

Recent Publications

S a b d a

The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth



29 February 1956 ↔ 29 February 2024

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To mark the seventeenth anniversary of the Golden Day, our lead essay frames the significance of the descent of the Supramental Light and Force and Consciousness upon earth in the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. These words herald the establishment of a new evolutionary stage for humanity and assure us of the growing influence of the Supramental Power on all aspects of life on earth.

The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth

This 29 February 2024, marks the 17th leap year anniversary of the manifestation of the supramental consciousness upon earth. This essay will examine what happened on this day in 1956, what its significance is for the world and for individuals, what it augurs for the world's future, and what new possibilities it opens for our own spiritual development. To help address these issues the essay draws largely on Sri Aurobindo's prophetic writings about the supramental manifestation and its eventual results, as well as the Mother's writings and conversations about the event and its aftermath. As we will see, this was the central work that these Avatars came upon the earth to fulfill, though the full consequences of this momentous day are still unfolding.

The Event

Let us begin with the Mother's statement of her experience of what transpired that evening in 1956:

This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that "*the time has come*", and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow.¹

During that period in 1956, there used to be a common meditation for the Ashramites in the Playground on Wednesday evenings, like presently there are common meditations on Thursday and Sunday evenings. It was during that time that the Mother had this inner experience of this cosmic event. The Divine Mother herself, in her immense divine form, at this particular moment in time, broke open the door to the supramental realm allowing its Light and Force and Consciousness to rush down upon the earth. It is this moment and event that we celebrate on this day every four years.

But to better convey some understanding of its meaning and importance, it is necessary to say something at least of what is meant by the supramental in Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teachings and Yoga. For this an entire book could be written, and even that would be an inadequate, pale rendering, but here a few sentences will have to suffice. To put it in simple terms, we could say that the supramental is a kind of consciousness that is divine in its principle and character, a next step in the earth's evolution of consciousness from matter, to life, to mind, and

1. Written in the leap year 1956, this statement was first publicly distributed as the message for 29 February 1960, the first "anniversary" of the Supramental Manifestation upon earth. (CWM 15: 94)

now to Supermind. Just as mind was established on earth and manifested first in a rudimentary form in animals and then in a higher form in human beings, this moment in 1956 marked the establishment of the Supermind on earth, which now will be embodied in new kinds of divine beings on earth. Just as mind manifested in various types of animals with increasing clarity and power before manifesting in its more characteristic form of intelligence in the human being, so Supermind will manifest in various types of transitional beings that are human in origin but increasingly divine in consciousness and life, before manifesting in a completely new kind of being, the supramental being, which will not have the same human birth in a human body, but will manifest in a new kind of body through other processes yet to be discovered.

It should perhaps be clarified and emphasized that the supramental consciousness is something different from the spiritual consciousness which has long been a part of the world's spiritual traditions, including Indian spirituality. There has long been the possibility and actuality of attaining a spiritual consciousness which is essentially divine in its nature, characterized by a sense of infinity, timelessness, absolute peace, absolute delight, absolute conscious awareness. This is termed in Sri Aurobindo's yoga the spiritual consciousness, a consciousness of pure spiritual existence. But a limitation of this consciousness is that it is not dynamic, it cannot effectively transform the outer life of the individual who attains it, who remains subject to disease and death and an impeded and limited outward life, nor can it effectively transform the outer life of the humanity of which he is part, nor can it transform the life of the world around. It is an essentially passive consciousness that is inwardly free of the limitations of the outer existence and perhaps unaffected by them, but is basically impotent to fundamentally alter or remove those limitations. In contrast, the Supermind is fundamentally a dynamic and creative spiritual consciousness; it combines omniscience with omnipotence. It is due to this dynamic character that its ramifications for humanity and the world are so transformative.

It was mentioned at the outset that the establishment of the supramental consciousness on earth was the primary work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Avatars or Divine Incarnations who came on earth to achieve this decisive step forward in the earth's evolution. We can cite a few statements from them that convey this. Following the manifestation in 1956, the Mother wrote:

29 February—29 March

Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled. (CWM 15: 190)

This affirms that this event was the fulfillment of the Lord's will and executed by the Divine Mother. It fulfilled their promise to manifest the supramental consciousness on earth. It indicates two decisive events: that a new light, the supramental light, has descended on earth, and that a new world is born. We will later have more to say about this birth of a new world, but here

we can just highlight this statement and its suggestion of the start of an entirely new creation on earth, as if one emerging out of an obscure womb after long preparation and development, carrying within its incipient form the promise of a full expression of its divine possibilities.

The Promise

This promise (or prophesy or stated aim) of the supramental manifestation was made in many writings and conversations throughout Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's long spiritual collaboration, which began in 1920 and continued even after Sri Aurobindo's passing in 1950, for Mother continued to be in a close inner communication and working with him after he left his physical body. We may quote a few passages from one of Sri Aurobindo's letters that point to the nature of their promise:

What we are doing, if and when we succeed, will be a beginning, not a completion. It is the foundation of a new consciousness on earth — a consciousness with infinite possibilities of manifestation....

It is not intended to supramentalise humanity at large, but to establish the principle of the supramental consciousness in the earth-evolution. If that is done, all that is needed will be evolved by the supramental Power itself. It is not therefore important that the mission should be widespread. What is important is that the thing should be done at all in however small a number; that is the only difficulty. (CWSA 28: 288–89)

Another letter reiterates and elaborates on the same points, adding some important context:

The descent of the supramental means only that the Power will be there in the earth consciousness as a living force just as the thinking mental and the higher mental are already there. But an animal cannot take advantage of the presence of the thinking mental Power or an undeveloped man of the presence of the higher mental Power — so too everybody will not be able to take advantage of the presence of the supramental Power. I have also often enough said that it will be at first for the few, not for the whole earth, — only there will be a growing influence of it on the earth life. (CWSA 28: 290)

Regarding this growing influence on the earth life, Sri Aurobindo asserts that eventually it will have an effect on physical matter, plant and animal life as well as human beings, and suggests that the entry of the supramental principle into this mix will “change the whole balance of the earth-nature” (CWSA 28: 299). In another letter he indicates “it will necessarily have a powerful influence on the whole earth-life” (CWSA 28: 290). But as he said, this is likely to be “a growing influence” taking place over an unspecified time.

The last prose writings of Sri Aurobindo appeared as a series of articles in *The Bulletin of Physical Education*² in 1949–1950 and were later posthumously published in book form under the title *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*. There Sri Aurobindo gives some indication of what this “powerful influence on the whole earth-life” could entail. He says,

One result of the intervention of Supermind in the earth-nature, the descent of the supreme creative Truth-Power, might well be a change in the law of evolution, its method

2. Later re-named *The Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*.

and its arrangement: a larger element of the principle of evolution through knowledge might enter into the forces of the material universe.... If man began to develop the powers and means of a higher knowledge in something like fullness, if the developing animal opened the door of his mentality to beginnings of conscious thought and even a rudimentary reason, — at his highest he is not so irrevocably far from that even now, — if the plant developed its first subconscious reactions and attained to some kind of primary nervous sensitiveness, if Matter, which is a blind form of the Spirit, were to become more alive with the hidden power within it and to offer more readily the secret sense of things, the occult realities it covers, as for instance, the record of the past it always preserves even in its dumb inconscience or the working of its involved forces and invisible movements revealing veiled powers in material nature to a subtler generalised perception of the new human intelligence, this would be an immense change promising greater changes in the future, but it would mean only an uplifting and not a disturbance of the universal order. Evolution would itself evolve, but it would not be perturbed or founder. (CWSA 13: 570–71)

Regarding the probable influence of the descent of the Supermind on humanity, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

Especially it could not fail to exercise an immense influence on mankind as a whole, even a radical change in the aspect and prospect of its existence here, even if this power had no other capital result on the material world in which it had come down to intervene. One cannot but conclude that the influence, the change made would be far-reaching, even enormous: it would not only establish the Supermind and a supramental race of beings upon the earth, it could bring about an uplifting and transforming change in mind itself and, as an inevitable consequence, in the consciousness of man, the mental being, and would equally bring about a radical and transforming change in the principles and forms of his living, his ways of action and the whole build and tenor of his life. (CWSA 13: 568)

He further elaborates:

But the result of the supramental descent need not be limited to those who could thus open themselves entirely and it need not be limited to the supramental change; there could also be a minor or secondary transformation of the mental being within a freed and perfected scope of the mental nature.... [T]here could emerge a true mind liberated and capable of the free and utmost perfection of itself and its instruments, a life governed by the free and illumined mind, a body responsive to the light and able to carry out all that the free mind and will could demand of it. This change might happen not only in the few, but extend and generalise itself in the race. This possibility, if fulfilled, would mean that the human dream of perfection, perfection of itself, of its purified and enlightened nature, of all its ways of action and living, would be no longer a dream but a truth that could be made real and humanity lifted out of the hold on it of inconscience and ignorance. (CWSA 13: 565–66)

In one of his letters, Sri Aurobindo also indicates that “in human life intuition would become a greater and more developed force than it now is and the other intermediate

powers between Mind and Supermind would become also more common and develop an organised action” (CWSA 28: 291). He suggests that these intermediate powers would become established in a hierarchy of spiritual beings intermediate between human beings with a mental consciousness and a new supramental species that would embody the supramental consciousness:

[I]t will confirm in possession of terrestrial birth the overmind, the intuition and the other gradations of the spiritual nature-force and establish a race of gnostic beings and a hierarchy, a shining ladder of ascending degrees and successive constituent formations of the gnostic light and power in earth-nature. For the description of gnosis applies to all consciousness that is based upon Truth of being and not upon the Ignorance or Nescience. All life and living beings ready to rise beyond the mental ignorance, but not ready yet for the supramental height, would find in a sort of echelon or a scale with overlapping degrees their assured basis, their intermediate steps of self-formation, their expression of realised capacity of spiritual existence on the way to the supreme Reality. (CWSA 22: 1003–04)

In addition to this growing divinization of earth and humanity, there will be established on earth a new supramental being who would take the lead at the evolutionary summit among earth’s creatures. As Sri Aurobindo says,

As there has been established on earth a mental Consciousness and Power which shapes a race of mental beings and takes up into itself all of earthly nature that is ready for the change, so now there will be established on earth a gnostic Consciousness and Power which will shape a race of gnostic spiritual beings and take up into itself all of earth-nature that is ready for this new transformation. It will also receive into itself from above, progressively, from its own domain of perfect light and power and beauty all that is ready to descend from that domain into terrestrial being. (CWSA 22: 1002)

Regarding the nature of this new species of being, Sri Aurobindo has written at length in *The Life Divine* in the chapter “The Gnostic Being”. A few passages will give a sense of its exalted divine status:

The gnostic individual would be the consummation of the spiritual man; his whole way of being, thinking, living, acting would be governed by the power of a vast universal spirituality. All the trinities of the Spirit would be real to his self-awareness and realised in his inner life. All his existence would be fused into oneness with the transcendent and universal Self and Spirit; all his action would originate from and obey the supreme Self and Spirit’s divine governance of Nature. (CWSA 22: 1007)

A complete self-knowledge in all things and at all moments is the gift of the supramental gnosis and with it a complete self-mastery, not merely in the sense of control of Nature but in the sense of a power of perfect self-expression in Nature. Whatever knowledge of self there would be, would be perfectly embodied in the will of the self, the will perfectly embodied in the action of the self; the result would be the self’s complete dynamic self-formulation in its own nature. (CWSA 22: 1008)

Delight of the manifestation of the Spirit in its truth of being would be the sense of the gnostic life. All its movements would be a formulation of the truth of the spirit, but also of the joy of the spirit, — an affirmation of spiritual existence, an affirmation of spiritual consciousness, an affirmation of spiritual delight of being....One in self with all, the supramental being will seek the delight of self-manifestation of the Spirit in himself but equally the delight of the Divine in all: he will have the cosmic joy and will be a power for bringing the bliss of the spirit, the joy of being to others; for their joy will be part of his own joy of existence. (CWSA 22: 1010–11)

The Transition

We have seen that the decisive manifestation of the supramental consciousness into the earth atmosphere occurred in 1956 and we have seen Sri Aurobindo's prophetic characterizations of its eventual results, but there are questions of how and when that new creation is going to materialize here on earth. For when we look around us, we still see wars, famines, existential crises, ignorance, evil and cruelty. If it were not for our faith in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and their words, one might well question whether it is not a fantasy. We noted earlier that Sri Aurobindo had indicated that "it will be at first for the few, not for the whole earth, — only there will be a growing influence of it on the earth-life". In another letter he elaborates: "[W]e have always said that the whole of humanity will not change the moment there is the Descent. But what can be done is to establish the higher principle in the earth consciousness in such a way that it will remain and go on strengthening and spreading itself in the earth-life. That is how a new principle in the evolution must necessarily work." (CWSA 28: 298) And another letter brings in a related important point: "There is no proposal to transform the whole earth consciousness — it is simply to introduce the supramental principle there which will transform those who can receive and embody it." (CWSA 28: 298)

The following conversation by the Mother reiterates this availability of the supramental force for those who open themselves to it, while also giving some indication of a timeline for its more general effects:

Sri Aurobindo has said that as the development rises in the scale of consciousness, the movement becomes more and more rapid, and that when the Spirit or the Supermind intervenes, it can go much faster. Therefore we may hope that in a few centuries, the first supramental race will appear.

But even that is rather disconcerting for some people, for they think it contradicts what Sri Aurobindo has always promised: that the time has come for the supramental transformation to be possible.... But we must not confuse a supramental transformation with the appearing of a new race.

What Sri Aurobindo promised and what naturally interests us, we who are here now, is that the time has come when some beings among the elite of humanity, who fulfil the conditions necessary for spiritualisation, will be able to transform their bodies with the help of the supramental Force, Consciousness and Light, so as no longer to be animal-men but become supermen...

There is no longer any doubt that those who will fulfil or who now fulfil the conditions are on the way to this transformation. (CWM 8: 322)

The Mother highlights that the supramental light and force are now available to human beings who fulfill the conditions necessary for spiritualization enabling them to undergo a transformation of their physical bodies. These conditions are not specified here, but perhaps are those succinctly described on the first page of Sri Aurobindo's book *The Mother*: "There must be a total and sincere surrender; there must be an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power; there must be a constant and integral choice of the Truth that is descending; a constant and integral rejection of the falsehood of the mental, vital and physical Powers and Appearances that still rule the earth-Nature." (CWSA 32: 3)

Still, the question of *how* such a radical transformation will unfold needs to be clarified. Of course, the Mother continued to work on this problem from the time of the supramental manifestation in 1956 until she left her body in 1973 and left behind an extensive record of her discoveries and progress which gives us some insights. For want of space we can't delve too deeply into that, but we can point out what appears to be an important thread that seems to run through much of it. The Mother had a now famous inner experience on 3 February 1958 of the "supramental ship" that highlights this thread. Briefly, she experiences a supramental ship transporting people between our world and the supramental world, and aboard which these people were undergoing preparation and training before disembarking at the supramental world. The substance of the ship was supramental, and the people on the ship, whom she recognized from the Ashram and elsewhere, had in various degrees a supramental form, the degree of their transmutation being the determinant of whether they were allowed to disembark. Her description of this experience is detailed and lengthy and well worth reading, but I will not repeat it here; I only quote here essential parts of her introduction to the experience which give us insight into the nature of the transition that humanity is undergoing:

Between the beings of the supramental world and men, almost the same separation exists as between men and animals... Only when the link of consciousness is established shall we see it — and even then only the part of our being which has undergone transformation in this way will be able to see it as it is — otherwise the two worlds would remain apart like the animal and human worlds.

The experience I had on the third of February is a proof of this. Before that I had had an individual subjective contact with the supramental world, whereas on the third of February I moved in it concretely, as concretely as I once used to walk in Paris, in a world *that exists in itself*, outside all subjectivity.

It is like a bridge being thrown between the two worlds...

The supramental world exists permanently and I am there permanently in a supramental body. I had the proof of this even today when my earth-consciousness went there and remained there consciously between two and three o'clock in the afternoon. Now, I know that what is lacking for the two worlds to unite in a constant and conscious relation, is an intermediate zone between the physical world as it is and the supramental world as it is. This

zone remains to be built, both in the individual consciousness and the objective world, and it is being built. When I used to speak of the new world which is being created, it was of this intermediary zone that I was speaking. And similarly, when I am on this side, that is, in the field of the physical consciousness, and I see the supramental power, the supramental light and substance constantly penetrating matter, it is the construction of this zone which I see and in which I participate. (CWM 9: 271–72)

The primary point about this experience which I want to highlight is that the supramental world, the new creation, already exists, it is only the link in consciousness between our human consciousness and world and the supramental consciousness and world that needs to be established. A secondary point is that she could see the supramental power, light and substance constantly penetrating matter, and establishing this link. The following year, on 6 October 1959, the Mother discusses a related experience that further illustrates and amplifies the primary point that the supramental world already exists, and has a relation to ours. She explains,

For the West with all its outward development a few centuries may be needed before the junction between the worlds can be made. And yet, these two worlds – the physical world and the world of Truth – are not distant from one another. They are as if superimposed. The world of Truth is there, close by, like a lining of the other.

Shortly before the 15th of August I had a unique experience that exemplifies all this....

I found myself in another world, but not far away (I was not in a total trance). This world was almost as substantial as the physical world. There were rooms – Sri Aurobindo's room with the bed he rests on – and he was living there, he was there all the time: it was his abode. Even my room was there, with a large mirror like the one I have here, combs, all kinds of things. And the substance of these objects was almost as dense as in the physical world, but they shone with their own light. It was not translucent, not transparent, not radiant, but self-luminous. The various objects and the material of the rooms did not have this same opacity as the physical objects here, they were not dry and hard as in the physical world we know....

And when I awoke, I didn't have this feeling of returning from afar and of having to re-enter my body, as I usually do. No, it was simply as though I were in this other world, then I took a step backwards and found myself here again. It took me a good half an hour to understand that this world here existed as much as the other and that I was no longer on the other side but here, in the world of falsehood. I had forgotten everything – people, things, what I had to do; everything had gone, as if it had no reality at all.

You see, it's not as if this world of Truth had to be created from nothing: it is fully ready, it is there, like a lining of our own present world. Everything is there, EVERYTHING is there. (Talk of 6 October 1959)

This experience and the Mother's interpretation of it clarifies that the new creation, the supramental world that is manifesting on earth, already exists; it does not have to be created out of the materials of our world, or our limited consciousness. And it not only exists, but it is

very close to our world, like a lining of our present world. But this transition zone between the two worlds, as she described in the earlier experience, remains to be built, and this is the crucial issue. We have always supposed there was a heaven and earth that coexisted, but the difficulty was to create or manifest that heaven on earth. The one capital improvement of the Mother's experience over this heaven and earth scenario is that now at least this heaven seems to be nearly physical, with the same mirrors and combs, and with a material almost as dense as in the physical world. But how will this persistent divide between these worlds finally be bridged? Here there seem to be two complementary movements, from the side of the world of Truth and from the side of the world of Falsehood. A short extract from a long conversation she had on 25 March 1965 describes the movement from the side of the world of Truth:

This has repeatedly been my experience lately, with a vision and a conviction, the conviction of an experience: the two vibrations [of the two worlds] are like this (*concomitant gesture indicating a superimposition and infiltration*), all the time – all the time, all the time.

Maybe the sense of wonder comes when the quantity that has infiltrated is large enough to be perceptible. But I have an impression – a very acute impression – that this phenomenon is going on all the time, all the time, everywhere, in a minuscule, infinitesimal way (*gesture of a twinkling infiltration*), and that in certain circumstances or conditions that are visible (visible to this vision: it's a sort of luminous swelling – I can't explain), then, the mass of infiltration is sufficient to give the impression of a miracle. But otherwise, it's something going on all the time, all the time, all the time, continuously, in the world (*same twinkling gesture*), like an infinitesimal amount of Falsehood replaced by Light ... Falsehood replaced by Light ... constantly. (Talk of 25 March 1965)

And then from the side of our world of Falsehood:

In fact, anything, everything that is ready to receive even a particle or a particular aspect of the supramental consciousness and light must *automatically* receive it. And the effects of this consciousness and light will be innumerable, for they will certainly be adapted to the possibilities, the capacity of each one according to the sincerity of his aspiration.

The more total the consecration and the intenser the aspiration, the more integral and intense can be the result. But the effect of the supramental action will be countless in its manifestations — multiple, innumerable, infinitely varied, not necessarily following a precise line which is the same for all. That is impossible. For it is contrary to the very nature of the supramental consciousness.

The very quality of the atmosphere has changed. (CWM 8: 177–78)

These two complementary movements are essentially the same as those asserted by Sri Aurobindo in his opening sentence of the book *The Mother*: “There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.” Sri Aurobindo follows this by saying that “the supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and Truth” and then he sets “the sole conditions under which the highest Force will descend” (CWSA 32: 3). The Mother's description of these movements, however, presents

a somewhat more reassuring and promising perspective. For she indicates that from the side of Truth there is a constant infiltration or substitution of the vibrations of Falsehood in our world by the vibrations of Truth, “everywhere, in a minuscule, infinitesimal way”. And from the side of Falsehood she indicates that “everything that is ready to receive even a particle or a particular aspect of the supramental consciousness and light must automatically receive it” and that it will “be adapted to the possibilities, the capacity of each one according to the sincerity of his aspiration”. The fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo’s conditions laid out in the first chapter of *The Mother* may seem daunting, whereas here we see that the Grace works with our limitations and adapts itself to our present stage and transforms us gradually. Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo’s dictum stands, that in the end our full surrender to the Divine is needed to entirely transform our physical nature.

The Present Circumstances

Due to the acute political, social, and environmental crises that we are facing in the world, it is perhaps appropriate to close with a few comments by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother about the ramifications of the supramental manifestation for these current conditions. Indeed, some hold that it is due to the action of the supramental Force manifesting on earth that the conditions are becoming so intolerable and dangerous. Regarding the possibility for cataclysmic changes in the world, Sri Aurobindo says,

There will necessarily be great changes but they are not bound to be catastrophic. When there is a strong pressure from Overmind forces for change, then there are likely to be catastrophes because of the resistance and clash of forces. The supramental has a greater, in its fullness a complete mastery of things and power of harmonisation which can overcome resistance by other means than dramatic struggle and violence. (CWSA 28: 292–93)

The Mother also provides an interesting perspective on this issue, and whereas she is speaking primarily about the rise of personal difficulties, it would seem to apply equally to our societal crises:

But now that person, who is perhaps a bit impatient, tells me this: “Why have the difficulties increased for quite a large number of sadhaks?” (*Mother puts the paper down forcefully on the table.*) Who told you that it is not because you have become more conscious! — that all your difficulties were there before, only you did not know it?... If you see more clearly and see things which are not very pretty, it is not the fault of the Supermind, it is your fault! It gives you a light, a mirror in which you can see yourself better than you did before, and you are a little troubled because it is not always very pretty? But what can I do?

And this person concludes: “Doesn’t the supramental Force work here in spite of all the obstacles the unregenerate human nature puts up against it?” Truly, I hope it does! — for otherwise, nothing could be done, the world would never be regenerated. But I have explained to you why it seems more difficult to you. It is because you are a little more conscious now and see things you did not see before.

There is yet another reason. When the Force which is at work is stronger, more insistent, naturally what resists, resists as strongly. And if instead — it is here I have to say something that's not very pleasant — if instead of being hypnotised by your little difficulties, your little inconveniences, your small discomforts, your “big” defects, if instead of being hypnotised by all that, you tried to see the other side, how much more powerful the Force is, the Grace more active, the Help more tangible; in a word, if you were a little less egoistic and less concentrated on yourselves and had a little wider vision in which you could include things that don't concern you personally, perhaps your view of the problem would change. (CWM 8: 219–20)

One point in this statement worth emphasizing, perhaps the key point to take away from this essay regarding the immediate consequences of the supramental manifestation for us personally, is “how much more powerful the Force is, the Grace more active, the Help more tangible”.

One final advice pertinent to concern about the present crises was discussed by the Mother in reference to the August 15, 1967 Darshan in which she stood for several minutes on the balcony of her upstairs room looking upon those assembled on the streets below. Afterwards, she said:

And in the evening, at the balcony, there was a crowd. I believe it was the biggest crowd that we have ever had: it spread out into all the streets; as far as I could see, the streets were full of people. Then I came out, and as I came out, there arose from this crowd like a... something between an imploring, a prayer and a protest about the condition the world is in, particularly this country. And that rose up in waves. I looked at it, and then (it was extremely insistent) I said to myself: “It is not my day, it is Sri Aurobindo's day.” I went like this (*gesture of withdrawal*) and I put Sri Aurobindo in front. And when he was put in front, standing in front he simply said, simply: “The Lord knows best what he is doing.” (*Mother laughs*) Immediately, I began to smile (I did not laugh, but I began to smile) and there came the same peace as in the morning.

There you are.

“The Lord knows best what he is doing”, with his most perfect sense of humour. And immediately everything became calm. (CWM 15: 403–04)

—Larry Seidlitz

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

*COMPILATIONS FROM THE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO
AND THE MOTHER*

All India Magazine :

The Avatar—Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry
42 pp, Rs 60, ISBN: 978-81-7060-450-1

Size: 14 x 20 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Never Despair—Words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry
42 pp, Rs 60, ISBN: 978-81-7060-449-5

Size: 14 x 20 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Divine Possibility:

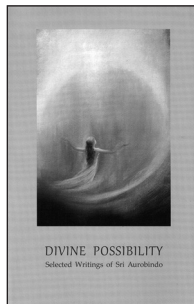
Selected Writings of Sri Aurobindo

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

143 pp, Rs 130, ISBN: 978-93-5210-281-5

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The brief passages collected in this compilation cover the central features of Sri Aurobindo's vision of life and his method of spiritual practice, the Integral Yoga. Drawn from letters to his disciples and from his major prose works such as *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and *The Human Cycle*, the selections focus on all aspects of life and *sadhana* and in their profundity demonstrate a beauty and elegance of expression characteristic of Sri Aurobindo's style.



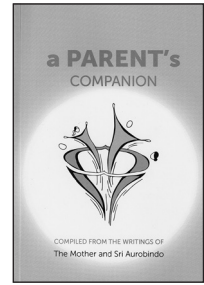
A Parent's Companion—Compiled from the Writings of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo

Publisher: AuroPublications, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry

130 pp, Rs 180, ISBN: 978-81-7060-440-2

Size: 14 x 21 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This selection from the works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is a parent's mini-guide to raising children, while also touching on a variety of allied topics. A complementary volume to *A Student's Companion*, which encouraged students



to discover their true aim in life by growing the spirit within, this volume rests on the premise that parents must act in accordance with a high ideal so that their child grows to reflect this ideal in himself. The passages touch upon topics preparatory to the arrival of the child, followed by those that exhort the importance of a parent being a living example to one's child. The next two chapters form the bulk of the volume, dealing with an integral child-rearing and what a conscious family life is all about. The final chapter rounds out the work with passages on what the higher life is according to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

OTHER AUTHORS

Talks by Nirodbaran (April 1971–September 1971)

—Edited by Sunayana and Maurice

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

218 pp, Rs 280, ISBN: 978-93-5210-288-4

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

In this new, third instalment of the talks given at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education prior to Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary in 1972, Nirodbaran continues to share his reminiscences. Quoting extensively from their correspondence on subjects as varied as his work as a doctor in the Ashram, his budding prowess as a poet under Sri Aurobindo's tutelage, and questions and

answers on the practice of the Integral Yoga, Nirod evokes the humour that characterised his long relationship with the Master as well as the words of encouragement and spiritual support constantly offered to him. During this period of talks, two *sadhaks* were invited by Nirod as guest speakers. Kireet Joshi spoke on how he came to the Ashram and Arindam Basu spoke on a few aspects of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

See review on page 19

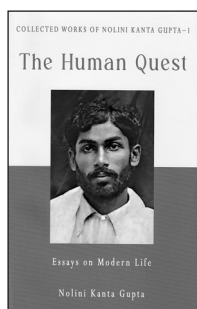
The Human Quest: Essays on Modern Life
(*Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol I*)

—Nolini Kanta Gupta

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry

490 pp, Rs 575, ISBN: 978-93-5210-273-0

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



Comprising five books of essays that deal with the problems of humankind in today's world and the prospect of a brighter future, this is Volume I of The Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta. First published between 1923 and 1955 the books, *The Coming Race*, *The*

Malady of the Century, *Towards a New Society*, *The Quest and the Goal*, and *The March of Civilisation*, address the urgent demand for a fresh approach to all aspects of life, an approach that will prepare for the emergence of a new society based on unity and harmony instead of division and strife. They point the way through some of the most pressing sociological and political problems of the day. The appendix includes his editorials from the quarterly journal *The Advent* published between 1944 and 1951.

The English of Savitri, Volume 12
(Books Six, Eight, and Nine)

Comments on the language of Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri

—Shraddhavan

Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville

433 pp, Rs 600, ISBN: 978-81-955260-3-1

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

Volume Twelve, the last volume of the series *The English of Savitri* covers Book Six, *The Book of Fate*, Book Eight, *The Book of Death*, and Book Nine, *The Book of Eternal Night*. In Book Six, the sage Narad arrives to reveal the foreknowledge of Satyavan's death, and his dialogue with Savitri's mother deals with the human need to answer the questions of grief, pain, and suffering. In Book Eight, *The Book of Death*, Narad's prophecy is fulfilled: Death comes and takes away Satyavan's soul, ending Part Two of the poem. Part Three opens with Book Nine, which describes how Savitri follows her husband into Death's territory and how she has to suffer the darkest Eternal Night, the black void that signals a denial of all existence. Savitri answers all of Death's attempts to scorn and mock her and, by the end of Book Nine, she has survived that dreadful experience of darkness and death that threatened to swallow her and finds instead, as the night is fading, the gradual return of light and hope.

(previously introduced in the August 2023 issue)

See review on page 22

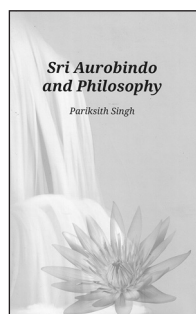
Sri Aurobindo and Philosophy

—Pariksith Singh

Publisher: BluOne Ink LLP, Noida

410 pp, Rs 995, ISBN: 978-93-92209-01-7

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover



In the first few short essays that introduce this book, the author sets out to describe Sri Aurobindo as a *darshanik*, one who does not speculate and intellectualise, but who directly realises or spiritually and intuitively perceives the truth of existence. Sri Aurobindo expanded this traditional role to include Western thought

and truths in a universal synthesis. In a series of very personal mini essays, he writes on Sri Aurobindo's role of *darshanik* vis-à-vis Indian philosophy, Western philosophy, linguistic and literary philosophy, and the philosophies of psychology, religion, history, and what he terms the political thought for humanity's future. Singh calls Sri Aurobindo a philosopher in action, who not only spoke the truth for his times but for the next few hundred years, calling men to awaken to their highest possibilities and showing the way it was to be done.

Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery

A sequence of development

—Narad (Richard Eggenberger)

Publisher: PRISMA, Auroville

225 pp, Rs 450

Size: 14 x 21 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

A semi-autobiographical and historical account of the development of the Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery by Narad, a central figure in both the planning and execution of the gardens, this is an eclectic collection of notes, letters, articles, and photos from a variety of sources. It includes correspondence between Narad and the Mother as well as notes and letters with other central workers and government agencies involved. The text covers joyful moments of harmony and progress, the recurring obstacles put forth by the nature of the physical work, and the complications that arose between factions that disagreed over vision and implementation. It also provides a wider perspective on life in and around the Matrimandir site, the Matrimandir Nursery, and the gardens.

(previously introduced in the August 2023 issue)

See review on page 26

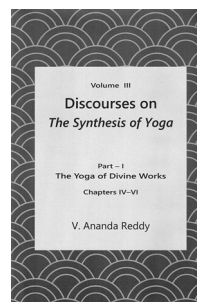
Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Volume III

Part I: The Yoga of Divine Works (Chapters 4–6)

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry
529 pp, Rs 645, ISBN: 978-93-85391-33-0
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The book, a transcription of the author's talks, covers Chapters Four, Five, and Six of *The Yoga of Divine Works*. In Chapter Four, he explains that Sri Aurobindo uses the word sacrifice as it refers to the sacrifice of the Divine, the consciousness of the Divine that has descended to become this material universe in order that it may hasten the perfection of the creation. Dr Reddy discusses at length the Purusha/Prakriti duality and the tritecta of a sacrifice of works, of love and adoration, and of knowledge. Chapters Five and Six address the crucial question of what kind of work should be taken up during the preparation and purification of our beings and emphasises that only the growing influence of the psychic being can give meaning to all our life, our works, and knowledge.



Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Volume IV *Part I: The Yoga of Divine Works (Chapters 7–13)*

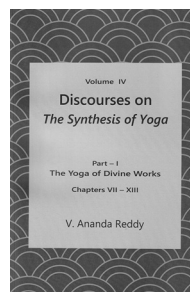
—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

410 pp, Rs 465, ISBN: 978-93-85391-35-4

Size: 14 x 22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



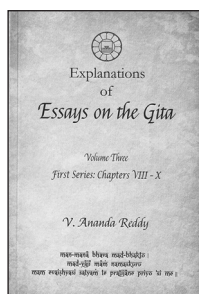
The book, a transcription of the author's talks, covers the last seven chapters of "The Yoga of Divine Works". Some of the concepts discussed include the need to found one's action as a doer of works on the living sense of an increasing consciousness of all existence as one, and the necessity to rid oneself

of egoistic activity and act in self-consecration, in complete equality. The next step is the stance of the impersonal witness that maintains a position behind the action of the three *gunas* and looks beyond the working of Nature to the unveiling of the Transcendent Divine as the true Master of works in this creation. Only there can the being exist pure and free. In a long chapter on “The Divine Work” the author brings to our attention the nature of the work after a *sadbhak* has established the perfect equality and lives in the knowledge of the Master of works.

Explanations of Essays on the Gita, Volume III First Series: Chapters 8–10

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry
177 pp, Rs 265, ISBN: 978-93-85391-34-7
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

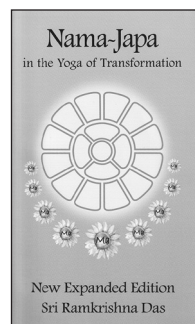


In these talks delivered in 2007 and 2008, the author examines Chapters Eight, Nine, and Ten of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*. The first two chapters, “Sankhya and Yoga” and “Sankhya Yoga and Vedanta” deal with philosophic and metaphysical subjects. The author points out that the Gita's foundation is Vedantic; it is primarily a practical system of yoga. In the first of these chapters, Sri Aurobindo brings clarity to the differences between Sankhya, Yoga, and the Gita, and in the second he delivers a synthesis of Sankhya, Yoga, and Vedanta. In Chapter Ten, “The Yoga of the Intelligent Will”, the author comments on Sri Aurobindo's understanding of the deep truth of the Gita. Sri Krishna's yoga will free Arjuna from his fears, from all bondage of the soul to its works. Commanding Arjuna to offer his thoughts, his love and adoration, and his sacrifice to Him, he reveals the message of the Gita: the act of surrender is the surest, safest path to the Divine.

Nama-Japa in the Yoga of Transformation —Ramkrishna Das

Publisher: Auro Seva Trust, Pondicherry
152 pp, Rs 210, ISBN: 978-93-5913-768-1
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This new, expanded edition of *Nama-Japa in the Yoga of Transformation*, by Sri Ramkrishna Das, explains what *nama-japa* in the Integral Yoga means, and elucidates on its practice. The author highlights the Mother and the use of her name in *nama-japa*, describing how she herself found *nama-japa* indispensable for the transformation of her body. Part II, about the same number of pages as the original edition, is drawn from a *sadbhak*'s diary maintained during the last ten years of Ramkrishna's life. It features more questions and answers concerning *nama-japa* in the practice of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and also includes a few personal anecdotes and experiences that highlight Ramkrishna's personality and the nature of his *sadhana*.

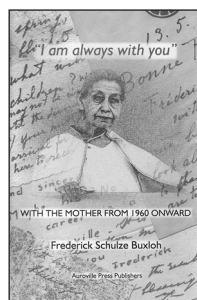


“I Am Always With You”

With The Mother from 1960 Onward

—Frederick Schulze Buxloh

Publisher: Auroville Press Publishers, Auroville
187 pp, Rs 440, ISBN: 978-81-955314-9-3
Size: 15 x 23 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



Both a personal memoir and a partial history of Auroville's early years, this book comprises mostly messages and letters between the Mother and Frederick regarding his *sadhana* and his purpose and place in Auroville. It is also a record of his revelatory dreams, inner experiences, moments

of crisis and surrender, and efforts to be a true soldier in his work for the Mother. Detailed histories and meditative soliloquies combine to create a story of how one soul came to the Mother and remained to help build the community of Auroville.

Jewels from the Gita

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

198 pp, Rs 280, ISBN: 978-93-85391-09-5

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This volume contains a transcription of short, informal talks by Dr V. Ananda Reddy on Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on Sri Krishna and the Bhagavad Gita. The book is divided into three sections, each one dealing with Sri Aurobindo's reading of a facet of Sri Krishna's personality or his philosophy: Vasudeva Krishna, Jnaneshwara Krishna, and Yogeshwara Krishna. The author picks out for discussion Sri Aurobindo's reading of Krishna's personality as Vasudeva (Section One), the latter's Yoga of Knowledge (Section Two), and the concluding section on Krishna as the archetypal Yogi (Section Three).

Specifically, Section One has mostly to do with the epiphany as recounted in the Gita; the chapters in Section Two deal with the mysteries of birth, death, rebirth and the nature of the soul, and karma. The concluding section orients the reader to the significance of this text for modern times.

See review on page 24

How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: Volume 5

Thirty-seven True Stories of Sadhaks and Devotees

—Shyam Kumari

Publisher: Overman Foundation, Kolkata

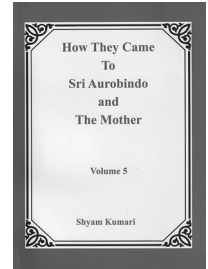
392 pp, Rs 500

ISBN: 978-81-960391-0-3

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

In this volume in the series *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, the author has

gathered thirty-seven accounts that recount the individual journeys of those who have found their way to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Some of these stories have already appeared in the journals *Mother India* and *Collaboration*; some have been compiled from published books and articles, such as the reminiscences of Amrita, Esha, Amal Kiran, and Surendranath Jauhar. The remainder are based on interviews or were submitted in written form to the author. Although most of them were written decades ago, there is still a freshness to these chronicles. The aspirants came from India and beyond, but all tell the marvel of their spiritual awakening and their eventual arrival at the feet of their gurus.



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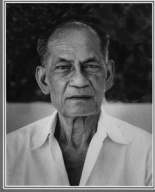
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BOOK REVIEWS



TALKS BY NIRODBARAN
at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education
April 1971 – September 1971

Talks by Nirodbaran (April 1971–September 1971)

—Edited by Sunayana and Maurice

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department,
Pondicherry

218 pp, Rs 280, ISBN: 978-93-5210-288-4

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The present book is a continuation of the series of talks delivered by Nirodbaran to the students of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in 1971. A total number of twenty-one talks were delivered by him from April to September 1971 out of which nineteen were based on his epistolary exchanges with Sri Aurobindo and two were delivered on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. While many of these letters can be classified as medical correspondence the rest deal with a host of interesting themes such as karmayoga, the difference between yogic and ordinary action, reason and intuition, opening oneself, the importance of morale during illness, remembering the Mother at work, vital relations and vital thoughts, the attitude of doctors at the Ashram, the inferiority and superiority of women, the supramental descent and death, overcoming the perils of falls in yoga, and Avatarhood, to name a few.

But the most remarkable feature of this book is Sri Aurobindo's delightful sense of humour, which can be found in abundance in these epistolary exchanges. Those who have read Nirodbaran's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* in two volumes are well aware of the humorous side of Sri Aurobindo's personality. Although the text of some of the letters of *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* have been included in *Talks by Nirodbaran*, such is the beauty of these letters that even a reader who has read them multiple times in the past would surely find them as refreshing as ever. Sri Aurobindo was not quite known as a smiling Guru but he surely knew how to make others smile.

Let's quote a few passages from the humorous letters for the benefit of the reader:

Nirodbaran: At times I wonder why the Divine is so meticulously particular as regards contagion, infection. Is he vulnerable to the viruses, bacilli, microbes, etc.?

Sri Aurobindo: And why on earth should you expect the Divine to feed himself on germs and bacilli and poisons of all kinds? Singular theology yours! (p. 10)

*

Nirodbaran: Last night I tried to compose a poem. It was a failure; I fell asleep over its first two lines!

Sri Aurobindo: You call it a failure — when you have discovered a new soporific. (pp. 15–16)

*

Nirodbaran: Why are we made up of so many contradictory elements: one aspect has aspiration towards Him, religion, morality, aesthetic qualities; the other a tremendous pull towards baser elements...?

Sri Aurobindo: It takes many ingredients to make a nice pudding. (Ibid.)

*

Nirodbaran: Shall I adopt the surrealist method, i.e., keep quiet for a while and whatever strikes first, go ahead with it, only be careful in case of poisons? You remember once I told you of this method and you cried, “Good Lord, no!”?

Sri Aurobindo: I did and I repeat it; I don’t want this Asram transferred to the next world by your powerful agency. (p. 76)

*

Nirodbaran: I wonder why you flared up at the idea of my using the surrealist method.

Sri Aurobindo: I didn’t flare up. I was cold with horror. (Ibid.)

*

Nirodbaran: ... I hear from reliable authority that the Supramental descent is very near. Is it true, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: I am very glad to hear it on reliable authority. It is a great relief...(p. 78)

*

Nirodbaran: No luck about intuition?

Sri Aurobindo: None! Too thorny a subject to tackle without leisure and space. (Ibid.)

*

Nirodbaran: Is the Divine so helpless against these forces or beings?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you expect the Divine to force a man into heaven against his own will? (p. 131)

*

Nirodbaran: People are saying that it [the Supramental] has come down into the physical, evidenced by great peace and calm. Is this then that calm and peace or the deluge before the new creation?

Sri Aurobindo: Into whose physical? I shall be very glad to know—for I myself have not got so far, otherwise I would not have a queasy eye. But if you know anybody who has got it (the Supramental in the physical, not the eye) tell me like a shot. I will acclaim him “Grand First Supramental” at once. (p. 218)

At the same time, we come across important guidance on the path of Yoga from Sri Aurobindo. Although these replies were given nine decades ago, their relevance has not diminished even a

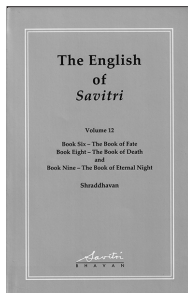
bit. For instance, on page 127, we find Nirodbaran asking Sri Aurobindo: 'How to remember the Mother during work? I have tried to follow a mental rule, but it is not a success. Or is it the inner consciousness that remembers while the outer is busy?' Sri Aurobindo replied: 'One starts by a mental effort—afterwards it is an inner consciousness that is formed which need not be always thinking of the Mother because it is always conscious of her.' On another occasion, Nirodbaran asked Sri Aurobindo: 'What is meant exactly by "opening oneself"? Calling you, praying to you, remembering you, etc.?' Sri Aurobindo answered: 'These are acts of the mind, openness is a state of consciousness which keeps it turned to the Mother, free from other movements, expecting and able to receive what may come from the Divine.' (pp. 124–25)

During the course of these talks, we find Nirodbaran at times sharing certain vignettes about some of his contemporaries. Through these interesting anecdotes, memories of some of the long-forgotten members of the Ashram are refreshed. The book also contains an autobiographical talk by Dr Kireet Joshi in which he recalls how his association with Sri Aurobindo Ashram started and a philosophical deliberation by Prof. Arabinda Basu in which he discusses Sri Aurobindo as a Rishi and an Avatar.

Talks by Nirodbaran provides a vivid glimpse of the intimate relationship Nirodbaran had with Sri Aurobindo. Hundreds of spiritual guides across the globe have had thousands of disciples but seldom in the history of spirituality have we come across the unique bond of love, affection and indulgence that Sri Aurobindo had with his disciples. Here was one Guru with whom they could take liberties, ask any question under the sun and argue incessantly. And Sri Aurobindo – the all-compassionate Guru – instead of getting miffed bore these epistolary attacks indulgently. Reading these letters not only rejuvenates a tired heart but also makes us realize how fortunate the disciples of Sri Aurobindo were to have a Guru like him!

—Anurag Banerjee

Anurag Banerjee is a multiple award-winning author, researcher, poet and translator who is the Founder and Director of Overman Foundation, a leading research institute situated in Kolkata.



The English of *Savitri*: Volume 12 (Books Six, Eight, and Nine)

Comments on the language of Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri

—Shraddhavan

Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville

433 pp, Rs 600, ISBN: 978-81-955260-3-1

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

This volume of *The English of Savitri* is the last in the series of twelve that covers all the Books of *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*. Here “The Book of Fate”, “The Book of Death”, and “The Book of Eternal Night” are appropriately clubbed together by Shraddhavan. She perhaps purposely did not include the detailed study of Book Seven: “The Book of Yoga” in this volume as the mood is so different for the reader.

Book Six starts with *Devarshi* Narad's descent on earth. He is always present on the occasions when something has to be revealed to those with whom he interacts. When Savitri arrives at her father's palace, Narad describes her beautifully as a bride and asks the reason for her beauty. We come to know that Savitri has chosen Satyavan as her husband; Narad then reveals the ill-fated destiny of the couple. The Queen Mother with her human will and emotions tries to dissuade Savitri from marrying Satyavan but receives her daughter's answer thus: “Once my heart chose and chooses not again.” Broken by this declaration, the Queen turns to Narad for help and throws arrows of doubts and questions at him. Shraddhavan has given great importance to this Book. She deals elaborately with every detail of almost every line and answers many questions raised by her listeners. In keeping with the tone of “The Book of Fate”, which involves many lines of dialogue in a question-and-answer format, the author too has allowed her listeners to ask as many questions as they wish and clear their doubts about the use of words, imagery, and symbols by Sri Aurobindo. For example, consider the lines:

He meets an ancient adversary Force,
He is lashed with the whips that tear the world's worn heart;
The weeping of the centuries visits his eyes:
He wears the blood-glued fiery Centaur shirt,
The poison of the world has stained his throat.

These lines allude to Christ, the Greek legend of Hercules, and the act of Lord Shiva drinking poison to save the world (188-190). Shraddhavan has taken great delight in explaining the deep significance of these lines and the explanation for Sri Aurobindo's allusion to them. On being asked why Hercules and Lord Shiva have been brought together, she answered that Hercules was an immortal being on this earth who bore pain and suffering like every mortal. The author has clarified all the doubts of the readers much as Narad does for all the questions asked by the Queen, the mother of Savitri, who finally got an answer from the sage: “O queen, stand back from that stupendous scene, | Come not between her and her hour of Fate” because “She only can

save herself and save the world". This Book is significant in terms of voicing both the doubts and questions that bother humanity asked by Savitri's mother and the responses and solutions given by Narad, who offers solace in this line, "Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save." Shraddhavan devoted more than half of this volume to discussing "The Book of Fate".

In order to retain the link between Book Six and Book Eight we have been provided with a summary of each of the seven cantos of Book Seven, "The Book of Yoga." This sustains continuity but does not alter the mood of the Books under discussion. Book Seven primarily focuses on Savitri's inner journey where she travels through the dark and luminous chambers of her being and realises the cosmic consciousness. After achieving this, she gets ready to face Death and later conquers him.

Book Eight, "The Book of Death" has only one canto, Canto Three: "Death in the Forest". Shraddhavan gives an explanation based on Sri Aurobindo's letters as to why there is only one canto in this Book and why is it called Canto Three instead of Canto One. We are told that when Sri Aurobindo was reminded to complete this Book, he said, "Well, that will be for later." This canto links us to Book One, Canto One where we are left with the concluding line: "This was the day when Satyavan must die." In Book Eight we come back to that day when Satyavan will die. Shraddhavan has taken us through the expectant dawn to the gloomy afternoon when "Satyavan had passed from her [Savitri's] embrace". Referring to comments and observations by the Mother, Nirodbaran, Huta and Sri Aurobindo himself, she has explained the significance and meaning of this canto to readers.

Book Nine, "The Book of Eternal Night" is Savitri's journey into Night, Darkness and the realm of Death. Sri Aurobindo has presented this book in a dense and yet philosophic way. The feeling of sadness when Satyavan slips from Savitri's grasp is countered by an admiration for Savitri's strength when she courageously follows Death into his realm. Savitri is seen as no ordinary mortal here. She emerges as "A columned shaft of fire and light". About this luminous, dauntless Savitri, Shraddhavan points out a few stories and anecdotes to which Sri Aurobindo perhaps alludes.

In Canto One we saw Savitri's entry into Death's realm, in Canto Two we are taken to the "Eternal Night". Here, Death begins to tempt her with boons so that she may agree to return to earth and not pursue Satyavan. But Savitri accepts nothing less than Satyavan: "Out of thy shadow give me back...Satyavan".

In her inimitable yet simple style, the author leads us from one line to another, one image to another. As readers understanding the meaning of the poem, we are led from one mood to another, from one frame to another. Each time Savitri is revealed a little more to us, each time Death's "huge mask" is removed a little further until in the next Book we are able to look upon the "face of God".

Although this is the last volume in the series, it does not deal with the final Books of the poem. Readers are encouraged to further reading, re-reading and inter-reading of the other volumes in order to enjoy the comprehensive story and meaning of Sri Aurobindo's creative word: *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*. Now that all the volumes of *The English of Savitri*

are available, it will be easy to read her commentary and explanations either canto-wise or in the manner in which Shraddhavan has presented them. These volumes are a wonderful guide for those who want to understand *Savitri* but find the epic poem difficult in language and purport. Her detailed exploration indeed encourages the reader to contemplate and meditate on its meaning and significance.

—Shruti Bidwaikar

Shruti Bidwaikar is working as the Assistant Director at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Puducherry. She has done her PhD on Sri Aurobindo's Poetry and Poetics. She continues to research and give talks on poetry, poetics, and Indian culture.

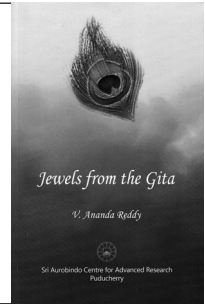
Jewels from the Gita

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust,
Pondicherry

198 pp, Rs 280, ISBN: 978-93-85391-09-5

Size: 16 x 24 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



This slim book by Dr Ananda Reddy comprises transcriptions of several of his short, informal talks that expatiate on Sri Aurobindo's insights on Sri Krishna and the Bhagavad Gita. This being a collection of transcribed talks rather than an originally written work, it is necessary to view it more as a sympathetic listener would, as if one were hearing the speaker, than as a reader of a book.

In this volume, three personalities of Sri Krishna the Avatar are elaborated upon in three sections, *viz.*, Vasudeva Krishna, Jnaneshwara Krishna, and Yogeshwara Krishna. Section One is primarily focused on the epiphany as recounted in the Gita, with the key takeaway hidden in the fourth and last chapter in this section, “Three Doors to Hell”, where we are warned not to give way to desire, anger or greed. This comes after Dr Reddy dwells on the Love that Sri Krishna has for Arjuna. What follows are a few words from the author about the epiphany that Arjuna witnesses upon his request to Sri Krishna to see his divine form in its full glory.

The chapters in Section Two deal with the mysteries of the soul, birth, death, and rebirth, leading up to Sri Aurobindo's explications of the true nature of *karma*. Dr Reddy stresses Sri Aurobindo's point that *karma* is not an escapist's attempt to avoid physical rebirth, but a warrior's effort to achieve constant union with Sri Krishna.

The bulk of the final section focuses on the author's understanding of Sri Aurobindo's views on the Gita, concluding with a note to the reader on the significance of the Gita for modern times. We are asked to live a more soul-centred life, and Dr Reddy loosely delineates a possible path based on

his reading of Sri Aurobindo's insights. The first step, Dr Reddy suggests, is consecration, and he quotes this passage from Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*:

There will be needed a complete consecration of your self and your nature and your life to the Highest and to nothing else but the Highest; for all must be held only for the sake of the Highest, nothing accepted except as it is in God and a form of God and for the sake of the Divine. There will be needed an admission of new truth, an entire turn and giving of your mind to a new knowledge of self and others and world and God and soul and Nature, a knowledge of oneness, a knowledge of universal Divinity, which will be at first an acceptance by the understanding but must become in the end a vision, a consciousness, a permanent state of the soul and the frame of its movements. (CWSA 19: 575)

Care has to be taken not to look for strong connecting threads between the sections and the chapters that comprise them; one has to remember that each chapter is an informal talk standing by itself and that the transcriptions have been put together in the best possible sequence. If this is kept in mind, one comes to enjoy the book more fully. One may also note that though the transcriptions have been edited, here and there pieces of text indicate that their source was obviously the spoken word. The reader is asked to lend his sympathetic understanding at these points in the text.

The volume is especially valuable because the author is an avid scholar of Sri Aurobindo, and the result of his many years spent steeped in Aurobindonian thought will be in evidence throughout. The views that he expresses are therefore faithful to the original texts and in addition feature the author's reflections on these. One must note that though it is Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Gita and its message that the author expounds, it is not a mere summary that he reproduces. The talks transcribed here clearly show the author's own thoughts on the Aurobindonian views that he expounds, as the very last chapter in the book clearly demonstrates.

Here and there in the text, the reader is treated to tidbits such as a little known story from the Mahabharata about Bheem's grandson Balarsen (sometimes known as Baliyadav or Barbarik). By Lord Shiva's grace, Balarsen wins three arrows that can destroy entire armies and comes to fight on the weaker side at Kurukshetra where the Pandavas and Kauravas are set to join battle. It is not Sri Krishna's intention to destroy whole armies, however, but only individuals who have failed to uphold *dharma*. Therefore, Sri Krishna stops and outwits Balarsen, preventing him from taking part in the war—how he does this is described in detail in this volume. Stories such as this find more room for play in informal talks than in written works; consequently, their transcriptions are delightful reads.

Jewels from the Gita is one in a series of many by Dr Ananda Reddy that form a part of his offering on the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. Almost all of these volumes are transcriptions of informal talks given by the author on various occasions.

—Sivakumar Elambooran

Sivakumar was an academic philosopher who has now turned to writing. After living abroad for some years, he is now settled in his native Pondicherry, where he is associated with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery

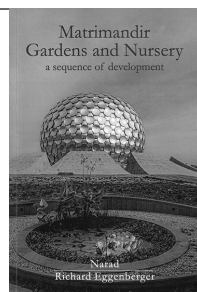
A sequence of development

—Narad (Richard Eggenberger)

Publisher: PRISMA, Auroville

225 pp, Rs 450, Size: 14 x 21 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



In his beautiful *Homage to the Service Tree* Narad (Richard Eggenberger) remembers something from his youth that has stayed with him for decades, and which is still there with him: “I had pruned trees with my father for many years and learned from him the sanctity of Nature and the respect one must have when working with her.” Over the years not only did that sanctity mature, it has grown into a worshipping devotion, a dedication, a means of entering the inner realms of one’s being.

This horticulturist of exceptional quality and visionary of the Gardens of the Future had arrived on the scene to serve the Mother, to develop the Matrimandir’s twelve gardens envisioned and named by her. In his book *Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery*, we have Narad’s own account of the work entrusted to him, an account made precious by the addition of quotations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother relevant to the names given to the different gardens. Here are the powers of the universal Mother in the terrestrial working, the fourfold order based on the fourfold nature of the soul in the evolutionary process. The key stipulation for human nature to change into the dynamic divine nature lies in the four powers of the Divine Mahashakti, founding their harmony and freedom of movement in the universal functioning.

The Grace is bestowed to work for the Matrimandir in its integrality, an extraordinary privilege, and Narad has received that Grace in its extraordinariness. The early pages of the book comprise Narad’s account of how the Gardens project started and how he applied himself to it. In a letter dated 14 January 1972, he wrote to friends: “The Mother has granted us a small monthly working fund which, due to our constant expansion, will not continue to serve us too much longer. There are many needs which are absolutely essential for this work in order to realize her vision and to bring it into full manifestation.” That is how financial help was sought.

About designs for the Matrimandir Gardens Narad writes: “I have seen many beautiful gardens in the world....They are often creative masterpieces... It will take designers who are essentially open to the Divine Vision...dedicated to the manifestation of supreme beauty...able to catch the Force that wants to descend and surround the Matrimandir.”

The Mother, an occult-spiritual Yogini par excellence, had a firm grounding in the fields of music and painting, and this she carried farther into their “Future”. Likewise, there shall be a future architecture, sculpture, choreography, sports discipline, and a future food for the new body. And we have another to add to the list, the Matrimandir Gardens, the Gardens of the Future, “dedicated to the manifestation of supreme beauty”. To quote Roger Anger, whom the Mother commissioned as the architect for the project of Auroville: “The Matrimandir Gardens as a whole

cannot be compared or identified with the realisation of any past or present garden for they have to respond to the indications given by the Mother to manifest a specific beauty and various states of consciousness.... It will be more in the nature of a quest, to allow the manifestation of a vision, rather than a mental endeavour that seeks to achieve a symbiosis of the traditional gardening forms, be they Japanese or Western.” (https://auroville-learning.net/av_opportunity/gardens-design/)

Yet there are human factors involved in this endeavour. One of the saddest incidents narrated by Narad occurred during the early history of Auroville, just a handful of years after the Mother’s withdrawal from her body. A young girl came running to the Matrimandir Nursery, crying out “The gundas at Bharat Nivas are beating Frederick and David to death. Please help.” The lingering Christian/American humanism arose in Narad and he rushed to the spot, leaving aside his garden work. His intervention resulted in a rock being thrown by one of the thugs, causing a serious injury to his head. Afterwards, he was taken to see Nolini in the Ashram who “turned almost white on seeing the large bandages and gave me his blessing”.

There are forces active against the Mother’s vision and work, and the human instrument lends itself easily to that hostile work. Towards the end of his book Narad writes a note, on page 223: “Sri Aurobindo spoke of a perfect perfection and indeed the Matrimandir Gardens will exemplify this... In fact they are already built in the subtle physical and only await manifestation on the physical plane.” That is of course true, but there is a big leap from the subtle to the physical and one cannot be confident that the Gardens will be built exactly according to the Divine Will. Humans are still too human for that to necessarily happen.

There is a difference of opinion and execution of a plan connected with the Banyan Tree at the center of Auroville, which stood witness to the inauguration of the City of Dawn on 28 February 1968. Narad is careful in presenting his point of view. One foot of soil was put over the whole area to achieve the level Roger, the Mother’s Auroville architect, wanted. But Narad feels extremely disappointed about what they have done, that they have poured reinforced concrete over the roots, and laid Agra stone, and then put heavy granite benches on the top of that. “I feel that...what is being done under and around the Banyan is a sacrilege and an abomination.”

Whatever that may be, we must applaud the fact that Narad’s *Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery* is a valuable gift to future generations. It forms not only an authentic archival document of the time, but is enriched by his direct contact with the Mother, who had given him the name “Narad”. Even the play of diverse forces and individuals is educative and enlightening for the astute reader.

There are some dozen books on the Mother’s City of Tomorrow that have recently appeared, and among them *Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery* has an important place. It is a chronologically ordered collection of various notes, letters, articles, and photos taken by the author. It is a plain narrative of a personal nature and it has no intention of going into the ifs-and-buts or merits-and-demerits of various events and decisions that have impacted the story of Auroville.

We will celebrate along with Narad when he discloses on page 148: “Mary Helen and I made a world tour of botanical gardens in 1977 to collect the best species and hybrids of trees and shrubs for the Matrimandir Gardens.... No one ever refused to help... We reached Singapore so

overloaded that the people looked at us with incredulity. Somehow, we contacted Devan Nair... and he had everything sent through without any duty.”The ‘moral’ is that when you work for the Mother, the Mother arranges everything for you, that is, for herself!

Included is a photograph of a jubilant young Narad seated on the ground in the august company of Nirodbaran and Champaklal and others from the Ashram. “There was joy of walking,” writes Narad, “with Champaklal and Nirodbaran during the flower show” at Matrimandir Nursery.

The blurb on the back cover of *Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery* describes Narad as “a highly regarded poet and author of numerous works on spiritual themes. Horticulturist, opera singer, musician, and tropical plant specialist, his *Handbook on Plumeria Culture* is a classic.” We must add that he is also a lexicographer who gave us a valuable dictionary on the words in Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*, titled *Lexicon of an Infinite Mind*, a phrase appropriately picked up from *Savitri*.

Congratulations to the Mother’s celebrated horticulturist. But she herself is the Divine Horticulturist! Let us conclude with the Mother’s assurance written in 1971: “I am always present, near you, in you, and my blessings come with me.... Be sure that I am always present among you to guide and help you in your work and your sadhana.”

—R.Y. Deshpande

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



Narad with the children’s gardening class



Narad with Doraikannan at Matrimandir Gardens