindo's talks between May and September 1926. Anilbaran joined Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry in May 1926 and was soon invited to attend the talks. His account is published for the first time as a book titled *Sri Aurobindo's Talks of 1926*.

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Anilbaran Roy

The Mother's Personality of Ananda and Divine Love



In the book *The Mother*, first published in 1928, Sri Aurobindo describes “four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities [that] have stood in front in her guidance of this universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play”(CWSA 32: 17). These four Personalities are widely known by the names of the goddesses Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati, and Sri Aurobindo respectively attributes to them the four great Powers of Wisdom, Strength, Harmony and Perfection. Following an extensive description of each one in turn, he explains:

There are other great Personalities of the Divine Mother, but they were more difficult to bring down and have not stood out in front with so much prominence in the evolution of the earth-spirit. There are among them Presences indispensable for the supramental realisation,—most of all one who is her Personality of that mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda which flows from a supreme divine Love, the Ananda that alone can heal the gulf between the highest heights of the supramental spirit and the lowest abysses of Matter, the Ananda that holds the key of a wonderful divinest Life and even now supports from its secrecies the work of all the other Powers of the universe. (CWSA 32: 23–24)

He adds, “Only when the Four have founded their harmony and freedom of movement in the transformed mind and life and body, can those other rarer Powers manifest in the earth movement and the supramental action become possible”(CWSA 32:24).

Much later, in 1954, the Mother commented on the book *The Mother* in her Wednesday classes at the Ashram Playground, which was published in 1979 under the title *Questions and Answers 1954* as volume six of the Collected Works of the Mother. These conversations took place in July and August 1954 and provide illuminating insights into the issues discussed by Sri Aurobindo in *The Mother*. It was during the class held on 25 August that a student asked about the Ananda aspect of the Mother: “Sweet Mother, what Personality is this and when will she manifest?” (CWM 6: 291) The Mother had anticipated the question and prepared an answer, the first line of which was “She has come, bringing with her a splendour of power and love, an intensity of divine joy unknown to the earth so far.” She explained that when it came, “for two or three weeks, the atmosphere, not only of the Ashram but of the earth, was surcharged with such power, precisely, with so intense a divine joy, which creates so wonderful a power that things which were difficult to do before could be done almost instantaneously! There were repercussions in the whole world.” And then someone asked, “When did it happen?” She answered, “I don’t know the dates.[...] I could tell you approximately” and then added, “All I know is that it happened before Sri Aurobindo left the body, that he had been told beforehand and recognised the fact...” She further explained that there had been “a terrible fight with the inconscient; for, as I saw that the receptivity was not what it ought to be, I put the responsibility for it on the inconscient and it was there that I tried to give battle” (CWM 6: 294). Then someone suggested, “I think it was in 1946, Mother, for you told us so many things at that time!” The Mother answered, “Right!” Although a direct connection was not mentioned, it may be noted that 1945 marked the end of the Second World War, which Sri Aurobindo referred to as “the Mother’s war”(CWSA 35: 211), and its end was marked by jubilation across the world.

In this 75th year since the descent of the Mother's Personality of Ananda, it may be appropriate to consider some of the important issues that are implied in these profound but somewhat isolated comments by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. First, let us elaborate on Sri Aurobindo's explanations of the nature of Ananda and its relation with the supreme divine Love from which it flows, while considering also its personal and impersonal sides. Secondly, let us consider more carefully Sri Aurobindo's statement that this Presence is "indispensable to the supramental realisation" and the role it may have played in the Mother's own realisation. And third, let us review the more direct implications of this descent for our own individual aspiration and purification, and the relation of the divine Love and Ananda to our own psychic being and its love for the Divine and its enjoyment of the essential delight in existence.

Divine Love and human love, Ananda and human joy

It is important to understand the relation between Ananda, the divine bliss and ecstasy, and the divine Love, of which human love is a much diminished and degraded translation in the lower ignorant nature. We naturally feel love and affection for certain people in our lives, especially for those who help us and are good to us, whether materially, vitally, emotionally, or mentally. We characteristically love especially our mothers and fathers who generally satisfy our needs on all levels when we are young, a few close friends who generally support our growing sense of selfhood and emotional needs of belonging and comradeship, and perhaps certain mentors who guide us mentally and vitally in the complex game of life. In adulthood we may establish a primary relationship with someone who satisfies all these needs as well as our desire for intimacy. By these various ways that we are helped, by the satisfaction of these various types of needs, we grow and expand our being, and we experience joy, happiness, and pleasure in that expansion. Just as we tend to love those who help us on these different levels of our being, the nature of our love for the other too can be physical, vital, emotional, or mental. In our love for the other person, we return in kind the gifts we have received; we give of ourselves physically, vitally, emotionally and/or mentally to support the person in their own development and enlargement of their being, which also brings to them joy, happiness, and pleasure. We see then a close linkage of human love with joy, a diminished form of Ananda, but we see also its characteristically transactional nature, that is, we tend to love those who satisfy our needs and love them in return by satisfying their needs.

As we evolve spiritually, another type of love begins to emerge in us, an outflow from our soul and its developing personality, the psychic being. In its first incomplete emergence, this psychic love begins to color and alter our human love for others at the physical, vital and mental levels; it lends increasing selflessness, sensitivity, refinement, generosity, and a loosening of that looking towards or expectation of return. The long development of our human nature through many lives consists essentially in the growth of this psychic influence in our physical, vital, and mental nature, and along with it, a growing intuition of the existence of the Divine, a higher Being or Absolute which is our origin and goal, and a gradual turning of our consciousness and life towards the Divine. It is when the psychic love is turned towards the Divine directly and consciously, generally the result of an intense *sadhana*, rather than merely through its mental, vital and physical instruments and intermediaries, that its full intensities and widest possibilities can emerge. For the psychic love can bring an absolute self-giving to the Divine without any sense of return, with a fiery ardor and passion, a deeper depth

and fullness, and because the presence of the Divine can be sensed by the psychic being in all others and the world and its events, it can give itself to the Divine in any and all of its numberless forms.

The full emergence of the psychic being into the outer consciousness brings not only a deep and intense love and devotion for the Divine, but also a profound happiness and an intense joy and ecstasy. It is precisely due to its complete selflessness, its utter self-giving, that it leads inevitably to the experience of Ananda. Our normal existence is characterized by a combination of pleasure, pain, and insensitivity, which are the broken reflections of Ananda in our lower divided nature, that is, our nature divided from conscious unity with the Divine and limited by our ego, this egoistic sense of our self being separate from all else. Identified with our ego, we are small vulnerable creatures in a big and dangerous world which we don't understand and can't control. Naturally we suffer, though quite remarkably most of us nevertheless tend to experience a preponderance of happiness and joy thanks to the support of the Ananda aspect of the Divine to our existence. The Divine in contrast is infinite in its existence, without limit, and this absolute freedom and limitlessness is bliss. It is through the total self-giving of ourselves to the Divine through psychic love that brings us identification with our larger divine Being and with it the divine Ananda, the bliss which is the very nature, the very substance, you could say, of the divine Being.

Even this pure selfless psychic love is not yet the divine Love, though Sri Aurobindo explains that the psychic being is a projection of the Ananda aspect of the Divine in the lower evolving nature, and thus we can say that psychic love is a kind of projection of the divine Love in the lower nature. Whereas the psychic being and its love are divine in essence, they are still individual and limited; the divine Ananda and divine Love are universal and transcendent. Sri Aurobindo says, "The Divine's love is that which comes from above poured down from the Divine Oneness and its Ananda on the being—psychic love is a form taken by divine love in the human being according to the needs and possibilities of the human consciousness" (CWSA 29: 336). Still, in us it is the psychic love that leads to the experience of the divine Love and Ananda. Sri Aurobindo says,

A psychic fire within must be lit into which all is thrown with the Divine Name upon it. In that fire all the emotions are compelled to cast off their grosser elements and those that are undivine perversions are burned away and the others discard their insufficiencies, till a spirit of largest love and a stainless divine delight arises out of the flame and smoke and frankincense. It is the divine love which so emerges that, extended in inward feeling to the Divine in man and all creatures in an active universal equality, will be more potent for the perfectibility of life and a more real instrument than the ineffective mental ideal of brotherhood can ever be. It is this poured out into acts that could alone create a harmony in the world and a true unity between all its creatures; all else strives in vain towards that end so long as Divine Love has not disclosed itself as the heart of the delivered manifestation in terrestrial Nature. (CWSA 23: 165–66)

The Mother gives a clearer picture of the nature of the divine Love in a conversation from 2 June 1929. She says,

Love is one of the great universal forces; it exists by itself and its movement is free and independent of the objects in which and through which it manifests. It manifests wherever it finds a possibility for manifestation, wherever there is receptivity, wherever there is some opening for it. What you call love and think of as a personal or individual thing is only your capacity to receive and manifest this universal force. But because it is universal, it is not

therefore an unconscious force; it is a supremely conscious Power. Consciously it seeks for its manifestation and realisation upon earth; consciously it chooses its instruments, awakens to its vibrations those who are capable of an answer, endeavours to realise in them that which is its eternal aim, and when the instrument is not fit, drops it and turns to look for others....

Love is a supreme force which the Eternal Consciousness sent down from itself into an obscure and darkened world that it might bring that world and its beings to the Divine. The material world in its darkness and ignorance had forgotten the Divine. Love came into the darkness; it awakened all that lay there asleep; it whispered, opening the ears that were sealed, "There is something that is worth waking to, worth living for, and it is love!" And with the awakening to love there entered into the world the possibility of coming back to the Divine. The creation moves upward through love towards the Divine and in answer there leans downward to meet the creation the Divine Love and Grace. Love cannot exist in its pure beauty, love cannot put on its native power and intense joy of fullness until there is this interchange, this fusion between the earth and the Supreme, this movement of Love from the Divine to the creation and from the creation to the Divine. (CWM 3: 69-74)

The full conversation from which this selection was taken is quite revealing about human and divine love, and about the distortion of love in the vital made by the hostile forces; it is worthwhile reading in full. One important aspect alluded to in the quote above is that the divine Love has both personal and impersonal aspects, something also mentioned by Sri Aurobindo. Here the Mother refers to it as "a supremely conscious Power" which "seeks for its manifestation and realisation upon earth". This would seem to tie it with the Mother's "Personality of that mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda which flows from a supreme divine Love" which Sri Aurobindo said was "more difficult to bring down".

Love and the supramental realization

Why might this Personality of Ananda and divine Love be indispensable for the supramental realization, and why was it more difficult to bring down? We have already discussed the close linkage between Ananda and the divine Love, and it is particularly with respect to the divine Love that its presence can be seen to be a necessary condition for the realization of the supramental consciousness. Sri Aurobindo refers to its importance in this passage in *The Life Divine* chapter "The Ascent towards Supermind":

It follows that the psychic and the spiritual transformation must be far advanced, even as complete as may be, before there can be any beginning of the third and consummating supramental change; for it is only by this double transmutation that the self-will of the Ignorance can be totally altered into a spiritual obedience to the remoulding truth and will of the greater Consciousness of the Infinite. A long, difficult stage of constant effort, energism, austerity of the personal will, tapasyā, has ordinarily to be traversed before a more decisive stage can be reached in which a state of self-giving of all the being to the Supreme Being and the Supreme Nature can become total and absolute. There has to be a preliminary stage of seeking and effort with a central offering or self-giving of the heart and soul and mind to the Highest and a later mediate stage of total conscious reliance on its greater Power aiding the personal endeavour; that integral reliance again must grow into a final complete abandonment of oneself in every part and every movement to the working of the higher Truth in the nature. The totality of this abandonment can only come if the psychic change has

been complete or the spiritual transformation has reached a very high state of achievement.
(CWSA 22: 963–64)

This indicates that a long stage of *tapasyā* is usually necessary before an absolute self-giving to the Divine is possible; it is perhaps one reason why this Personality of Ananda flowing from the divine Love was more difficult to bring down in the earth evolution and required the preliminary action of the other four Personalities. Sri Aurobindo elaborates on the preliminary psychic and spiritual transformation necessary for the supramental realization by saying there must be the full opening of the inner subliminal consciousness, “a breaking down of the wall between the inner and outer nature”, as well as “an opening up of the individual into the cosmic consciousness” (p. 965), and “he must have already become aware of what is now to him superconscious; he must be already a being conscious of the higher spiritual Light, Power, Knowledge, Ananda, penetrated by its descending influences, new-made by a spiritual change” (p. 965).

It may seem out of place to consider how the descent of the Mother’s Personality of Ananda may relate to the embodied Mother’s supramental realization and transformation, but we should keep in mind Sri Aurobindo’s explanation that “there are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness behind and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature, under the conditions of Nature, and it uses it according to the rules of the game” (CWSA 28: 472). Even so, to speculate about the nature and unfolding of Mother’s *sadhana* and progressive realization is prone to error and should be taken as no more than speculation, certainly not as established fact. We may note, however, that the Mother had discussed the effects of the descent of another divine Personality, the Personality of the Superman consciousness on her *sadhana*, that its descent had assisted and accelerated her own progress [see the June 2019 issue of this publication for a discussion of that descent]. So there would seem to be the possibility at least that the descent of this divine Personality may also have contributed to the Mother’s efforts in bringing the transforming effects of the supramental consciousness into the earth nature and into her own body.

Whereas any direct influence of the descent of the Ananda Personality on the Mother’s supramental realization and transformation may be speculative, particularly as the Mother only discussed it tangentially in the 1954 discussion, it is being raised here because of the rather dramatic prominence of the divine Love and Ananda in the Mother’s experiences as related by her as she was bringing down the supramental consciousness into her own body, and it is these experiences that are particularly noteworthy and suggest the possibility.

Perhaps the most important of these experiences occurred in April 1962 at the culmination of a severe crisis in the Mother’s physical condition, and related by her in a recorded message. She said,

Night of April 12–13.

Suddenly in the night I woke up with the full awareness of what we could call the Yoga of the world. The Supreme Love was manifesting through big pulsations, and each pulsation was bringing the world further in its manifestation. It was the formidable pulsations of the eternal, stupendous Love, only Love: each pulsation of the Love was carrying the universe further in its manifestation.

And the certitude that what is to be done is done and the Supramental Manifestation is realized.

Everything was Personal, nothing was individual.

This was going on and on and on and on...

The certitude that what is to be done is DONE.

All the results of the Falsehood had disappeared: Death was an illusion, Sickness was an illusion, Ignorance was illusion—something that had no reality, no existence.... Only Love, and Love, and Love, and Love—immense, formidable, stupendous, carrying everything.

And how, how to express in the world? It was like an impossibility, because of the contradiction... but then it came: “You have accepted that this world should know the Supramental Truth ... and it will be expressed totally, integrally.” Yes, yes...

And the thing is DONE.

(long silence)

The individual consciousness came back, just the sense of a limitation, limitation of pain; without that, no individual.

And we set off again on the way, certain of the Victory.

The heavens are ringing with chants of Victory!

Truth alone exists; Truth alone shall manifest. Onward! ... Onward!

Gloire à Toi, Seigneur, Triomphateur suprême!

The Mother further elaborated on this experience in conversations with a disciple that followed, but this gives the gist of it. Several comments made in these later conversations may be briefly noted. On 13 May she said, “I was at the Origin—I WAS the Origin. For more than two hours, consciously, here on this bed, I was the Origin. And it was like gusts [...] It was Love in its supreme essence...” And then two days later she said, “I said [on April 3] the body was the battlefield, that the battle was being waged IN this body. And then in that experience [of April 13] I was sent back into the body, because the thing – that last creative gust – had to be realised through this body.” In this same conversation the Mother indicates that her experience of and relation to her body had shifted: it is “like a material equivalent or expression of these gusts—it’s like waves...Not separate waves, but a MOVEMENT of waves; a movement of what might be called material corporeal waves, as vast as the earth, but not...not round, not flat.... Something giving a great sense of infinity but moving in waves. [...] It is a limitless movement, with a very harmonious and very tranquil rhythm, very vast, very calm. And this movement is life itself. I walk around the room, and that is what is walking.”

We see from these excerpts that the Mother’s experience of her body was radically altered by this profound experience of the divine Love and that the experience facilitated the ongoing supramental transformation taking place in her body. Mother commented extensively on the changes taking place in her body in the years that followed and on further experiences that she was having in the body consciousness. One characteristic theme that was emphasized over and over was the absolute surrender and self-giving to the Divine that her body consciousness, her very cells, was learning and progressively realizing – this surrender had already been established in the other parts of her being long before – and that this attitude of surrender led to the experience of Ananda, whereas the natural resistance in the physical body to this attitude led to marked physical difficulty and sometimes extreme suffering. We may cite as example this passage from a conversation with a disciple on 18 October 1969:

So now it’s like this, now it’s like that. And the other state, the state of Immortality, is immutably peaceful, tranquil, with ... lightning-fast waves, so rapid that they seem still. It’s like this: complete motionlessness (apparently) within a tremendous Movement. But then, as soon as the other state comes, it’s all the ordinary notions that come back, that is to say ...

reality in its present state, that gives it the anguish and suffering of a falsehood. But it's still like this (*same to-and-fro gesture*)...

The only, only way out that is effective is in fact self-abandon, surrender. It's not expressed in words or idea or anything, but it's a state, a state of vibration, in which ONLY the Divine Vibration has value. Then—then things get back in order.

This absolute self-giving, opening and surrender is an expression in her body of the divine Love. We may look at it also from the other direction and say that the Divine Mother undertaking this battle and ordeal in her physical body was an expression of the Divine Love for the earth leading to its supramental transformation and future.

Divine Love and Ananda and the practice of Integral Yoga

We have considered the possible relation of the descent of the Divine Mother's Personality of Love and Ananda with the Mother's own *sadhana* and transformation, but what about for us human beings? Has the descent any relevance for us and especially for our practice of *sadhana* and its progress? We may reiterate Mother's words cited earlier: "She has come, bringing with her a splendour of power and love, an intensity of divine joy unknown to the earth so far... for two or three weeks, the atmosphere, not only of the Ashram but of the earth, was surcharged with such power, precisely, with so intense a divine joy, which creates so wonderful a power that things which were difficult to do before could be done almost instantaneously! There were repercussions in the whole world." Thus she states unequivocally that its descent had a general uplifting effect throughout the world. That first influx of the Personality of divine Ananda and Love may have been especially intense, but we may also reiterate her other assertion regarding the divine Love: "It manifests wherever it finds a possibility for manifestation, wherever there is receptivity, wherever there is some opening for it." Putting together these statements suggests the general conclusion that we now live in the presence of a profound and powerful Love and Ananda and that if we but open ourselves to it, it will enter our consciousness and manifest in us and help us in our spiritual progress.

We may also note that the descent of the Personality of Ananda and divine Love, which Sri Aurobindo said was a condition for the supramental realization, occurred in 1946 and that the descent of the supramental consciousness into the earth consciousness occurred in 1956. Thus, the descent of the former must have facilitated the descent of the supramental consciousness, of which we are the beneficiaries. Sri Aurobindo has indicated that "once the supramental is established in Matter, the transformation will be possible under much less troublesome conditions than now are there"(CWSA 28: 296). At the same time, we undoubtedly benefit from the effects of the Mother's experience of the pulsations of divine Love carrying the world forward in its evolution and especially that last wave that she said had to manifest through her body, and which she felt in her better moments as her body consciousness—"I walk around the room, and that is what is walking." She said that in 1962, and the work in her body continued for over ten more years. We are the heirs of that supreme divine Love, that long battle that took place in her body between the divine Love and the Inconscience, the resistance of matter. It is certain to have had a profoundly uplifting and enabling effect on our own spiritual condition and ease of progress, on the lessening of the resistance in ourselves, and on the possibility for opening ourselves to the divine Grace and its Love and Ananda.

Another possible relation of the descent of the Personality of divine Ananda with our individual *sadhana* should be mentioned, the way of “the sunlit path”, which both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother discussed and advocated, and surely made more accessible to us. It is a path that is closely connected with keeping the psychic being in front and with the attitude of surrender to the Divine, a way of quiet ease and delight. A brief quote from the Mother seems to link its accessibility to us to the supramental descent:

All was gold and gold and gold, a torrent of golden light pouring down in an uninterrupted flow and bringing with it the consciousness that the path of the gods is a sunlit path in which difficulties lose all reality.

Such is the path open before us if we choose to take it. (CWM 14: 31)

Sri Aurobindo has written extensively on the nature of this sunlit path in his letters. The following passage from a long letter in which he discusses it at length describes the attitude of the consciousness associated with this path, and though here he discusses it in relation to the practices of meditation and creative work, this attitude is applicable to spiritual practice more generally:

The remedy we propose, the key we offer to you ought not to be so difficult to apply as you imagine. After all, it is only applying in “meditation” the way that has been so successful with you in your creative work. There is a way of creation by strain and tension, by beating of the brain, by hard and painful labour — often the passage clogged and nothing coming or else coming only in return for a sort of intellectual tapasya. There is the other way in which one remains quiet and opens oneself to a power that is there behind and waits for inspiration; the force pours in and with it the inspiration, the illumination, the Ananda, — all is done by an inner Power. The flood passes, but one remains quiet for the next flood and at its time surely it comes. Here too all is not perfect at once; but progress comes by ever new waves of the same Power. Not then a strain of mental activity, but a restful opening to the Force that is there all the time above and around you, so that it may flow freely and do its work in peace and illumination and Ananda... It may take some time to take entire hold of it, get the other habit out and make this normal; but you must not start by deciding that it is impossible! It is eminently possible and it is the door of definitive entrance. The difficulty, the struggle were only the period of preparation necessary to get rid of or exhaust the obstruction in the consciousness which was a thorn-hedge round the faery palace. (CWSA 31: 193)

What this all suggests is that the Divine Ananda and Love which Sri Aurobindo and Mother have brought down to us surrounds us and is waiting and ready to lead us into its unfathomable peace and delight; our soul and psychic being are a kind of projection of this divine delight within our individual being, and awakening to their inner influence and natural attitude of quiet opening and surrender to the Divine, and holding on to that attitude as much as possible, is the way favored by them for our deliverance out of darkness and falsehood and into the wonders and ecstasies of its Beatitude.

—Larry Seidlitz

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New Correspondences of the Mother ❧ An Introduction

This book contains twelve new correspondences of the Mother—“new” meaning that these correspondences do not appear in the *Collected Works of the Mother* and will therefore be new to most of its readers.¹ Some of these correspondences are long, others are short, but even the short ones have a coherence that gives them a personality. The names of the correspondents are given, along with a brief life sketch, to enable the reader to form a picture of the persons to whom the Mother is replying. The correspondences are presented in chronological order and, as far as possible, in a question-and-answer format. This format allows the reader to sense the relationship between the Mother and the correspondent.

The first and longest correspondence is with Dyuman. The Mother placed him in charge of the Dining Room in 1930 and asked him to instil greater discipline in the workers there. Faced with their intransigence, he promised to “always remain turned” towards her. “Well,” she replied, “surely when unfaithfulness prevails all around, it is the time to be truly faithful and to stand untouched and unmoved in the storm.” Time after time she boosted him up so that he could effectively do his work, offering him not only guidance but her care and love. In every way she ‘had his back’. And he responded with all-out faithful service; through difficult times, he stood for her.

Another sadhak who served the Mother with deep devotion was Champaklal. His correspondence reveals his inner doubts and reveals too the Mother’s faith in him. She assured him of his capacity to do the Yoga. She strengthened his selfless nature. “The generosity of your absolute self-giving,” she wrote, “will bring to you the revelation of the generosity of the Divine’s Love.”

Dilip Kumar Roy’s correspondence shows his troubled relationship with the Mother and her boundless concern for him. “Don’t let troubles and difficulties depress you,” she advised. “The greater the difficulties, the greater the victory hereafter. Why did you not come for the Pranam? You are mistaken: I did miss you, I said to you again and again, ‘Dilip, come, come.’ If you had looked within you would have heard my voice.”

This book also has the correspondences of simple souls such as Tara Patel, who worked in the kitchen, and Ambu, who washed pots and pans. “My dear little star,” she wrote to Tara, “You must not be sorry or depressed. I am quite satisfied not only with your work which is excellent but also with your spiritual progress.” And to Ambu: “I do not want the work of slaves; I want the work of free people who work because they feel benefited by it and for whom work is a source of joy and strength. What you cannot do in that spirit, it is better not to do.”

For those who love flowers, there is the “garden” correspondence with Parichand. The Mother gave him advice about growing roses, watering and manuring plants, cutting the branches and roots of trees, and working in harmony with others.

1 Nine of these correspondences have been published in some form in the Ashram’s *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*.



Jayantilal and Indra Sen were two Press workers. When Jayantilal expressed a wish to leave the Press, the Mother retorted, “If you leave the Press, the work will be ruined!” And she added, “The more I go, the more I know that it is in work that Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga is best done.” When Indra Sen asked for a motto to put up on the walls in the rooms at the Press, the Mother wrote: “Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body’s best prayer for the Divine.”

Prithwi Singh, who joined the Ashram at the age of thirty-nine, was the head of the Publication Department. “Your attitude towards work is the right one,” the Mother affirmed, “and I see no changes to suggest. The work done through love and because of love is surely the most powerful.”

Surendranath Jauhar, the lone correspondent who was not a member of the Ashram, lived in New Delhi and started the Mother’s International School there. In a message to the school, she wrote: “The best students are those who want to know, not those who want to show.”

The American Maude Smith came to the Ashram at the age of forty-two. When she complained that her work was “never finished”, the Mother counselled, “Never exert yourself and never hurry. Do what can be done in the time you have but without strain—in a quiet flow of peace. All work must be play, but a Divine play played for the Divine, with the Divine.” When Maude wrote, “Show me the door, I pray, and lead me within,” the Mother simply said, “The door is open. You have only to step in.”

The final correspondence is with Pradyot Bhattacharya, an electrical engineer. “My dear child,” she told him, “I need you as my instrument, and you will remain so. Be very quiet—endure with courage. I am with you, in love and in victory.”

What these quotations fail to convey is the intimacy of exchange between the disciples and the Mother. The depth of their devotion and of her love comes out more adequately when the correspondences are read in full.

New Correspondences of the Mother is an unnumbered supplement to the Collected Works of the Mother. It is the first of three or four new books intended to bring her Collected Works up to date. The next book, *New Words of the Mother*, will consist of letters, messages and personal notes on various topics, arranged by subject. A third book, *New Writings and Talks of the Mother*, will include diverse material: some early visions and prayers, a number of talks, and a number of correspondences, major and minor, not in the present volume. If there are enough correspondences, there will be a fourth volume: *New Correspondences of the Mother II*. This is the tentative plan for the publication of new writings and talks that have emerged in the four decades since the Collected Works was published around the time of the Mother’s centenary in 1978. A subsequent step will be the incorporation of this new material in a revised and enlarged edition of the Collected Works.

—Bob Zwicker
Director, Archives and Research Library
Sri Aurobindo Ashram

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO

The Origins of Aryan Speech

—Sri Aurobindo

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication

Department, Pondicherry

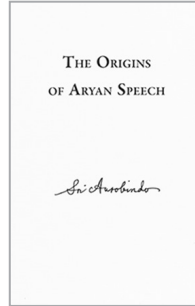
88 pp, Rs 65, ISBN: 978-93-5210-189-4

Size: 14 x 22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

Sri Aurobindo became interested in researching the origins and nature of the Indo-European languages (of which Indo-Aryan is a branch) and their relationship to the Dravidian languages after he settled in Pondicherry in 1910.

His examination of the vocables of the Tamil language led him to discover missing connections and new relations between Sanskrit and Latin, between Greek and Sanskrit. The possibility of an original connection between the Dravidian and Aryan tongues was one reason he took up a study of the Veda in the original. The material in this book is extracted from *Vedic and Philological Studies*, Volume 14 of The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, and contains the title essay as well as other writings on philology and a selection of his notes of simple root-sounds and their most general meanings.



WORKS OF THE MOTHER

New Correspondences of the Mother

—The Mother

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication
Department, Pondicherry

462 pp, Rs 250 ISBN: 978-93-5210-186-3

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This book contains the Mother's correspondence with twelve disciples: Dyuman, Champaklal, Dilip Kumar Roy, Tara Patel, Ambu, Parichand, Jayantilal,

Prithwi Singh, Indra Sen, Surendranath Jauhar, Maude Smith, and Pradyot. A brief life sketch of the disciple precedes each correspondence, and the letters are presented in chronological order. These correspondences were not published as part of the Collected Works of the Mother, but appeared later in various issues of the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* or in independent volumes connected to a few of the disciples. The correspondence with Pradyot is published here for the first time.

See article on page 10

COMPILATIONS FROM THE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

Sri Aurobindo and India's Rebirth

—Edited by Michel Danino

Publisher: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.,
New Delhi

263 pp, Rs 395, ISBN: 978-93-5304-056-7

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

(previously introduced in the July 2020 issue)

See review on page 23

All Creatures Great and Small

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Animals

—Compiled from the Writings of Sri Aurobindo
and the Mother, and other sources

Publisher: AuroPublications, Sri Aurobindo
Society, Pondicherry

143 pp, Rs 280, ISBN: 978-81-7060-419-8

Size: 18 x 24 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This compilation, whose title is a line drawn from an 1848 hymn for children, draws our attention to the animal world and our relation to its creatures in the light of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's words. The quotations are interspersed with many photographs, some of the Mother's sketches of animals, and numerous graphics. The book also includes recollections recorded by disciples during their interactions with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother relating to animals. Chapters are organised around subjects such as

the yogic attitude towards animals, intelligence in animals, animal stories told by the Mother, and the development of consciousness in animals.

See review on page 19

OTHER AUTHORS

Sri Aurobindo's Talks of 1926

—Recorded by Anilbaran Roy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication
Department, Pondicherry
254 pp, Rs 160, ISBN: 978-93-5210-187-0
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Anilbaran Roy's account is his record of informal conversations between Sri Aurobindo and about a dozen of his disciples between May and September 1926. These talks were serialised in part for Mother India during the early 1950s and in full between 1977 and 1986 for *Sri Aurobindo Circle*. The talks cover a wide range of topics—his own life and spiritual practice, his method of yoga, India under British rule, Indian politics and the freedom struggle, Indian religion, education and culture, Western influence on life in India, and the future of humanity. As with A.B. Purani's account of Sri Aurobindo's talks in the 1920s, they give the reader a sense of Sri Aurobindo's versatile personality, his spiritual insight and experience, and his approach to some of the important issues of his time.

See review on page 15

The English of Savitri, Volume 6 Book Eleven, The Book of Everlasting Day, and Book Twelve, Epilogue

*Comments on the language of Sri Aurobindo's
epic Savitri*

—Shraddhavan

Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville
270 pp, Rs 650, ISBN: 978-93-82474-29-6
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

(previously introduced in the July 2020 issue)

See review on page 17

The Spiritual Evolution of the Soul

Essentials of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy and Yoga

—Larry Seidlitz

Publisher: White Falcon Publishing
212 pp, Rs 300, ISBN: 978-1-63640-030-3
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

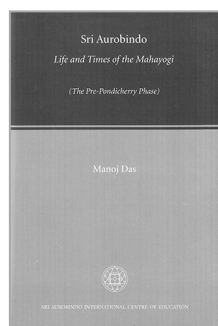
This treatise on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and system of yoga summarises his essential ideas such as the nature of the Divine and its relation to the universe, the relation of the soul and nature, the concepts of karma and rebirth, and his theory of the involution and evolution of consciousness. It also examines the method and practice of the Integral Yoga, the psychic, spiritual and supramental transformations of consciousness, and the intermediary consciousness of the superman bridging the human and supramental beings. In the final chapter the author argues for the relevance of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga in today's world. Through all these chapters runs the main theme of the spiritual evolution of the soul, because at the core Sri Aurobindo's philosophy goes beyond the mind: it is a philosophy of the soul and its union with the infinite Reality.

See review on page 20

Sri Aurobindo—Life and Times of the Mahayogi (The Pre-Pondicherry Phase)

—Manoj Das

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of
Education, Pondicherry
716 pp, Rs 750, ISBN: 978-93-5210-228-0
Size: 16 x 24 cm, Binding: Hard Cover



This meticulously researched account of Sri Aurobindo's pre-Pondicherry life is a revised and substantially enlarged version of an earlier work published in 1972, *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Century*. The book is mostly built upon archival documents and extracts from personal diaries published and unpublished, and extant reminiscences. There is an abundance

of quoted material and rare photographs, and many sketches of people who played important roles in his life, whether friend or foe. For example, there is even a story that US President Theodore Roosevelt requested Lord Minto to send him a copy of an issue of *Bande Mataram*, which he enjoyed.

The book charts Sri Aurobindo's early life, his initial entry into politics, his active leadership of the freedom movement, and ends with the story of his departure for Chandernagore and then for Pondicherry. The work is so broad in its scope that three introductions are required to set the stage for the narrative and three postscripts and an epilogue to satisfy its completion. The work was serialised in *Mother India* from April 2011 to November 2017.

ASSAMESE

Prasna aru Uttar (1950-51)—Ma, Rs 250

GUJARATI

Savitri Shabdarnut-11—Shraddhavan, Rs 300

HINDI

Rahasyamaya Agni Ke Prati Sukta Bhag 1 & 2

—Sri Aravind, ISBN: 978-93-82919-03-2, Rs 350

Sri Aravind Apne evam Ashram ke Sambandha mein

(Bhag 3) *Guru aur unki Adhyatmik Shakti: Sadhak-Shishiyon ke sath Patrachar*—Sri Aravind

ISBN: 978-93-5210-205-1, Rs 150

Sri Aravind: Chuninda Kavitayen—Sri Aravind

ISBN: 978-81-237-8984-2, Rs 285

Sri Aravindkrita Char Lambi Kavitayen: Sandarbh

aur Tippani sahit—Amrita Bharati

ISBN: 978-93-80424-55-2, Rs 650

ITALIAN

Le Sette Tetradi dello Yoga Integrale

—Giacomo Colomba, Rs 1300

KANNADA

Sri Aravindara Mahakavya Savitri—Sri Aravindaru

ISBN: 978-93-83717-37-8, Rs 260

RUSSIAN

Mat', Ty skazala tak...—Compiled and designed by

Huta, ISBN: 978-81-87372-42-4, Rs 150

TAMIL

Sri Aravindarin Savitri: Oru Arimugam—

Angilattil toguttavar: Shraddhavan

ISBN: 978-93-82474-31-9, Rs 150

TELUGU

Suvarnavaradhi Savitri—Suneetha Sekhar,

Rs 80

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BOOK REVIEWS

Sri Aurobindo's Talks of 1926

—Recorded by Anilbaran Roy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication

Department, Pondicherry

254 pp, Rs 160, ISBN: 978-93-5210-187-0

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

THE BENGALI POLITICAL LEADER Anilbaran Roy came to live with Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry in May 1926. Soon after his arrival he was invited to join the talks Sri Aurobindo had with a small group of disciples several evenings a week. Recognising their value, Anilbaran began noting down these talks from memory. His record has been published, in whole or part, in two periodic journals; this is the first time they are appearing in book form.

Some of these talks – about forty percent – were also recorded by another participant, A. B. Purani, and published in his *Evening Talks*; the two accounts differ somewhat, of course, in content and expression. The remaining sixty percent of the talks were recorded only by Anilbaran, and for most readers they will be new.

In his notebooks Anilbaran generally gave the names of the participants; these names have been retained in this book, and they bring to the talks a sense of personality and intimacy. The discussions were informal, open-ended and animated. The disciples were free to ask questions or make comments; Sri Aurobindo was likewise free in his replies. His remarks are clear, candid, incisive, and sometimes sharp. Anilbaran has admirably captured their power. He has also managed to convey the congenial atmosphere of the talks. The lighthearted banter among the participants adds to the reading enjoyment.

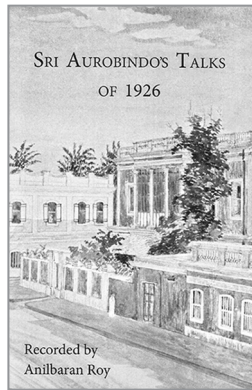
There is a fair dose of politics in the talks. Asked about the “characteristics of Indian politicians”, Sri Aurobindo tells his listeners, “They never do a thing at the right time and whatever they do, they do it badly,” at which point laughter breaks out. More seriously he goes on to explain, “They are out of touch with reality—they see what the English people are doing in England and try to apply that to this country, though it may be quite unsuitable here.” Elsewhere he comments, “The present politics in India is not essentially different from European politics; it is rather an imperfect imitation of it.” Then he asks, “Is it worthwhile for Indians to give up their own Swadharma in pursuit of these foreign ideals?”

The politics of Mahatma Gandhi comes up several times for discussion. In one talk Sri Aurobindo says, “Gandhi made a confusion of things when he sought to win over the Mahomedans by helping them in the Khilafat movement.... Gandhi took no account of facts, ignored the nature of the Mahomedans, formed in his own mind a scheme of Hindu-Muslim unity and thrust it upon the country without regard to the existing circumstances.” In another talk Sri Aurobindo speaks about a fatal flaw in Gandhi's insistence on pacifism: “Gandhi's doctrine of meeting violence by soul-force is most impracticable. The oppressor will respond only when he has a soul, but in most cases there is no soul to respond.”

Sometimes the conversation turned to Hindu religion and its customs. Sri Aurobindo did not think much of the efforts at the time to reform the caste system. “Mere interdining and so forth cannot affect the caste system,” he remarks. “Unless there is intermarriage, the caste system cannot be said to have disappeared.”

The *Shraddha* ceremony for deceased family members he dismisses as a “social superstition”. As for Hinduism as a whole, he considers it “more fundamentally tolerant than any other religion in the world”. Always in the end he affirms the intrinsic value of Indian religion and culture.

Nations other than India also come up for discussion in the talks. When A.B. Purani offers an item of news, “The crew of a Japanese ship saved many shipwrecked Englishmen at the risk of their own lives,” Sri Aurobindo comments, “That is quite like the Japanese. They would rather perish than neglect their duty.” Anilbaran then asks, “What has made the Japanese so dutiful?” Sri Aurobindo explains, “It is their ancient culture—the splendid organisation and the discipline of the Samurai which has reached the whole people. That discipline consists in great self-restraint and sacrifice at the call of duty.” Other countries are similarly assessed with the same sure eye.



Often the conversations explore various aspects of spiritual life, and on occasion Sri Aurobindo speaks of his own *sadhana*. In a discussion about the need for a Guru, Sri Aurobindo observes, “Though generally a touch from the Guru is necessary, it is not indispensable. In my case there was no touch from a Guru. I got an inner touch and then practised Yoga. At a certain stage, when I could not proceed further, Lele gave me some help. When I came to Pondicherry, I got from within a programme for my *sadhana*. I did it myself, but I could not figure out how to help others; then Mirra came and I found out with her help.”

Sri Aurobindo also speaks about his system of Yoga. “In the course of evolution,” he says in one talk, “Nature has brought forth the mental consciousness. The next stage is the manifestation of the Supramental. The bringing down of the supramental consciousness is the object of our Yoga.... [O]ur object is to transform this life with the help of the Supramental.” Throughout the talks there are hints about how to practise the Yoga and questions about its relation to other paths. When Anilbaran asks how Tantrics use the lower movements of their nature to help build up their spiritual life, Sri Aurobindo simply says, “I have no objection to taking fish; you can even take wine if it suits you; but how can the sexual act be made a help to spiritual life?” Then he explains why sex is inadvisable from a Yogic point of view. As for the use of drugs, he notes, “Drugs give an artificial stimulation which makes possible certain experiences, but these experiences do not bring any permanent change.” When Anilbaran asks, “How do things of beauty help our spiritual development?”, Sri Aurobindo offers this insight: “Cultivation of the sense of beauty brings a refinement which makes spiritual transformation easier when there is the necessary opening. There is the aspect of beauty in God and it is easy to approach Him through beauty.”

The talks of 1926 cover a large canvas. In them Sri Aurobindo speaks of his own life and work and *sadhana*; his method of Yoga and that of other paths; the condition of India under British rule and the country’s struggle for freedom; Indian religion, education and culture; Western religion, science and social life; the West’s influence on life in India; the future of humanity; and much else besides. The book is, as the back-cover blurb puts it, “a valuable record of Sri Aurobindo’s viewpoint on many important issues at the time”.

—Bob Zwicker
Bob is the Director of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library.

**The English of Savitri, Volume 6
Book Eleven, The Book of Everlasting Day,
and Book Twelve, Epilogue**

*Comments on the language of Sri Aurobindo's
epic Savitri*

—Shraddhavan

Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville

270 pp, Rs 650, ISBN: 978-93-82474-29-6

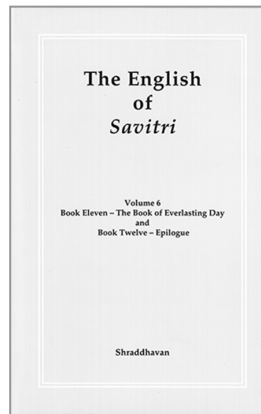
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

ACCORDING TO THE MOTHER, *Savitri: a legend and a symbol*, the *mahakavya*, is the “message” of Sri Aurobindo. It is certainly a difficult task to unravel the mystery of this message given by a *rishi*. Reading *Savitri* is sometimes mind-boggling, sometimes mesmerising, sometimes puzzling, and almost always brings joy and peace. To read *Savitri* is to bathe in *Ananda rasa*. This *rasa* is experienced by a being deep within us. Even though the Mother has advised us to read *Savitri* without trying to understand everything, our mind is always eager to know and understand the text, its message, imagery and symbolism. It is this inquisitiveness of the mind that brings us to books like the one we have in hand for review.

The English of Savitri by Shraddhavan indeed comes in handy when one wants to approach this magnum opus of Sri Aurobindo and delve into the beauty of the image and sound, the rhythm and movement of the poem. The author, having written five volumes in the same series, brings us home to Sri Aurobindo’s language, the masterly use of syntax and rhythm in blank verse. She is very careful to go through each line and bring out the shades of meaning that may be possible in the given context. Surely, for all study circles on *Savitri*, this series of books is a must.

Volume Six of *The English of Savitri* is indeed special because it covers the last two books from

the epic and is as such the finale of the grand vision of Sri Aurobindo. Especially, Book Eleven – “The Book of the Everlasting Day” has the longest but one canto in the epic – “The Eternal Day: The Soul’s Choice and the Supreme Consummation”. This was one of the last cantos that Sri Aurobindo revised extensively before he took Mahasamadhi. It is very powerful and creates a serene atmosphere after the long battle with Death that Savitri wages in Book Ten. As the author observes, it is indeed difficult for the human mind to think about a Day without Night! However, Sri Aurobindo’s vision of “God’s everlasting day” forces our imagination to widen and discover that beauty and peace which is lying hidden in the womb of time.



This volume is systematically divided into two parts consisting of Books Eleven and Twelve. Book Eleven has been discussed in eight sections and Book Twelve in three. The first two sections of Book Eleven describe the beauty of the “Everlasting Day”, its abounding and intense peace, the beauty and harmony of rhythms and patterns of the worlds which

are not terrestrial. Savitri has risen to those worlds where death, ignorance, sorrow and suffering are “impossible”. In the third section a dialogue between the Supreme and Savitri begins, which goes on till section seven. The Supreme tempts Savitri with many boons, and almost tests her whether she chooses who will climb to the deathless spheres or will return to the earth to become a bridge. Many doubts about the incapacity of human beings are also raised by the Supreme, dissuading Savitri from choosing to work for the earth. But Savitri is firm and focused, saying, “I climb not to thy everlasting Day, | Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night.” She then asks the Supreme for

the boons for “earth and men”. The Supreme, having tested her well, then showers all the boons and powers on her. Savitri proves to be such an instrument that the Supreme tells her that “Now will I do in thee my marvellous works.” In the seventh section the veil between Satyavan and Savitri is rent asunder and together they start their journey to the earth with the Supreme’s boons. The last section sees their descent on earth to carry on the work.

Book Twelve contains three sections: Satyavan and Savitri returning to earth in their physical bodies, the return of sight and kingdom to the blind king Dyumatsena, and a description of the Night that has been given the assurance of a new and greater dawn.

The author has taken pains to address many questions which arose during her classes. Her explanations helped in clarifying many difficult images and concepts in these cantos. These responses will surely enrich readers and create in them an urge to know more and delve deeper into each word and phrase of this epic poem.

With its wonderful insights into the theme and thought of these cantos, surely Volume Six of *The English of Savitri* is as captivating as the other five volumes by the author. Written in a simple, lucid style, it maintains the tenor of the classes and makes it easy for the readers to understand and go closer to *Savitri*. Most definitely, this book helps us understand more deeply the theme and substance of *Savitri* and thus motivates us to read the epic poem again and again.

—Shruti Bidwaikar

Dr Bidwaikar is the Assistant Director of the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research. She did her doctorate on Sri Aurobindo’s aesthetics and is actively involved in reading, researching, and editing study material related to the thought of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.



As *The English of Savitri, Volume Six* deals with the last two books of the poem, this passage from Kailas Jhaveri’s book *I am with you (Parts II and III)*, which comments on these last five lines of the poem, seems particularly relevant:

Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign.
She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn.

There is a significant difference between the night in the first canto of the First Book and that of the last canto in the Twelfth Book. The first night before the fateful day “when Satyavan must die” is opaque with the “huge foreboding mind” unwilling to receive any light—a mind that is ignorant and obscure, not ready to receive the spiritual light. But the night after Savitri brings back Satyavan is “splendid with the moon”.

The moon is the symbol of spiritual realisation and hence Night is peacefully dreaming of a greater light. It represents a spiritually awakened and enlightened mind which meditates in the stillness of the luminous depths and foresees the Dawn of the divine manifestation which will destroy forever all darkness and obscurity—a mind ready to abdicate the reign of the ego and ready to receive the light of the Supramental Dawn.

from *I am with you* by Kailas Jhaveri, p. 446

All Creatures Great and Small

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Animals

—Compiled from the Writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and other sources

Publisher: AuroPublications, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry

143 pp, Rs 280, ISBN: 978-81-7060-419-8

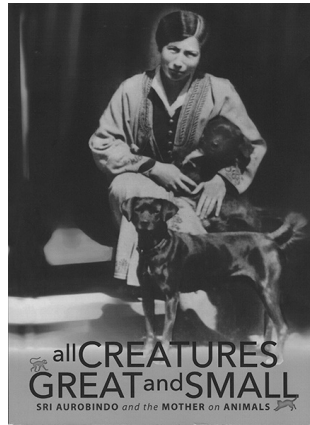
Size: 18 x 24 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

FOR MANY PEOPLE you could say that this is the book they have been waiting for, one subject that has not been adequately covered before. There are so many books on the Yoga, on collections of sayings by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, on spiritual life in general, and so on—even on flowers and their meaning. But apart from comments which appear almost by chance as illustrations of various aspects of Yoga, no one has ever attempted to collect together in one book almost everything that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said about animals. And what a treasure trove they have come up with! Above all, after reading this book no one can any longer dismiss animals as far inferior to us.

Most of us from birth onwards have been led to believe that animals are... well... just animals, usually having four legs, generally different to us in appearance, surviving on different diets, living almost universally outside dwellings, and are there to eat, to serve mankind, to add life and colour to the landscapes and seascapes around us, all of which helps sustain us.

The book starts with a leading question for all *sadbaks*, namely, what should our attitude be towards animals, or in particular the yogic attitude? The answer is to never be afraid of them. We are just one species out of around seven million. We see ourselves as the top of the pile, but are we? It depends on what you judge us by. Certainly we are technologically ahead of

the other animals, but who is to say that in the long run that matters and puts us in the number one position? There are plenty of other attributes one could choose from. For example, gorillas are stronger than us, the cheetah runs faster, the elephant can communicate over greater distances, the chameleon and the octopus can change colour, certain ticks can go for years without food, cockroaches and fruit flies can withstand radiation better than us, and so on. There are literally thousands of ways animals can outdo us, thousands of reasons for us to respect them, and reading this book will make you think twice about our self-proclaimed superiority, because in the long run it comes down to which species is likely to survive over time. For humans, that is by no means a certainty.



Animals have a soul, and can respond to the psychic in man; in many ways they are superior to man. We need the animal world to sustain us, though it is highly questionable whether they need us. Where would we be without pollinators, without bats to keep insects under control, without sharks to ensure weak and diseased fish are eliminated before they infect other fish, or without wolves, lions and tigers to keep the numbers of other species in balance. Animals are much nearer to man than is generally supposed. Europeans imagine a big difference between man and animals, but the only difference is they can't form concepts and can't read or write or philosophise. They can think and reason, but their intelligence has evolved within the narrow limits of life. The tiger cannot be blamed for killing, because it is nature that kills and eats. Likewise not killing, because it is full or responding to another principle of nature. It is

love, in a darkened and corrupted form, that is associated with all the impulses of physical and vital nature. The essential being is the same in a cat and in trees, the essential Self is one. The difference exists in what is put forth in Nature. One could go on musing about the role of animals in the world today. The book illustrates that animals are essentially vital creatures that reincarnate as the same species, just as we do, and we need them alongside us. They are capable of love and friendship, of a more simple and honest consciousness, especially if they have lived alongside humans; of grief and sadness; of shame and compassion; of rescue and altruism; of rage, dominance and cruelty; of fear and concern for their offspring and family; of hatred and joy, etc. All qualities that we are proud of and think are unique to us. Some of these are touched on in this book, but the main point is that animals don't have the ability to write or speak about their emotions and capabilities, so we think of them as inferior to us. We shouldn't. After all, we are animals ourselves! Like us, they are also evolving, and feel as we do. This is particularly relevant when it comes to people being cruel to animals. They need to realise that animals are essentially like us. If we fear to be tortured then an animal would fear it also. Only, it cannot communicate the fact.

The book is richly illustrated with photos and drawings related to the text; almost every spread has something for the eye to appreciate. What will particularly be welcomed by readers are the many photos of the Mother and the individual animals which she had a relation with, both her own pet animals and those brought to her by the disciples. There are numerous sketches by her which have not been seen before, and every animal covered by the book is listed in a comprehensive index.

Finally, at the end of the book there are chapters on the symbology behind certain animals, some cat tales, various animal stories

told by the Mother, reminiscences of Ashram disciples, and what some disciples have said about animals. Altogether, this is a rich and entertaining book, which will have a beneficial impact on all who read it, hopefully changing their attitude to the animal world around them.

—Tim Wrey

Tim was born in the UK, but has lived half his life in Auroville. A passionate nature lover and conservation proponent, he has produced two books on nature—the first on the wildlife of Auroville, and the second on the wildlife of the Coromandel coastal region. His aim in both books is to interest readers in India's wildlife in such a way that people feel motivated to protect and conserve it.

The Spiritual Evolution of the Soul

Essentials of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy and Yoga

—Larry Seidlitz

Publisher: White Falcon Publishing

212 pp, Rs 300, ISBN: 978-1-63640-030-3

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

“But what is the meaning of it all and of our own life in it, where is it leading, and which direction are we to go? Ask any flower bud, it will know: Turn to the sun, soak in its light, open, and express your absolutely unique and perfect beauty.”

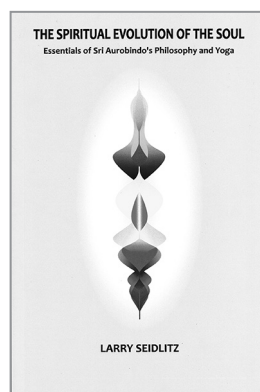
FOR LARRY SEIDLITZ to end his latest endeavour – a comprehensive, yet compact introduction to and summary of Sri Aurobindo's thought – with this passage in its poignant and aesthetic simplicity seems like a counterpoint to the preceding 200 pages of condensed philosophical, metaphysical and practical yogic considerations. In a kind of literary fractal this somewhat mirrors Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* in which its author concluded over 700 pages of epic mantric poetry,

which, as the Mother stated, encompassed, in profound and elevated verse, the entirety of his vision, experiences and inner processes, with these lines:

Awakened to the meaning of my heart
That to feel love and oneness is to live
And this the meaning of our golden change
Is all the Truth I know or seek, O sage.

If we can simply open ourselves to the light like blossoming flowers or turn golden by feeling and living the love and oneness in our hearts, maybe we don't need to seek any other Truth or try to know anything else. For those

of us whose minds still need some convincing, Larry Seidlitz's "Essentials" provide an excellent overview of the elaborate case that Sri Aurobindo has made for this simple and beautiful Truth throughout the thought and vision contained in his many literary works.



In ten chapters, accompanied by a glossary of relevant terms from Sri Aurobindo's collected works, Larry Seidlitz takes us from the foundations of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical framework, including his conception of the nature of reality and the relation between the Divine and the world, through the nature of the individual and the collective soul to its development over lifetimes and civilizational cycles. The later chapters delve into the processes of consciously hastening our incarnated souls' developments through Integral Yoga. Seidlitz presents the transformative inner dynamics and stages of accelerated conscious evolution specified by Sri Aurobindo as well as looking ahead towards the future physical manifestations they are envisioned to enable. Finally, the author states his case for why both Sri Aurobindo's

philosophical views as well as proposed yogic practices still hold meaning and possibility for those who strive to improve themselves and the world around them today, and are not as "difficult" or even "impossible" to understand and put into practice as some might argue.

Threading through these explorations of Sri Aurobindo's thought and practical suggestions to make it effective in our lives are the author's own reflections on history and the current state of the world. To him, engaging with Sri Aurobindo's works is not an abstract intellectual exercise but rather it is "particularly in such a time of upheaval that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is so important and relevant, because it, perhaps more than any other, gives a comprehensive meaning and understanding to it." Although Seidlitz considers this philosophy's aid to constructive cognizance of the world around us as important, its positive effects are not limited to the mind:

When considering and feeling the weight of the many difficulties and challenges facing humanity, this same faith in humanity's bright future promised by Sri Aurobindo's philosophy can lighten the load, give hope, bring solace, and provide a helpful support to carry on in our lives and move past the darknesses that sometimes appear overwhelming.

In his own words the author describes his motivations for writing the book:

It represents my understanding of the teachings of my spiritual teachers Sri Aurobindo and the Mother about the human being and its evolutionary journey toward a divine life on earth. I came across these teachings forty-four years ago, found them convincing, and have been studying them and doing my best to practice them ever since. Over these many years, my studies, my own inner experiences, and my discussions with others who have followed their teachings have further confirmed my convictions. I find the philosophy to be

extraordinarily positive and inspiring, and while I understand that many would be sceptical of such an idealistic philosophy in our troubled times, it is congruent both among its parts and with other widely accepted narratives about the nature of human beings and our world

While those already familiar with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and instructions for the practice of Integral Yoga might not gain too many new insights from the first foundational chapters, in the latter part of the book, even seasoned readers of this field's literature might see aspects of the substance it refers to in a new light. For newcomers to this field of study the first two chapters, "The Divine and the Undivine" and "Involution and Evolution", provide an excellent introduction to Sri Aurobindo's worldview, its cosmology and ontology. In the first, more "theoretical" half I especially enjoyed the fourth chapter, "The Soul and Nature", and Chapter Six, "The Evolution of Human Societies". While reading the former I marvelled at the ease with which the author presented the complexity of our deeper psychology and felt myself to be reoriented inwardly, which to me attests that the impact of the writing goes beyond the intellectual level. Chapter Six, on the other hand, comprises Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle* in such a comprehensive yet concise way that it would probably lend itself well to introductory sessions in a lecture and seminar series on "integral sociology" at institutes of higher learning.

The second half of the book focuses more on the practical implications of Sri Aurobindo's thought and begins with the book's longest chapter, "Integral Yoga and Concentrated Evolution". Following this is "The Triple Transformation" in which both basic and advanced concepts and processes relating to the yoga formulated by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are laid out for the reader. Personally, the last two chapters of the book, "The Superman: Intermediary Between

the Human and Supramental Being" and "The Relevance of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy and Yoga", represent the highlights of this book. The former sheds light on a fascinating and yet not too widely noted aspect of this field of study. The latter importantly deals in a nuanced and clear way with the notion that both Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and his Integral Yoga are too "difficult" to understand and practise. In this way, the author concludes the book in a fitting manner by exploring some of the furthest frontiers of this evolutionary movement and making his case for their practical relevance and sure possibilities, no matter how daunting they might seem to the doubting sceptics within us, especially today. He quotes the Mother:

"Finally, I am fully convinced that the confusion is there to teach us how to live from day to day, that is to say, not to be preoccupied with what may happen, what will happen, just to occupy oneself day by day with doing what one has to do [...] and then to let the All-Consciousness decide.... By giving great importance to things dangerous and harmful, you only add strength to them." She said that when we are assailed by disorder and confusion, we should enter into the consciousness where there is only a single Unity and everything is taking place within this Unity. "More and more," she said, "the certitude is there: this is the only solution."

—Matthias Pommerening

Matthias, who lives and works in Auroville, has an academic background related to research into consciousness and is fascinated with Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's explorations in the field. He has been in conversation with Larry Seidlitz about his book since its inception.

Sri Aurobindo and India's Rebirth

—Edited by Michel Danino

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New Delhi

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AS THE GLOBAL BALANCE OF POWER tilts towards Asia, the issue of India's future and her role in the community of nations has never been more important. Over the last three decades enormous economic, social, and political changes have swept across the country, but, while there is a resurgence of national pride in line with similar movements around the world, the question of India's deeper *raison d'être* has remained in the shadows.

Sri Aurobindo's concern with the fate of India dates back to his days as a young man in England as he prepared himself for a return to the country of his birth and his future action. His role in shaping the destiny of India evolved with time. In a series of articles soon after taking up the Maharaja's service in Baroda (written when he was just twenty-one years old) he launched a scathing attack on the moderate policies of the Congress at the time, and foreshadowed the genius he would manifest more fully a decade later. After years spent deepening his connection with India through her texts and languages, Sri Aurobindo plunged into political action in 1905. For the next five years, Sri Aurobindo helped shape the course of India's freedom struggle, most noticeably through his electric writings and inspiring speeches.

Later in Pondicherry, from 1910 onwards till his passing in 1950, even while his focus shifted from a "national yoga" to a yoga of human transformation, he followed closely the events taking place in India, wrote frequently to

correspondents on the burning issues of the day, and shared his views on them in conversations with disciples. Thus, a large body of material exists spanning almost sixty years for anyone interested in Sri Aurobindo's evolving but constant engagement with the role and destiny of India. This can be found in numerous volumes of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, and also in published conversations with disciples, such as *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by A.B. Purani, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran, and *Sri Aurobindo's Talks of 1926* by Anilbaran Roy. Sri Aurobindo also delivered a few messages on important occasions that clearly expressed some of his last views on issues pertaining to India, for instance, his Independence Day message of 15 August 1947 and his message to Andhra University in 1948.



Sri Aurobindo and India's Rebirth, edited by Michel Danino, does an outstanding job of presenting a selection from all of the above sources in a succinct and chronological format. The second edition of this popular book (earlier titled simply *India's Rebirth*) builds on the success of the first, and answers the urgent need to engage

with Sri Aurobindo's perspective on India in an easy-to-browse format. The compilation is divided into six neat chronological sections: Revolutionary Writings (1893-1910), Essays, Letters and Articles (1910-1922), Talks (1923-1926), Letters (1926-1938), Talks (1938-1940), and Letters and Messages (1940-1950). The book begins with a useful timeline of important events and a pertinent introduction that brings into focus the considerable work that remains to be done for the fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's vision of India. The author's brief historical notes are a very helpful feature of this book. Short introductory paragraphs explaining contemporary issues, as also biographical notes

on Sri Aurobindo, preface the extracts every few pages and help the reader navigate their context.

Presenting Sri Aurobindo chronologically highlights how Sri Aurobindo's own engagement with India evolved and deepened. While his early writings and speeches are full of a tremendous intensity and call to action, his later views reflect on the dangers of excessive sentimentalism and emotional outpouring vitiating the slow and patient work of spiritual nation-building.

By their very nature, compilations present a limited view on any topic as complexity of thought is often diluted in extracts. Their perspective is shaped by the editor, and they work to the extent that they respond to the needs of the reader. In this respect, the editor has been eminently successful in answering the needs of various kinds of readers. Those interested in the political views of Sri Aurobindo will not be disappointed, neither will those seeking a deeper understanding of India's soul-purpose.

As the title of the book suggests, the preoccupation of the editor is with India's renaissance, and various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's thought relevant to his purpose are presented. Important topics include nationalism, internationalism, Hinduism, democracy and its suitability for India, the Hindu-Muslim problem, Gandhi and non-violence, the partition of India, and World War II. Other diverse topics such as the status of women, religious fanaticism, Indian art, and the Aryan-Dravidian theory are also briefly presented.

Readers interested in the political developments in the years leading up to Indian independence will find much to ruminate on. Sri Aurobindo's perspective on the Khilafat movement, the methods of Gandhi, the Cripps proposal, and the partition of India – which he

vehemently opposed – are unique in their honest analysis of the forces at work behind the façades.

In line with its focus, the book mostly skips over Sri Aurobindo's extensive interpretations of Indian texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads or the Gita, or his detailed explorations of the Hindu *dharma* that we find in *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays on Indian Culture*.

Finally, this book offers not only insights into the past, but casts its gaze into the future. There are warnings that ring true some seventy-five years after they were given; for instance, the danger posed by an authoritarian China, the unsuitability of a political structure not sufficiently adapted to India's needs, and the perils of excessive centralisation.

But there is also hope and promise in these passages. The Mother writes: "Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his Motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world." Sri Aurobindo believed that the rebirth of India was intimately connected to a rediscovery of her spiritual purpose and its manifestation in the life of the nation. As the post-World War II order crumbles and newly independent nations with ancient cultures take centre stage once again, which direction will India choose on the cusp of this new age? Can she cast ancient wisdom in new forms? Will she, in the words of the Mother, wake up to her true mission in the world and show the way to union and harmony?

—Devdip Ganguli

Devdip resides in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He teaches History in the Higher Secondary section of SAICE and also offers courses on the social and political thought of Sri Aurobindo in the Higher Course section.