

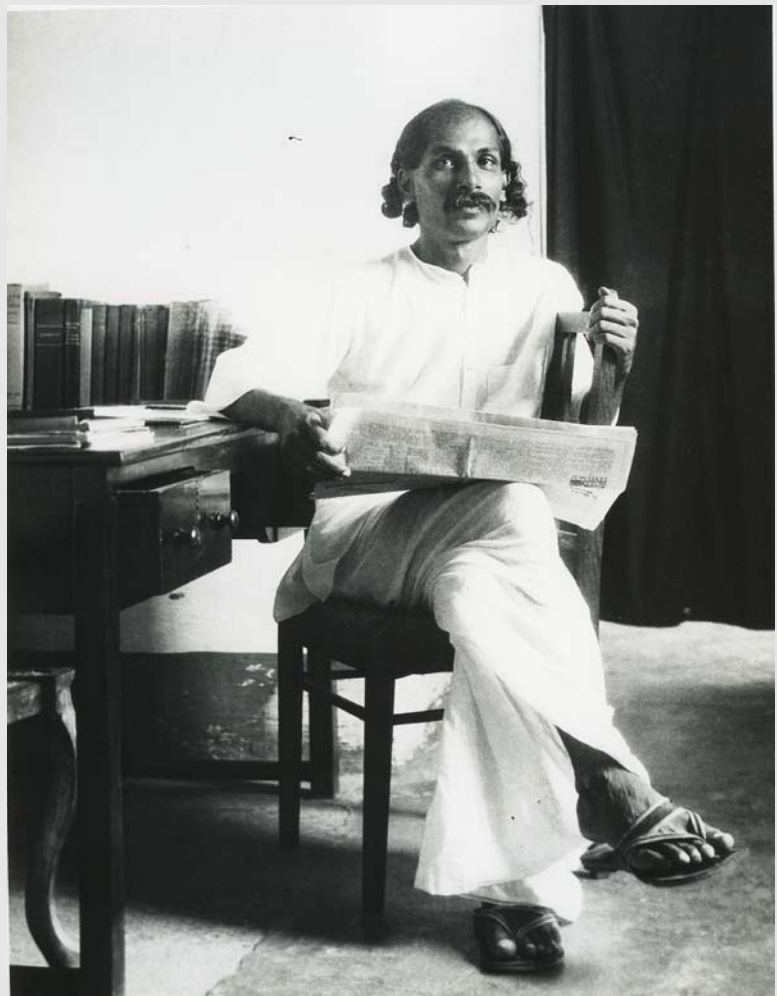
Recent Publications

Sabbā

This issue features two Sri Aurobindo Ashram publications: *To Thee Our Infinite Gratitude*, a collection of reminiscences, reflections, letters, and excerpts evoking the hours and days before and after the passing of Sri Aurobindo, and *The Mother Abides: Final Reflections 1973–1983*, a collection of talks and essays by Nolini Kanta Gupta, whose 125th birth anniversary is being celebrated this year. In our lead article, we mark this occasion with some personal remembrances of Nolini-da.

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Nolini Kanta Gupta, photographed some time between 1928 and 1935

THIS YEAR marks the 125th birth anniversary of Nolini Kanta Gupta. We asked two persons who were close to Nolini-da to share with our readers a few reminiscences. The first piece is by Subir Kanta Gupta (known in the Ashram as Manju-da). He is the second of Nolini-da's three sons, all of whom currently live and work in the Ashram. The eldest is Sameer Kanta Gupta (known as Ranju-da) and the youngest is Prabir Kanta Gupta (known as Robi-da). Manju-da teaches Spanish and Italian at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

The second piece is by Matriprasad, who worked with Nolini-da towards the end of his life. Matriprasad teaches history at SAICE as well as courses on Sri Aurobindo's The Human Cycle and The Ideal of Human Unity. He also does administrative work at the office of the Ashram Trust.

Nolini Kanta Gupta Reminiscences of my Father

Family

Before sharing some memories of my father's time here at the Ashram, let me say a few words about the family. Rajani Kanta Gupta, my paternal grandfather, was a leading lawyer of Nilphamari, which is now part of Bangladesh. He was a serious man, much respected and even feared in the town. He was an avid reader; in addition to his law books, he often read books on Sri Ramakrishna till late in the night. He had high expectations for Nolini Kanta, his eldest son, and hoped he would take over the responsibility of the large joint family after his own retirement. When Nolini Kanta broke the news of his planned departure for Pondicherry, my grandfather was severely disappointed and gravely replied, "It's good, but the path is as sharp as a razor's edge. Are you fully prepared for the hazardous trek?" Nolini Kanta left the room without answering, determined to depart soon for Pondicherry.



Manju-da with his father, Nolini-da

In later years, my grandmother Kadambini visited the Ashram twice. She would prepare food for her son and sit silently beside him while he ate, feeling happy in the knowledge that he was respected and that he worked so closely with the Mother. Nolini Kanta had inherited his mother's dynamic nature and the sobriety and intelligence of his father.

Learning French

In 1943–4 we three brothers were Nolini-da's students in French class here in the Ashram. His way of teaching was totally different from that of others. He did not begin with the alphabet. We started with Mother's *Prières et Méditations*. He himself had begun learning French from Sri Aurobindo with the works

of Molière and Italian with Dante's *La Divina Commedia*. Once, he told me that Sri Aurobindo had asked him to recite from this poem, but the Mother had intervened and said he should first recite it in front of her. I asked Nolini-da if Mother knew Italian. He answered, "No", but that one of her distant relatives knew it, and Mother had occasion to hear the language. From time to time he gave us dictations and afterwards explained our mistakes. He read out to us two beautiful French poems which Mother had read out to him, remarking that Mother's way of reading was wonderful. One of these poems Ranju-da translated into English—it was by Louis Aragon.

One day in the French class, we were taken by surprise when he said, "Today I shall sing the French national anthem." He began singing with a lot of emotion: "*Allons enfants de la patrie, le jour de gloire est arrivé!*" He explained how, in the face of defeat, the song had changed the course of a war. Dilip Kumar Roy wrote a song in Bengali based on this anthem. Another time, Nolini-da read two beautiful English poems: "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and "The Hound of Heaven" by Francis Thompson. Coleridge wrote the poem while he was in semi-trance. "The Hound of Heaven" was a symbolic poem, and Nolini-da explained the symbols. He also pointed out the lines that came from the overmind, the highest plane of consciousness below the supermind. That was quite amazing. Apart from his teaching, his proximity was beneficial to us. We spent our time in a pleasant atmosphere.

In the evening, Nolini-da took classes for the adult students, who could join his class whether or not they knew any French. He recounted many events or episodes in English—that was the biggest attraction of the class. He even told us who he and Sri Aurobindo had been in some of their previous incarnations. I recall that Sri Aurobindo had been Leonardo da Vinci and Nolini-da had been the French poet Ronsard. Sometimes Mother gave printed messages to Nolini-da for distribution in the class.

After learning French from Nolini-da, I joined Satprem's French class. He was not interested in grammar, so we had to write essays only. He liked my writings. Later on I became a senior teacher of French at the school on his recommendation. I continued for quite a long time until I started to teach Spanish and Italian in the Higher Course (at Knowledge). I am still there.

Football

Our father was a very good football player. In the early days, he had regularly played for Cercle Sportif, a local team, where he was known as "Roy", because he had first come to Pondicherry under the assumed name of Manindranath Roy. (In later years, Benjamin, our club president, introduced me to all the officials of different clubs as the "*fils de Roy*" (son of Roy).) Suresh Chakravarty (Moni) was a footballer par excellence. He had played for Mohun Bagan, a famous club of Calcutta, but Nolini-da had not played for the same club. When I asked him why, he said, "I did not like the atmosphere." Moni had come to Pondicherry in advance of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in order to arrange for his lodgings. He was a very good writer who wrote both essays and poems. Rabindranath Tagore praised his poems. He passed away just a few months after Sri Aurobindo's demise. Saurin Bose, Sri Aurobindo's brother-in-law, was also a very good football player. One day, after they had come back from the football ground, they took bath and went to have their food. Much to their surprise, the bowl of meat, which they had earlier prepared for their dinner, was empty! Just then Sri Aurobindo came in and said that he had already taken his food—he had eaten what was in the bowl. The young men looked at each other, mouths agape. That bowl was kept a long time as a memento, and afterwards our mother, Indulekha, handed it over to the Ashram authorities.

We also were very much interested in football. We played for the Ashram team in the local tournament. Once, a devotee from Cuddalore invited the Mother to witness a friendly football match between the Ashram team and a local team. The match itself had no importance, but the Mother's presence was most desirable. Next day the news of our match was printed in the newspaper. I read out the report to the Mother.

A Literary Gentleman

Nolini-da did an outstanding translation into English of Tagore's famous Bengali play *Natir Puja* ["the dancing girl's worship"]. He also did English translations of some beautiful poems by well-known Bengali



Nolini Kanta Gupta, Anilbaran Roy, Pavitra (P. B. Saint-Hilaire), Arjava (J. A. Chadwick).
Photograph taken some time in the 1930s.

poets. Nolini-da's translations were so admired by Rabindranath Tagore that he invited Nolini-da to settle at Shantiniketan among a galaxy of stars: Pramathanath Bishi, Syed Mujtaba Ali, Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, and others. Nolini-da did not accept the invitation. Sri Aurobindo moulded him in his own way. He was Sri Aurobindo's *manas putra*. He translated Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* into Bengali. In addition to these achievements as a translator, I might add here that as a critic of foreign literature he held a very high place among Indian writers.

With Sri Aurobindo

While the Alipore Bomb Case was going on, Sri Aurobindo had around him a small group of intellectuals who spent their time discussing various topics and were, quite surprisingly, indifferent to the proceedings of the court. After the trial was over and they had been acquitted, Sri Aurobindo asked Nolini-da what he wanted to do. “I shall travel all over the country”, he answered. “Come with me”, replied Sri Aurobindo. He soon took Nolini-da on a political tour of Assam.

Nolini-da related to us how on some evenings, both in Calcutta and then in the early days in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo tried automatic speech and automatic writing, meaning he acted as a medium for departed spirits who came and either spoke or wrote messages through him. One day, someone asked Sri Aurobindo to write about Nolini-da. When I asked Nolini-da if what the medium wrote was true, he answered in the affirmative. Another person suggested that some information might be given about the Mother. The Mother did not agree, and the writing stopped. On another occasion, Nolini-da told us that some spirits came and, speaking through Sri Aurobindo, narrated many historical facts. When this happened, Sri Aurobindo’s voice would change and sound hoarse. Like this, we learned from Nolini-da about events and personalities—it was our history class.

There was an article that Sri Aurobindo wrote for publication in *Bande Mataram* called “The Morality of Boycott”. It begins with these lines:

Ages ago there was a priest of Baal who thought himself commissioned by the god to kill all who did not bow the knee to him. All men, terrified by the power and ferocity of the priest, bowed down before the idol and pretended to be his servants; and the few who refused, had to take refuge in hills and deserts. At last a deliverer came and slew the priest and the world had rest. The slayer was blamed by those who placed religion in quietude and put passivity forward as the ideal ethics, but the world looked on him as an incarnation of God.

The whole essay so impressed Nolini-da that he read it again and again, memorised it, and would often recite it when he was alone. “These lines,” he commented, “I should like to say, have an epic quality about them, and were written by the greatest writer.”

Sri Aurobindo would come forward in defence of Nolini-da whenever needed. Once, a *sadhak* of the Ashram sarcastically asked Sri Aurobindo, “Is Nolini doing *sadhana*?” Sri Aurobindo’s reply was brief but telling: if Nolini was not doing *sadhana*, then who here was?

With the Mother

At one time, Mother used to come out at ten o’clock in the morning for “Terrace Darshan”—on the terrace of Dyuman-bhai’s room. She would give a biscuit to a crow she had named Blackie. One day, she asked Nolini-da to accompany her. As they came onto the terrace Blackie flew down from the branches of the Service Tree and perched on the circular parapet. Mother asked Nolini-da to give the biscuit to Blackie. Blackie took it and kept it on the parapet. Then Mother gave Blackie a biscuit; he took it and flew away. Mother said to Nolini-da, “How gentle is Blackie. At least he took the biscuit and did not refuse.”

Once, Mother called Nolini-da and Champaklalji to her. She had two raw eggs in her hand. Mother asked Nolini-da to open his mouth and then she broke the egg and put it in his mouth. When she turned to Champaklalji he said, “No, Mother, I shall vomit it out.” Mother said, “All right.” This incident may not be worth mentioning but that it sheds light on the character of Nolini-da.

In the Footsteps

Let me blow my own trumpet now. I had written two poems in English and Nirod-da read them out to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's comment was that "he is following in the footsteps of his father". Encouraged by the comment, I wrote more poems. Once, I wrote a prayer in French and read it out to the Mother. She asked me appreciatively, "Have you written that yourself?" "Yes, Mother", I answered. I wrote a short story and Nolini-da read it out to the Mother. Mother commented that the "form is weak but the content is very good". I had the privilege of going to the Mother before Balcony Darshan along with a few other *sadhaks*. I also joined her French class, which was held in the room next to Sri Aurobindo's. Only those who knew French well were permitted to attend the class.

I had come to the Ashram way back in April 1943, when I was nineteen years old. I went for the 24 April Darshan and when I stood in front of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, Mother whispered to him, "Nolini's son". Sri Aurobindo smiled. This happened again on several Darshan days. I wish I could have heard Sri Aurobindo's voice.

A Pilgrim on the Path

To me, Nolini-da was friend, philosopher, and guide. On many occasions I solicited his guidance. We brothers wrote letters to him regularly. Once, my younger brother, Robi, asked him why he signed as "Nolini Kanta Gupta" at the end of his letter instead of "Father". In the next letter he wrote, "Father—Nolini Kanta Gupta"! We were not in the habit of addressing him by any name, such as Baba or Nolini-da. We just spoke directly to him.

A revolutionary, *sadhak*, and *littérateur*—such a multifaceted personality was rare in the country. On the occasion of his 125th birth anniversary I offer my homage to a pilgrim who was on the way to the supramental world.

— Subir Kanta Gupta

Of Beauty and Ananda

Truth is Beauty's substance—it is Beauty self-governed.

Beauty is Delight perfectly articulate.

Love is Beauty enjoying itself.

Knowledge is the light that Beauty emanates.

Power is the fascination that Beauty exerts.

* * * * *

Beauty is delight organised.

Poetry is the soul's delight seeking perfect expression in speech.

Speech is self-expression. It is the organ of self-consciousness. The nature of the speech shows the nature of the self-consciousness. The degree of perfection in utterance measures also the extent to which one is conscious of oneself.

Nolini Kanta Gupta
Essays on Mysticism

A Radiant Silence

Nolini-da had certainly mastered a very difficult art: he knew how to remain silent. No one could provoke him or induce him to start speaking without his first having withdrawn and wrapped himself safely in a mantle of Silence. Even when he did speak, one surprisingly felt as if one were still essentially listening to a Silence—a radiant Silence that shone through the interstices of the words he uttered.

I had grown up listening to fabulous tales about Nolini-da and of his what we ordinarily call “achievements”. I had heard that Sri Aurobindo had once remarked, “If Nolini is not doing my yoga then who is?” So when I first imagined Nolini-da I had manufactured in my immature mind a picture of a coldly austere personality, remote and withdrawn, pitiless in his condescension towards human frailties. But it did not take long for me to realize that this picture was not true. However paradoxical it may sound, there was a glow of warmth that his impersonal ways emanated, a kindness and solicitude that one can find only in those persons who are perfectly detached. When I think of him I am often reminded of one of his own essays which begins with these luminous words, “The greatness of a person is the greatness of the Impersonal in him.”

Trying to remain faithful to this trait of Nolini-da’s personality, I too shall restrain myself from speaking much and shall limit myself to recounting just a single incident from my memory, because I do not think that it has been recorded anywhere.

We find that in Sri Aurobindo’s *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, in the section on “Bhakti”, there is the following aphorism which may sound a little mysterious if not downright provocative:

After I knew that God was a woman, I learned something from far-off about love; but it was only when I became a woman and served my Master and Paramour that I knew love utterly.

Aphorism 411, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 481

At least it provoked someone to ask the Mother this question, which appears on page 330 of Volume 10 of the Collected Works of the Mother:

What does Sri Aurobindo mean...when he says: “After I knew that God was a woman...”?

The Mother had replied:

I cannot answer because, while he was in his body, he never told me anything about this.

If anyone knows the exact date on which he wrote this, it might be an indication.

Perhaps N could tell you when this was written, or whether Sri Aurobindo told him anything about it.

I thought the N referred to by the Mother must surely be Nolini-da. So one day I read out just the aphorism to him and asked him what it meant. In response the usual Silence greeted me. I reminded him that it was the Mother who had actually suggested that one may ask N, and that I believed that he himself must be that knowledgeable N who was now trying to behave in an elusive manner. I then admonished him that if he chose to disregard the Mother’s choice...well...I would certainly leave him to his fate, unperturbed in his incommunicableness. (One could really take quite a few cheeky liberties of this kind with him, to our own and even to his delight too.)

Now the silence was broken with “...the meaning is very clear...” This did not help much, but I chose not to pursue the matter further.

However, in the evening when I returned and when nobody else was around, Nolini-da, without any word of introduction, went straight to the point, to the heart of the matter, one may say; without much ado this is how he began:

“You see, the Vedantic experience is essentially a masculine experience: Brahman is Anandamaya but not Premamaya. The masculine experience goes up to the level of the heart, up to even the soft and subtle emotions of the heart. But that is not Love. The origin of Love is from a centre behind the heart.

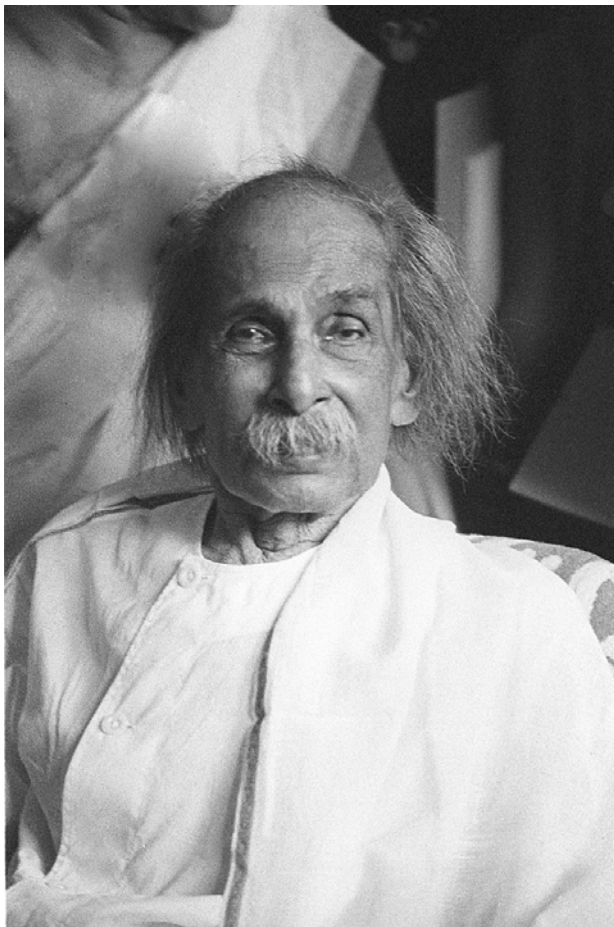
“In this universe the possibility of Love begins with the Parashakti—The Divine Mother. In this sense Sri Aurobindo is referring to the coming of the Mother here and the fusion of Her experience with His.”

There followed a few moments of silence and then:

“Of course Mother knew what He meant; She was only being modest. She just wanted to know if Sri Aurobindo had spoken about it some time.”

Silence again. After this, any further word or elaboration or elucidation would have only been redundant. I have deliberately used quotation marks in the passages above because, although I had heard them only once, the power of these words was such that they have remained permanently etched in my memory. I have just repeated his words verbatim.

Our sacred literature speaks of *Pashyanti Vak* (speech that sees) as just a step before it merges into *Para Vak*, which to us can perhaps mean only SILENCE. I am also reminded of a beautiful line from the Sufi poet and mystic Rumi: “Silence is the language of God, all else is poor translation.” But I believe I have given an instance of how good a translator Nolini-da was. He could open himself to the realm of *Pashyanti Vak*.



Nolini-da in 1981

— Matriprasad

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

Sri Aurobindo

Essays in Philosophy and Yoga

— Sri Aurobindo

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

604 pp, ISBN 978-81-7058-974-7, Rs 250

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

This collection of short prose works, written by Sri Aurobindo between 1909 and 1950 and published during his lifetime, deals primarily with aspects of spiritual philosophy and yoga. Arranged chronologically and by original place of publication, the volume begins with essays from the *Karmayogin*, followed by the early work *The Yoga and Its Objects*. The third part contains writings from the *Arya*, including essays on Heraclitus, evolution, rebirth, and karma, and

other pieces such as the summaries or “arguments” which preceded fifteen chapters of *The Life Divine* when it was originally serialised. The fourth part is a long essay published in 1920 in *The Standard Bearer*. The book concludes with the series of essays on the supramental manifestation written in 1949–50. Most of the works in this volume were formerly published together under the title *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*.

Compilations from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Steps to Freedom and Mastery

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

181 pp, ISBN 979-81-7058-023-1, Rs 70



Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

The passages in this compilation help to define spiritual freedom and self-mastery. The book begins with descriptions of the ordinary human existence ruled by the elemental Ignorance of the material Nature. Subsequent parts outline the first steps towards achieving a freedom

from and a mastery over our human imperfections: becoming conscious of one's inner movements, purification of the lower nature leading to self-mastery, and detachment from the movements of the outer being. Absolute mastery and supreme freedom can be finally attained through the liberation from the ego and the radical transformation of the mental, vital, and physical nature into the divine nature.

Reprint from All India Magazine booklet

Dynamic Faith

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry

49 pp, ISBN 978-81-7060-334-4, Rs 30

Size: 14x20 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

The Knowledge Within

The Source, the Breath, the Five Elements, the Body or Matter

Publisher: Kalu Sarkar, Pondicherry

83 pp, Rs 220

Size: 18x24 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

Through passages from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the compiler reveals the importance of discovering the higher knowledge concealed in our Self for establishing harmony and good health in both mind and body. Selections also deal with *pranic* energy and the practice of *pranayama*, the five elemental states of matter – ether, air, fire, water, and earth –, and the education and training of the senses for a change of consciousness. The final section includes colour photographs illustrating respiratory exercises, important acupressure points for relief of pain, and therapeutic *asanas* for increasing flexibility and strengthening parts of the body.

See review on page 18

Golden Gleanings

A Compilation of Sri Aurobindo's Selected Works

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi

31 pp, ISBN 978-81-88847-49-5, Rs 35

Size: 15x21 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

The selections for this compilation are aimed at young adults, inviting them to begin an exploration of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision, primarily through the world of his poetry. The last three items are prose pieces: an excerpt from his well-known Uttara Speech, where he

reveals something of his spiritual experiences in Alipore Jail; his message of 15 August 1947 that describes the import of his five dreams for India and the world; and a passage on the aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual value of art to human development.

Other Authors

The Mother Abides

Final Reflections (1973–1983)

— Nolini Kanta Gupta

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

118 pp, ISBN 978-81-7058-933-4, Rs 70

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

This book is a collection of thoughts and reflections by Nolini Kanta Gupta, who was involved in India's freedom movement with Sri Aurobindo in Bengal and later became one of his earliest disciples in Pondicherry. Written or spoken during the last decade of his life, these pieces are especially concerned with the significance of the Mother's presence on earth and her departure from it; the nature and purpose of the Ashram; and the basis for the practice of the Integral Yoga as the human spirit faces the difficult challenges of today's world. Many of these talks and writings were first presented to the students in his classes and later published in *The Advent* or in his Collected Works.

See review on page 13

To Thee Our Infinite Gratitude

Writings on the Passing of Sri Aurobindo

— Compiled from various sources

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

103 pp, ISBN 979-81-7058-016-3, Rs 95

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

This book of reminiscences, essays, letters, and excerpts evokes the hours and days before and after the passing of Sri Aurobindo on 5 December 1950. It begins with the Mother's words, recalling his sacrifice and offering the assurance of his continued presence and spiritual action. There are personal accounts by Nirodbaran, Dr Prabhat Sanyal, and Pavitra that convey the gravity and emotion surrounding Sri Aurobindo's final withdrawal, and essays by Amal Kiran, Udar Pinto, and K. R. S. Iyengar that attempt some understanding of its inner significance. The final remembrance is by the American scholar Rhoda P.

LeCocq, who had come for the Darshan on 24 November, and later recorded her first impressions of the Ashram and her own experience of the Grace.

See review on page 15

Narendra Nath Dasgupta

As Firm as a Rock

— Compiled and edited by Supriyo Bhattacharya

Publisher: Supriyo Bhattacharya, Kolkata

97 pp, Rs 50

Size: 14x21 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



This portrait of Naren Dasgupta, of which the final third is written in Bengali, includes selections from his daughter Preeti's memoirs, some unpublished correspondence with Sri Aurobindo and with Barindra Kumar Ghose, Naren Dasgupta's

1940 review of *The Life Divine* originally printed in the Hindustan Standard, a few of his conversations with Sri Aurobindo, and some diary excerpts.

The Veda in the Light of Sri Aurobindo

A Brief Introduction

— Kireet Joshi

Publisher: Popular Media, Delhi

73 pp, ISBN 978-93-82085-04-1, Rs 95

Size: 12x18 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

The first part of this booklet provides a short introduction to an interpretation of the Vedas based on Sri Aurobindo's discovery of a body of profound psychological thought and experience behind its language and imagery. The second part, which is the transcript of a lecture delivered in Auroville, outlines the corpus of Vedic knowledge, some of the interpretations provided by scholars and pundits, and the unique importance for the future which Sri Aurobindo gave to the recovery of this ancient wisdom.

Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Evolution

— Kireet Joshi

Publisher: Popular Media, Delhi

37 pp, ISBN 978-93-82085-08-9, Rs 60

Size: 12x18 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, evolution is the process of a gradual development of consciousness. Life, already involved as a principle of consciousness in Matter,

evolved into its higher state of manifestation. Mind, already involved in Life, grew manifest in man and continues to develop its powers and capabilities. The next evolutionary step is the emergence of the supramental consciousness, which will have the power to transform all aspects of the being and the creation to express the highest plane of truth. This booklet lays out the basics of this view of evolution and, in the process, addresses some fundamental questions about the keynote of terrestrial existence.

Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

A Brief Introduction

— Kireet Joshi

Publisher: Popular Media, Delhi

57 pp, ISBN 978-93-82085-03-4, Rs 75

Size: 12x18 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

This brief introduction to the Integral Yoga begins with two short life sketches of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and then presents an overview of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga, which aims not at a departure from the world as we know it but at a radical change of consciousness that will transform life into a manifestation of the highest truth. Touching briefly on his major works, the author outlines Sri Aurobindo's vision of the spiritual evolution of the being through the power and action of a triple transformation: psychic, spiritual, and supramental.

Management by Consciousness: The Mother's Way Wisdom, Power, Harmony, Perfection

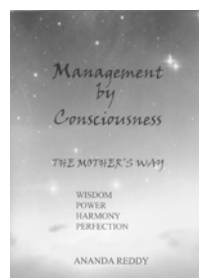
— Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch Trust, New Delhi

40 pp, ISBN 978-81-88847-47-1, Rs 20

Size: 15x21 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



Using his own experiences of the Mother's ways of dealing with people and resources and citing examples from the Mother's own words, the author of this booklet, which was originally delivered as a talk, tries to see what general principles of management can be

gathered from an analysis of her way of working. He describes these four essential principles of management by consciousness as wisdom, power, harmony, and perfection.

Towards the Rhythmic Word

Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Theory of Poetry

— Pabitrakumar Roy

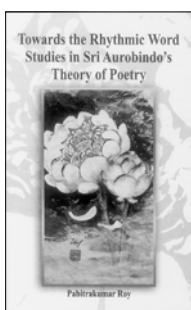
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Samiti, Kolkata

181 pp, Rs 200

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Hard Cover

In this scholarly and philosophical work, the author has focused on certain aspects of Sri Aurobindo's aesthetic



philosophy: poetic discourse, imagination, poetry as *mantra*, and the value of art for spiritual life. He approaches his subjects through the lens of Sri Aurobindo's writings on evolutionary metaphysics and the sociology of human development. His main interest is Sri Aurobindo's theory of poetry, and he includes in his study an examination of the

mystery of language, the function of imagination as the formative power of art, and the roles of reason and intuition in man's mental and artistic progress.

Paths to Self-Discovery

Reflective practices with children

— Mirambika Team

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi

223 pp, ISBN 978-81-88847-48-8, Rs 300

Size: 18x24 cm

Binding: Hard Cover

This book provides a glimpse into the educational environment of Mirambika, a school situated on the campus of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch. It follows a free progress learning system based on the ideas of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, who said that education should help children to develop their entire nature—physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual. The text, photographs, and illustrations all help to show the day-to-day implementation of the self-observation and reflective practices used with the children, whose ages range from three to twelve. It includes remarks, reflections, and observations from the children, the teachers, and a few of the parents.

See review on page 22

OTHER LANGUAGES

BULGARIAN

Sintesit na Yoga : Tom 1 — Sri Aurobindo Rs 800
ISBN 978-954-319-176-5

FRENCH

La Connaissance Intérieure: La Source, Le Souffle, Les
Cinq Éléments, La Matière ou le Corps
— Extraits des œuvres de Sri Aurobindo et de la Mère
Rs 220

ITALIAN

Yoga e Salute — The Mother Rs 450
ISBN 979-81-7058-026-2
Il Sonno — Compiled from the works of Sri Aurobindo
and the Mother Rs 100
ISBN 979-81-7058-024-8
Giorni di Prigione — Sri Aurobindo Rs 700

BENGALI

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Mother Abides

Final Reflections (1973–1983)

— Nolini Kanta Gupta

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication

Department, Pondicherry

118 pp, ISBN 978-81-7058-933-4, Rs 70

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

“The time was over. Sri Aurobindo and Mother left their bodies.” (*The Mother Abides*, p. 61)

“Mother and Sri Aurobindo offered their physical forms and presence as a ladder for them to climb—no, to be carried up. They arranged so that human beings could grow into superhuman spiritual beings, shaking off their ignorant human consciousness, as the caterpillar grows into a butterfly shaking off its cocoon—but alas, man failed. Perhaps the new destiny was too new for him, the light too dazzling for his eyes so long accustomed to darkness; perhaps there were deeper necessities of fate and secret reasons. But man failed, man refused the help and rebelled against it.” (p. 61)

So, “Sri Aurobindo and Mother left their bodies; but they did not leave the earth. Their presence is still here, supporting and sustaining all of us, but supporting us so that we may still cling to Truth, may still serve the Truth.” (p. 62)

“But still there is a difference.” (p. 62)

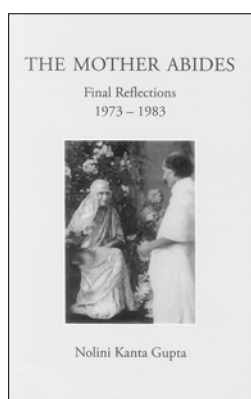
“Those who aspire for something better can still cooperate with the movement, offer themselves for helping and serving the new advent. Man can still do it. For each individual man is a point of concentration of the entire earth-consciousness; if he makes a progress in his own consciousness, lifts himself a little more, grows into a higher degree of consciousness, it is a gain. But he will have to do it with much greater difficulty than before; it will need far greater Tapasya now. For as long as Mother was in her body, she made things easy for us. But it is no more so.” (p. 63)

They will have “to forget all the big words—the big words like Supermind, Overmind, Higher Mind, etc. We no longer have the right to discuss them, to chat over them. They are dreams, beautiful dreams, but out of our reach. They belong to Mother

and Sri Aurobindo....It is in the Overmind they are kept; it is their work, their affair, we have nothing to do with that. Those dreams Mother has gathered in her own bosom; they will materialise in their own time according to their own rhythm.”

(pp. 63–4)

“Yes, we need not bother about them. Better let us look at ourselves...we are at the lowest rung of the ladder of consciousness....We have plunged straight into the bog, into the mire of crude physical existence. So we have to start the work of purification from that level, from the consciousness identified with the body; we must try to do the cleansing of the body and the vital.” (p. 64)



This is Nolini-da's central advice to all those wanting to take up the yoga of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It is very direct and powerful indeed. But that is what we need, I suppose, in the present times. He seems to shake us up from a deep vital-physical slumber and then puts us on the *yamas* and *niyamas* of the Integral Yoga.

It is because of such reminders to those who aspire to take up Sri Aurobindo's yoga that *The Mother Abides* – brought out to commemorate Nolini-da's 125th birth anniversary – is of immense value. These essays and talks, written or spoken after the Mother left her body, were of great significance in that decade, 1973 to 1983, because many of us, the young and old of those days, found in these words and in Nolini-da's physical presence a great solace and support in the face of the sudden vacuum created by the Mother's passing away. As the years roll by, we begin to see an even greater relevance in these articles; especially his analysis of the central truth of our Ashram gains a great importance:

The new creation is already here, forming itself; whatever is happening now in the Ashram and outside is happening so that it may come forward all the sooner. She is breaking the outer scaffolding within which the new reality has been established, or you may call it a dead shell which is being broken so that the new reality may come out. It is Mother's

action with her own Self. She has taken her Chhinnamasta form. All the things she is destroying are her own selves; she is getting rid, as it were, of the old unutilisable limbs of her own body.

(pp. 57–8)

Perhaps the most relevant and of immediate inspiration in this book are Nolini-da's words of encouragement to the students of the Ashram. Many of the present generation of Ashram school students do not know of him and even those who have heard of him in passing have hardly read his writings. For them, this compilation of Nolini-da's words of advice could be a great guiding light and oftentimes a succour in life's travail:

The golden chain is there within your heart. Wherever you go, you drag that chain; it is a lengthening chain. However far you may go, it is an elastic chain, it goes on lengthening but never snaps. In hours of difficulty, in hours of doubt and confusion in your life, you have that within you to support you. (p. 73)

And, Nolini-da assures all the students graduating from the Higher Course of the Ashram's Centre of Education:

She is there within you, her work is not arrested. The tempo of her work is as vigorous and as living as it could be and its impact will become more and more clear and manifest.

...Love the Mother, be one with her; then you will find and be this living soul of yours. (pp. 82–3)

There are other sections too in this collection of thoughts and reminiscences by Nolini-da that are more impersonal and philosophic in nature. We have dealt till now with the quintessence of Sections 2, 3, and 4: "The Ashram", "A New Creation", and "Talks to the Students". The fifth section deals with the Integral Yoga. It is quite a mix of articles, such as "Falsehood", "Yesterday", etc., that are psychological or philosophical in nature. Take, for instance, "Yesterday", wherein Nolini-da elaborates on the theme of repentance, in much need of being practised in our daily life. Then, there are some short notes. "To Live Within" stresses the need to live in a state of constant aspiration. An eye-opener essay, "Falsehood", starts with the line: "Falsehood is the agony of the Supreme—so said the Mother." It is a powerful wake-up call to all humanity!

The first section, "Sweet Mother", is of course the "sweetest" one. In the essay, "The Mother Abides", he has described for us the essential nature of the Mother's work for earth and man. For man, the individual, "it was your soul that she salvaged out of the inconscience and established in you as a living reality" (p. 8). Secondly, she built "around this soul, this inner being, a body, a material vehicle to express it. To give a concrete divine shape to this soul-reality was her labour at this point. The soul was there, but a god has to come and inhabit it; this godhead, that is to say, a Power, a form of the Mother's own personality, has to be brought down and the soul integrated into it. Apparently the effort was left off at that point and not completed." (pp. 8–9)

Although the Mother has left her body, she abides with us. Nolini-da reminds us of this when recounting a vision he had:

The Mother says:

'Just see. Look at me. I am here, come back in my new body—divine, transformed and glorious. And I am the same mother, still human. Do not worry. Do not be concerned about your own self, your progress and realisation, nor about others. I am here, look at me, gaze into me, enter into me wholly, merge into my being, lose yourself into my love, with your love. You will see all problems solved, everything done. Forget all else, forget the world. Remember me alone, be one with me, with my love...' (p. 31)

Yes, we hear once again the eternal promise of the Divine Incarnate, Sri Krishna:

Thou who hast come to this ephemeral and unhappy world, love me and turn to Me. (The Gita, 9: 33)

Take refuge in Me alone, I will deliver thee from all sin and evil. (The Gita, 18: 66)

— Ananda Reddy

Dr Reddy is the Director of the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR) in Pondicherry. He graduated from SAICE in 1969 and joined Auroville in 1971, where he participated in its early experiments in Integral Education. He has travelled widely, in India as well as abroad, and has delivered lectures and conducted workshops on the vision and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

To Thee Our Infinite Gratitude

Writings on the Passing of Sri Aurobindo

— Compiled from various sources

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication

Department, Pondicherry

103 pp, ISBN 979-81-7058-016-3, Rs 95

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

This is a humble testimony of my deep gratitude towards those who recorded their experiences, observations and vivid descriptions of events at a time of immense inner and outer shock after Sri Aurobindo left his body. I will mention passages in the book that touched me personally.

Indeed, this book of just over a hundred pages is a *recueil*, bringing together the writings of *sadhaks* who lived and worked closely with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Admittedly, the last account by Rhoda P. Le Cocq is, perhaps, out of place here since it also describes, in sharp contrast to the other accounts, life in general in the Ashram and the town. She was a Western seeker who too received the blessings of the Mother at that time.

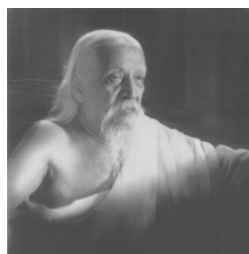
Let us begin with the Mother's messages given at the time, after 5 December 1950. In two or three of these messages, the Mother alludes to Sri Aurobindo's body in a revealing way. She writes, "The lack of receptivity of the earth and men is mostly responsible for the decision Sri Aurobindo has taken regarding his body." How many of us are able to separate our consciousness from that of the body? Again, in a poignant invocation and tribute she addresses his body thus: "To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our infinite gratitude." Finally, we are deeply moved by her message of 12 April 1953: "Sri Aurobindo has given up his body in an act of supreme unselfishness, renouncing the realisation in his own body to hasten the hour of the collective realisation. Surely if the earth were more responsive, this would not have been necessary."

In Pavitra-da's account "A Telegram and a Letter" (p. 66), we are struck by certain portions of his letter to his father. For instance, he writes:

For us, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are, now more than ever, one and the same Person. We have lost the great sweetness of the personal relation with Sri

Aurobindo, but not his guidance, his knowledge and his power, and he has left to us the great sweetness of the relation with the Mother (p. 69).

He sends a photo of Sri Aurobindo taken after he left his body, indicating that the picture had to be viewed



To Thee Our Infinite Gratitude

Writings on the Passing of
Sri Aurobindo

so as to show him reclining against a cushion. The Mother distributed another photo of the Lord's profile shown too in an erect position. Incidentally, this reminds us of the Mother's attitude towards lying down. She did not lie flat when resting or "sleeping" but would recline on a couch. We are told that she wanted to avoid sinking into

inconscience. I may add that Pavitra-da's utter surrender and firm belief in Sri Aurobindo's "living and active presence, radiating Light and Force until...the Supramental has descended and is fully manifested on earth", shines through the restrained objective analysis written to his beloved father.

In "A 'Call' from Pondicherry" (p. 29), Dr. Sanyal recounts his own experience of the events. Among other intimate conversations with the Mother he mentions her poignant remark: "People do not know what a tremendous sacrifice He has made for the world. About a year ago, while I was discussing things I remarked that I felt like leaving this body of mine. He spoke out in a very firm tone: 'No, this can never be. If necessary for this transformation I might go, you will have to fulfil our yoga of supramental descent and transformation!'" (pp. 39–40).

There are intimate exchanges between Sri Aurobindo and the doctor: for instance, the day after arriving he went to Sri Aurobindo's room and gave him a head massage. The doctor enquired if he liked it. The Master replied, "I know you went to England for your Fellowship but where did you learn massaging?" I may add a personal note here that Dr. Sanyal, the renowned surgeon, had the softest, most gentle hands I have ever felt.

Just before leaving Pondicherry he asked the Mother 'naively', "Why was I called?" The Mother sweetly and lovingly replied, "We wanted you to be here, not

so much for treatment.” A day earlier, while kneeling by the Mother’s feet at the bedside of Sri Aurobindo, he had whispered to her, “Where is the light you speak of—can I not see it?” With “infinite compassion”, he writes, “She put Her hand on my head. There He was—with a luminous mantle of bluish golden hue around him.”

With a most reassuring title, “I am here! I am here!”, Nirodbaran also gives us a full account of the events prior to Sri Aurobindo’s leaving the body and the time afterwards. Nirod-da was the scribe who wrote down the lines of *Savitri* as dictated by Sri Aurobindo at the time when his eyesight was failing. Here we can experience the intimate and deep camaraderie that had grown up between the disciple and the Master. There are also the most precious pages, from page 12 to page 16, in which is revealed the progress of Sri Aurobindo’s work on *Savitri*, which he wanted to “finish soon”. Nirod quotes these prophetic lines:

A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world’s doom and
hers.
In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
She only can save herself and save the world.

Writing about Sri Aurobindo’s dogged determination against all odds, he quotes the Master: “Even if I knew that my mission would fail, I would go on working till the last moment” (p.21). The full text of Nirodbaran’s report was read out to the Mother. She liked it, and when it was printed as a booklet, she distributed it along with “The Passing of Sri Aurobindo” by Amal Kiran and, if I remember correctly, Dr. Sanyal’s “A ‘Call’ from Pondicherry” too.

“The Passing of Sri Aurobindo: Its Inner Significance and Consequence” by Amal Kiran is the longest record here by a disciple present at the time. One reads indeed a beautiful, detailed, exhaustive and analytical report. In the very first line we read this statement of Sri Aurobindo: “No one can write about my life because it is not on the surface for men to see.” It is certainly befitting to mention Amal-da’s after Nirod-da’s, since they were both poets, and close friends too. Amal was a born poet and it is my impression that in complexity,

sweetness and richness, his style approaches that of Sri Aurobindo. For instance, his description of Sri Aurobindo’s body as “spiritually imperial” is very beautiful and shows his deep, loving devotion and sensitivity (p. 58). However, I feel that the second part of his article is unparalleled, beginning with these words: “The core of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy and yoga is the dynamic Truth-consciousness that is the Supermind.” The whole section from page 51 to page 61 is superb and so true! It cannot be condensed. One should just let the words sink into the silence of one’s mind and the depths of one’s heart.

There is just one extract from *Savitri* included in the article, from a passage in Book I, Canto II that Amal particularly cherished. It includes the following lines, which describe Savitri, the central figure of the poem:

A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple-door to things beyond.

There are also those disciples who did not live in the Ashram, yet whose souls and beings lived steeped in adoration and deep love for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar was one such disciple. In “The Mystery of 5th December 1950”, we get all the salient facts given in other accounts earlier in the book. It is truly a chronicle—the longest in this slim book. Here we are given a vast sweep of experiences, personal notes, visions of disciples, as well as tokens of respect from seekers and important persons at the time. I was happy to see here repeated two messages of the Mother:

To grieve is an insult to Sri Aurobindo who is here with us, conscious and alive.

and

We stand in the Presence of Him who has sacrificed his physical life in order to help more fully his work of transformation.

He is always with us, aware of what we are doing, of all our thoughts, of all our feelings and all our actions.

Srinivasa Iyengar has also mentioned the words put up on the Ashram notice board, I believe, by Nolini-da as Managing Trustee:

He has done it: he has made the Nature take the final leap. The mental being with its triple nodi is

at last bundled up and cast into the Supramental status. As he saw and assured us,

A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,

Nature shall overleap her mortal step.

The formed seed is now in the womb developing fast and sure, it awaits the moment to break out into the light of material and universal day.

It is interesting to read the way this scholar defines the 'withdrawals' in Sri Aurobindo's life as means to make many greater steps forward (see pp. 86–87). Finally, as a seal on the Avatar's tremendous labour for the earth, "we have the Mother's word – reinforced by the experience of the Supramental radiance from his body from 5th to 8th December – that 'as soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he called the Mind of Light got realised here.'"

To would-be readers I must add a final word. Read the book a little at a time, slowly, quietly; bathe your mind, your heart and your soul in each of the experiences evoking the presence of the Mother and the Lord. Relive that past which points clearly to a glorious Future!

— Richard Pearson

Richard arrived in India from England to join his father in 1946 at the age of eleven. He studied at SAICE where he teaches Natural History and is a gymnastics coach. He is the editor of the book Flowers and Their Messages.

On a personal note. . .

In the beginning of December 1950, my father wrote to the Mother asking whether he, a photographer friend (V.) and I could go to Annamalai University to visit Dr. Singh, who had spoken in the Ashram about his experiments with music on plants. He told her we wanted to go on the 5th of the month. She granted us permission. As we were getting ready to leave early in the morning, our friend knocked on our window to tell us that he did not feel like coming and advised us to postpone our trip. My father replied that since the Mother knew about our plans, we would leave as scheduled.

Only after arriving at Annamalai University did we learn that Sri Aurobindo had left his body. This was indeed unexpected news. Dr. Singh asked us if we wanted to

return to Pondicherry immediately, but my father decided that we should continue to see all that we had come for. In the afternoon, after seeing his work at the botany laboratory, we spent time with Dr. Singh, talking about Sri Aurobindo and his teachings. In the evening, back in Pondicherry, I went to the Ashram to fill our *kujah* with water, as I did every day.

What met my eyes was truly shocking: the young saplings of the Mast Tree (*Polyalthialongifolia*), planted on either side of the street (Rue de la Marine) in front of the Ashram as directed by the Mother for India's Independence Day, had had their protective guards broken down. Inside the Ashram, it seemed there had even been a stampede over the rockery. Plants were broken or bent over. I met some friends at the water filter in the Ashram, and they told me how the local townspeople had rushed in, causing the damage I had just seen. In my mind was the thought: "Why had the Mother allowed us to go out?" But in my heart of hearts I knew that I would not have been able to bear such a disturbing atmosphere.

* * *

On 18 November 1973, I was awakened at four in the morning by a person knocking at my window who said: "Come to the Ashram. The Mother has passed away." At that moment I knew that the Mother had sent someone to see that I was informed as soon as possible. Along with others, I was on duty at the Ashram, silently supervising the entry of the *sadhaks*. Strange yet true, my duty station was near the rockery. What a difference from 5 December 1950! There was a calm, solemn and collected atmosphere in those moments before dawn. People came silently and serenely, a few at a time, or one by one.

Later, when my duty was over, I too joined the growing line to pass before the Mother as she lay reclined on her couch. I could not believe my eyes when I passed by. What I saw was a defiant warrior continuing to wage a great battle; not the expression of a calm face, but a grim determination in all her almost living features. It was impossible to feel that she was not alive. Each day until 20 November, I went to see her in the Meditation Hall and then sat quietly in the courtyard. It took me a long time to understand what I had inwardly felt while sitting there: she had entered into each one of us, into the whole world too, in a permanent, living and concrete way. After all, is not death an illusion?

— Richard Pearson

The Knowledge Within

The Source, the Breath, the Five Elements, the Body or Matter

— Compiled from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Publisher: Kalu Sarkar, Pondicherry

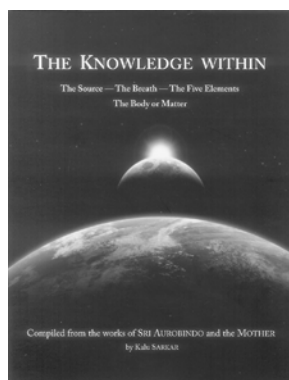
83 pp, Rs 220

Size: 18x24 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

The Knowledge Within, as a title, may be somewhat daunting for the common man. But it is an excellent, practical handbook for good health; and even, for the more inquisitive, it provides guidance on the basics of spiritual force and an understanding that “pranic energy supports not only the operations of our physical life, but also those of the mind in the living body.” It lucidly explains the benefits of the control of breath as a vital force for *nadi shuddhi* (purification of the *nadis*—the subtle channels that carry *prana*, the life energy), so very essential for our continued good health.

The editor, a veteran *sadhak* of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, has a vast storehouse of personal and practical experience in physiotherapeutic exercises practised over



decades, including his many sessions of stress management in France. His book, an offering blossoming out of his faith in the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, addresses a simple theme: stress. Modern man, enjoying the fruits of the progress of science and technology, is now beset with an “increased mental and emotional anxiety, [a] lack of ability to control thoughts”, familiar symptoms of the condition known commonly as stress.

Stress is not just a mental or psychological condition, avers the editor in his introduction, nor is it only physical. It is a psycho-physical condition which has

Some observations on The Knowledge Within from a hatha yoga instructor:

At the end of this book, the author has highlighted some physical practices that can contribute to improved health. These practices are divided into three sections and each section is illustrated with colour photographs that demonstrate the proper way to do the exercises.

Respiratory Practices: *Nadi Shuddhi*

As is commonly seen around the world today, yoga and its various practices are being modified to suit the needs of different people. There are practitioners and teachers of hatha yoga, therapists, physical culturists, physiotherapists and seekers who bring their own interpretations and experiences to the modifications. To begin with, *pranayama* (breathing techniques) is to be done only in the sitting position. The author has modified this to include a prone position for those who are very weak. It does seem to be a more comfortable alternative. However, this may tire the arms quickly and also keep the thorax and chest in a more expanded position

throughout, which may demand more effort in the chest and lungs. A word of caution should be added: the practitioner should limit the number of times each exercise is done and should not feel tired at any time during the practice of *pranayama*.

The other breathing practices that are shown are simple, doable and are clearly described. Every individual should practise these simple exercises as they promote healthy abdominal breathing.

Murma Points

The pressure points suggested seem to cover a host of general discomforts or ailments that people face at some time or the other. There are points for more severe conditions such as asthma and vertigo, which have also been thoughtfully included. Although I have no background in the use of *murma* points, it seems to me that these key pressure points, when pressed or massaged as part of a daily routine, would help to promote a healthy flow of *prana* and arrest an energy toxicity build-up in different organs and joints.

its genesis beyond the mind and the body; hence, to cure it one must delve deep and understand the spiritual element of man's physiology. The compiler's long association with the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, especially its practical aspects, has helped him cull relevant and meaningful excerpts from their writings, and these have been arranged in a sequence that can enable a serious reader to study and practise methods of spiritual improvement and those breathing exercises that contribute to keeping the body fit as well. Most importantly, here we learn about Matter, Mind, Spirit, and Consciousness, not just as abstract concepts but as elemental components for the existence of a complete individual.

The selections from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have many layers of meaning. But it is to the credit of the compiler that he has chosen the passages so that, even for a layman, the words convey practical guidance. Explaining the meaning of yoga, Annie Besant wrote, "Yoga is literally union and it means harmony with the divine Law, the becoming one with the divine Life, by the subdual of all outward-going

energies." If we bear in mind this meaning of yoga, we can discern even greater meanings in all these excerpts, which together form the bedrock of this book.

The sources of the extracts, all meticulously listed at the end, provide a ready guide to further readings for those who are so inclined. Equally valuable are the notes on respiratory exercises along with the sixty colour plates illustrating therapeutic postures and important acupressure points. All together, these provide simple yet effective guidance for those who are willing to try the prescription laid out in this book.

This is an unusual book but very readable, and repeated readings can only widen one's understanding and help one to walk on the path to good health, all by oneself.

— Swapan C. Dutta

Swapan Dutta retired in 2003 from his position in the Central Government as Secretary, Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications and IT. His association with the Ashram dates back to 1969, when he met the Mother. He lives in Bangalore and visits the Ashram regularly.

Therapeutic Postures

This section is conveniently divided to cover different regions of the body: the upper back-neck region, the hip-groin-thigh-hamstring-knee areas, and the lower back. The practices are simple, highly focused locally and extremely helpful.

I have personally benefited from the exercises given here for the knee/sciatic pain and for the hip too. These therapeutic postures are a precious gift to those people who tend to rely on medications or balms, believing they are the only way to relieve pain.

The descriptions are sufficient for the average person. More detailed, step-by-step instructions and a better quality of illustrations would make this section more appealing and clearer to the reader.

The author has a very rich and expansive breadth of knowledge and its practical application in these areas. Accompanying comments that explain how the nexus of

mind and emotion influences each area of the human body would have been of special interest. Hopefully, the next edition will bring that to fruition!

To sum up, the author has provided us with some simple respiratory techniques, important *murma* points to maintain a healthy flow of *prana* and help in the prevention of any toxic build-up, and a range of stretching exercises that cover important regions of the body. When practised daily, this is an easy-to-use maintenance program for robust health.

— Vibha Shah

Vibha graduated from SAICE and pursued her interests in the mind-body field, earning a diploma in traditional hatha yoga. Her interests are varied: energy-based healing (reconnective healing), energy therapy (EFT), reading, and photography. She has been teaching hatha yoga for more than a decade.

On Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*

Part Two: Collected Comments

— Writings by Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

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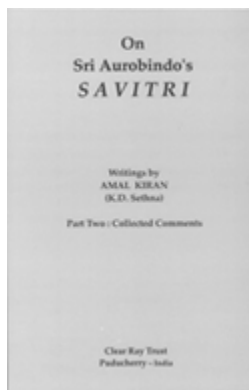
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Whereas volume one of this two-volume set of Amal Kiran's writings on *Savitri* consisted of completed essays, this second volume contains passages that have been extracted from various books, articles or letters. The idea was to gather these valuable comments which were scattered here and there and make them readily available. Typically the passages are a page or two in length, a few run to six or seven pages, and the longest – a talk – runs to about twenty pages. Occasionally there are a few passages that pertain to the same issue or line of poetry, and thus there is some overlap between them, but even in these cases there are generally unique points afforded. The writings are organized thematically in six sections: (1) Amal Kiran's relation with the poem; (2) how to read *Savitri*; (3) particular passages, lines, words; (4) general comments on *Savitri*; (5) talks and letters on poetry; and (6) miscellaneous. There is also a useful index of lines in *Savitri* on which the author has commented, as well as a general index.

I found confirmation of my own intuition, not as an absolute rule, but as a guide and suggestion: "Savitri is to be read in small quantities—two or three pages at most each time," and "It has the power to build you anew nearer to the Divine's conception of you."

I have found many jewels in this collection, which not only gave me deeper insights into *Savitri*, but also gave me enriching perspectives on *sadhana* and spiritual living. Because Amal was a master writer and poet and one of the most knowledgeable of persons about *Savitri*, who had for a long time corresponded with Sri Aurobindo about it, this collection provides the reader with rich insights into the poem and the nature of its poetry.



It may be useful to give a few examples of its discourse in each of the six sections mentioned above. The first section discusses some of Amal's personal experiences relating to the poem and his work on it.

We find some helpful hints about how one can use *Savitri* as a means of spiritual growth, and an interesting experience he had in which reciting *Savitri* helped him recover from a persistent fever. There is also an engaging discussion of Amal's interactions with the Mother regarding his work of proofreading and editorial corrections relating to *Savitri*. This essay gives us insights into not only Amal's editorial work with the poem, but also with the Mother's attitudes toward his work and her way of working with him. Perhaps most essentially, we get a feel for Amal's inner relation with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which in various ways was articulated by remarkable lines in the poem.

In the second section (on how to read *Savitri*), I found this gem in one of the passages:

Read it so that your ear and not only your eye takes the poetry in. This means you must read it audibly. Further, try to receive the impact of the poetry as though the sound came from above your head and at the same time emerged from what the Rigveda terms the heart-ocean. This twofold arrival is the way of the Mantra.

I had of course known that it is best to read *Savitri* audibly, and as he says elsewhere in this passage, with "as hushed a mind as you can manage," but this "twofold arrival" was new to me and suggests a new approach. Elsewhere I found confirmation of my own intuition, not as an absolute rule, but as a guide and suggestion: "*Savitri* is to be read in small quantities—two or three pages at most each time," and "It has the power to build you anew nearer to the Divine's conception of you."

In the third section, there are many helpful analyses of particular passages and lines which can give us a deeper appreciation not only of the significance of these particular lines, but of the nuances of poetic composition in general. Here we find out many of

Amal's favorite lines in the poem, along with some inkling of what special significance he attributed to them. But what I enjoyed most was his analysis of the rhythm and sounds of particular lines, and while this is sometimes a bit technical, it can give a fuller appreciation of the poem. For example, for the line, "In the wide workshop of the wonderful world," he explains that by using four *w*s "the expansive effect is tremendous and it is made most acute and conscious for us by the use of the very word 'wide.'" This expression of significances (e.g., expansion) through sounds (e.g., *w* sound) is of course crucial in poetry, and in this section we get various examples in *Savitri* that give us clues to better appreciate these correspondences in other lines. We also find in this section an explanation of some perplexing or easily misunderstood lines. In a supplement at the end of the section, there is a useful reference to the passages in *Savitri* that bear on modern physics. One thing that there was surprisingly little of in this section, however, was explanations of the particular planes of consciousness with which certain lines were associated.

In the fourth section (general comments), we find some commentary about the nature of mantra as it is exemplified in *Savitri*, as well as the standing of the poem in relation to other great epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata. There is also some interesting discussion about the Indian writing of English poetry, and how it can powerfully convey to the world the mystical experience and knowledge that India possesses. I also found a variety of interesting observations about the poem that enriched my appreciation.

Perhaps most notable in the fifth section (talks and letters) is a long twenty-page letter written to a critic of *Savitri* in which Amal responds to a series of criticisms. This letter is very instructive to help all of us better appreciate various qualities and characteristics of the poem. He deals with such issues as its massive length, its use of epithets, its abstractness and difficulty of comprehension, its distinction from the style of Milton, which is born of the pure poetic intelligence. In another letter, he traces some parallels with the styles of Homer, Virgil and Dante. In another, he shows influences or accents of Shelley and Keats. In yet another, he shows us some notes of Wordsworth coming through the poem. These comparisons of lines in *Savitri* with those of other great poets help us to better appreciate its finer rhythms and higher amplitudes.

In the last section (miscellaneous), I found some of the most valuable comments of the entire book, in part because they pertained more generally to the spiritual life than to specific aspects of *Savitri*, which often were brought in only through a line or passage that exemplified the point he was making. For example, in two different passages the author makes some comments about *sadhana* which were summed up by the line, "All can be done if the god-touch is there." Perhaps my favorite passage in the book is in answer to the question, "What is it to be an Aurobindonian?" In brief summary, Amal notes that it is one who "carries on the practice of the presence of Sri Aurobindo and aspires to catch as much as possible the traits which we discern as typical of him." Then, to catch the essence of those traits, he quotes the lines from *Savitri*: "A poised serenity of tranquil strength, | A wide unshaken look on time's unrest". His further elaboration of these traits is most touching and inspiring. We also find in this section an excellent discussion culled from a longer article on the spiritual significance of Sri Aurobindo's passing.

These various examples mentioned here can only give a taste of the contents of the book and perforce overlook many of its wonderful nuggets of golden wisdom. It may be noted that as its subject matter is *Savitri*, an incomparable revelatory poem, and that throughout the book are quoted various lines and passages together with insightful commentaries on them, it cannot fail to transmit a radiant splendor. This is perhaps a book primarily for *Savitri* lovers, those who want to penetrate deeply into its inexhaustible store of wisdom and delight, but surely all who read it will be elevated by its treasures.

— Larry Seidlitz

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Paths to Self-Discovery

Reflective practices with children

— Mirambika Team

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi

223 pp, ISBN 978-81-88847-48-8, Rs 300

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Binding: Hard Cover

I am but a refugee of divine Grace! Picked up from a sleepy, forlorn village in U. P. and carried graciously in Their arms through the most important phase of my life, childhood, the Mother gave me shelter in what was undoubtedly the “Dream School” of that privileged era: the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. When I recount the happy, grateful time I spent in that magical little paradise we used to call school, people can hardly believe today that such a world had really existed. And yet...

On the world stage, a whole cycle of development seems to be coming to a close as a silent revolution is on. We can glimpse its stirrings as we become increasingly aware of the wrong turn education has taken. We have watched children every morning, backs bent with overburdened satchels, “creeping like snails unwillingly to school”. We have seen disheartening newspaper clippings and TV shows: students, under unbearable pressure and frustrated, running away from home or even ending their lives. Apathy is writ large on the bored faces of teachers who, somewhere along the way, seem to have lost the very heart of their vocation, the thrill of exploring a world of wondrous, ever-expanding knowledge, and are now sunk into a soulless, joyless drudgery. There is a continuing, all-pervasive climate of mistrust of children unashamedly reigning among teachers and administrators alike.

Paradise lost, no doubt! But is there a way to regain it? Is there a glimmer of hope and light in the depressing world of these so-called temples of learning? Is there a system or method to reawaken in children the love and thirst for knowledge and rekindle in teachers the passion and fire for teaching and learning?

Yes, we have reason to hope. For there are people who continue to believe in the forward march of humanity, courageous dreamers who have hitched their wagon to a star and are leading us from the front, against tremendous odds, towards untrodden and more radiant pastures. One such promising endeavour is the Mirambika school! Leafing through *Paths to Self-*

Discovery: Reflective practices with children brought a smile back on my ever-hopeful teacher’s face. *Paths to Self-Discovery* is a breath of the much longed-for oxygen needed to lift the sagging spirits of our children. Published by the Sri Aurobindo Education Society (Delhi), it is generously and aesthetically illustrated with colour photographs of wide-eyed, happy-faced children absorbed in all kinds of activities amidst beautiful sylvan surroundings. The book’s Introduction has two parts: the first explaining the five aspects of a child’s development in Integral Education through the use of reflective practices and the second describing a child’s typical day at Mirambika. Then nine chapters follow, representing the various age groups, that describe how these reflective practices are woven into a variety of activities at the different levels – stories, role-plays, introspective questions, self-observation, self-discovery, journal-writing –, dealing with classwork, project-work, self-evaluation, conflict resolution and knowledge building. We also have some very perceptive and revelatory expressions from the children, from the teachers (known as *diyas*, a combination of *didi* and *bhaiya*), as well as some thoughts from parents of these Mirambika children.

Reflection is at the centre of the process and fits beautifully with one of the fundamentals of the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of education: to go from the near to the far. This reflection is not to be understood as an active mental activity at all. It is supposed to be a discovery in quiet concentration, as if one were gazing into a mirror or a rippleless lake, the deeply intuitive Wordsworthian “intimations of immortality”:

*There was a time when meadow, grove, and
stream,*

The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem

Apparell’d in celestial light,

The glory and the freshness of a dream.

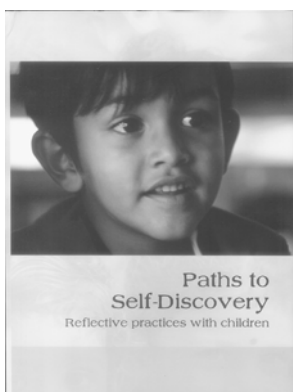
...trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God, who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Surrounded by the gentle and sensitively illuminating presence of the *diyas*, their guiding lights or “lamps”, together with the crucial understanding of the parents, who are invited to grow along with them in this progressive self-knowledge, the children are led

through a process of “flowering from within”. Any truth imposed from outside will not stay with the child, but one he discovers by himself will become part of his expanding universe, as with passing time the growing child reaches into ever-deeper layers of his consciousness towards that identity which is in fact his true self. This reflection leads to self-observation as the child grows older, when the looking within becomes a more active process, and then to introspection when the mind comes into sharp focus as the learner explains, analyses and reviews his thoughts, feelings, ideas and actions.



Considering the ever-narrowing, utilitarian view of life these days and the consequent job-oriented education, with its proliferation of industry-formatted schools that litter the student’s life with exasperating memory-based tests and examinations, the Mirambika school is indeed an unbelievable

and an admirable endeavour. My joy was redoubled to know that Tanmay-da had been part of the team of courageous dreamers of Mirambika, for he had also been the inspirer and caretaker of my own growing years at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education! I take this opportunity to remember and salute this indefatigable barrier-breaker of the Mother, for he sought ceaselessly to incarnate against much resistance one of Her most cherished dreams: the Free Progress method of education.

What *is* this revolutionary method of education?

The quality of education is always related to how we perceive the child. Most schools consider him a mind and the entire system is ruthlessly geared to mental development; some others think he is also a body and so a few hours are assigned in the timetable for physical training; yet others see the child’s volitional and emotional needs and pepper his academic life with some artistic pursuits. But they all ignore the core reality of the child: his psychic and spiritual dimension. The Free

Progress method of education is about integrating the discovery and nurturing of the psychic being or soul of a child into the daily activities of the school. It is an education that finally aims to be guided by the soul.

However, despite society, parents and, above all, children feeling a sense of deepening disillusionment with the present educational set-up, there will always be doubting Thomases ready to question and impede this natural upward human yearning for systems that express greater love, greater light and greater knowledge. This is but a premonition of Mind’s pathological fear, unwilling to cede its hold on us to a greater power to run our daily existence. But Light will out, for we cannot go on living in the old ways that stifle the very life-breath of human aspiration: the Soul longing to fly once more in its native sky.

— Maurice Shukla

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An example of reflective practices with children:

The children (age 10 group) were asked to reflect on the question, “What does spirituality mean to me?”

One boy wrote the following:

- Conscious about things and ourselves.
- Closer to God.
- We get to know our inner self because we are calm and peaceful.
- We have to be closer to God to know our inner self.
- Think deeply through things.
- We have spirituality and we must share it.
- Some divine power we are carrying within.
- When we meditate we get control on ourselves.

Effort and Grace

There are, we know, as Sri Aurobindo says, two powers which in their conjunction bring about the great consummation we aim at. It is personal effort from below and Divine Grace from above. The one prepares the field, the other fructifies and fulfils.

It has, however, always been declared that personal effort is not absolute in its effectivity, it is limited, relative and conditional: it does not by itself lead you to the final and supreme realisation; it takes you at the most to the threshold of Grace which follows up the work and brings it to its goal. Indeed it has also been said that personal effort itself is operative when inspired and impelled by the Grace from behind or from above. The Gita says in effect: By your effort and *tapasyā* you are capable of withdrawing yourself from the mayic world of the senses, get detached from the sense-objects; but the secret attachment, the taste, the subtle interest for them goes only when the Supreme is visioned:

Raso'pyasya param dṛṣtvā nivartate

(The Gita, 2: 59)

The Upanishad also says: the highest is visible only when of its own accord It unveils itself:

Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ

(Katha Upanishad, 2:23)

The actual function or role of personal effort is that of a guide, like Virgil taking Dante through Hell and Purgatory and then arriving at the frontier of Paradise and there entrusting him into the hands of Beatrice. It is to give the preliminary experiences, initiate into the basic mysteries in order to prepare the vessel that is to house the Supreme. The Supreme is not amenable to your control whatever your effort may be, it is free, even eccentric – the wind bloweth where it listeth – the Grace goes wherever it chooses to go; it does not weigh or examine the amount of your preparation, it has its own manner of choosing. But the preparation that your personal effort effectuates is helpful for the working of the Grace not so much for its initial descent—it is, as I said, to prepare the *ādhār* for holding, maintaining and establishing it.

We know too well:

Only a little the God-light can stay

(*Savitri*, Book I, Canto I)

The whole problem is there: how to make the God-light stay here, stay here for ever.... Here then is this special utility of personal effort, the service it can render,—to do the dredging, salvaging work. Personal effort with the

ego-sense has been put there to find out and note the barriers and pitfalls, the faults and fissures in the human system, to overcome, remedy and correct them as far as possible.... That is the work of the individual will, to make of the *ādhār* a strong base, strong and capacious, to receive and hold the descent.

...Still, personal effort on our part has a unique value in this sense that it means collaboration and goodwill and readiness of the being to fall in line with the cosmic work and the Divine plan: it signifies the assent of the lower consciousness to the working of the higher. What is required is conscious cooperation: unconscious cooperation is always there but it is, as it were, forced labour: does not the Lord declare to Nature

I will pursue thee across the centuries;

Thou shalt be hunted through the world by love,
Naked of ignorance' protecting veil

Nowhere shalt thou escape my living eyes.

(*Savitri*, Book XI, Canto I)

Instead of the ill-will or unwillingness of the normal original ignorant being there comes about a change, a conversion to the light and truth. First the Inferno, then the Purgatory, finally there will be the Paradise. At the outset in the ignorance the being withdraws, contracts, wriggles under the light touching it, its first impulse is to repel the newcomer. A conscious effort is a movement of correction against the instinctive reaction, it is a movement towards the right reaction of the being to the impact of the light. The whole being, the whole nature in all its parts and functions has to be corrected, re-oriented, gradually tempered and streamlined—polarized so that it is made one-pointed, supple and obedient and responsive. That is the process of fixing upon earth the fleeting Godhead.

Personal effort is thus a training in collaboration. From inertia and indifference, unwillingness and even positive hostility to rise into cooperation and comradeship, that is the discipline that personal effort gives to the mortal being, and then from cooperation and collaboration to union and identity with the Supreme Goal, effort merging into the spontaneous execution of the Divine Will, the personal melting into the impersonal Person—that is the consummation brought about by the Grace.

Nolini Kanta Gupta
The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo