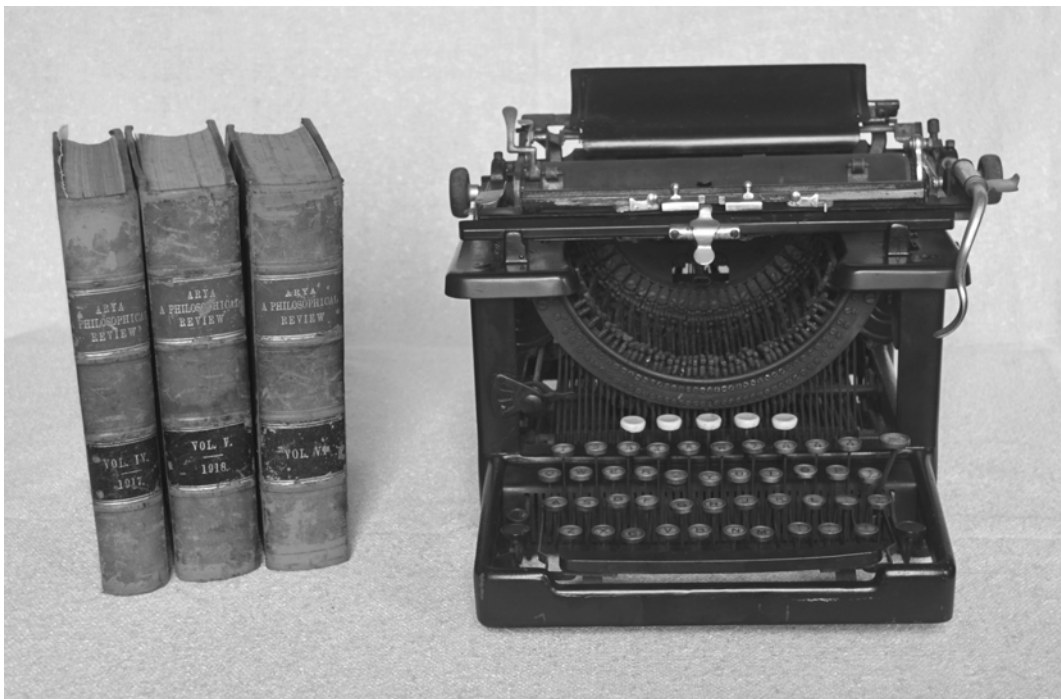


Recent Publications

Sabbā

This year marks two important centenary events: the Mother's first arrival in Pondicherry and her first meeting with Sri Aurobindo on 29 March 1914, and the launching of the *Arya* on 15 August 1914. The lead article in this issue takes a look at how, during these few short months, the Mother's presence gave a dynamic impetus to the scope of the Yoga, and the philosophical review *Arya* became, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "the intellectual side of my work for the world".



Sri Aurobindo's typewriter and some bound volumes of the *Arya*

In 1956, the Mother commented that when Sri Aurobindo wrote for the *Arya*, "he silenced his mind and sat at the typewriter, and from above, from the higher planes, all that had to be written came down, all ready, and he had only to move his fingers on the typewriter and it was transcribed."

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From the First Meeting to the Launching of the *Arya*

Recent Publications

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From the First Meeting to the Launching of the *Arya*

29 March–15 August 1914

ON 29 MARCH 2014, we celebrated the centenary of the Mother's first arrival in Pondicherry and her meeting with Sri Aurobindo. That meeting was destined to have profound repercussions for the future of humanity. Although we will never fully understand what passed between them that day and the ones that followed, we find hints in talks, letters, and diary entries, and their biographers have written eloquently of the deeper significance of the meeting. Sri Aurobindo had been engrossed in silent yoga since he arrived in Pondicherry in 1910, preparing the ground for future realisations. The Mother had been living an intense inner life in Paris and Algeria, intent on uniting with her psychic being, leading a small group of seekers, and studying occultism with Max and Alma Théon. When they met in Pondicherry, a new dynamic spirituality took form. As Nolini Kanta Gupta recounts, "it was then plans were clearly laid for the thing that was to be and the shape it was to take—this New Creation of theirs." [*Reminiscences*, 49]

The Mother's first impressions of Sri Aurobindo are recorded in the well-known passage from *Prayers and Meditations* dated 30 March: "It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth." [CWM, i, 113] And in November 1929, while speaking with a disciple, she described what happened in these words:

When I saw Sri Aurobindo for the first time, at once I knew that here was he, the Divine. It was a revelation. And once you know that here is the Divine, how can there be any more doubt, any questioning? I unburdened myself before him and became so happy, joyful, free! Whatever he said I at once accepted it as the truth, there was absolutely no room for doubts. When he said that my mental constructions were illusions, they at once broke down, though I had lived on them for fourteen years! [*Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1977, 64]

On the day after their first meeting, the Mother had an unexpected experience, when Sri Aurobindo imparted to her the silent mind. Reading the Mother's descriptions of this experience in her talks, one is reminded of Sri Aurobindo's words regarding his realisation of the silent Brahman consciousness, obtained when sitting for three days in a room in Baroda with the Maharashtrian yogi Lele in 1908: "what it brought was an inexpressible Peace, a stupendous silence, an infinity of release and freedom." [*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, 249] Here is how the Mother related her own experience of 30 March:

I was seated close to him [Sri Aurobindo], simply, like that, on the floor. (He was sitting on a chair, with a table in front of him, and on the other side of the table was Richard, and they were talking.) Myself, I didn't listen. I sat. I don't know how long they remained, but suddenly I felt within me as if a great Force—Peace! Silence! Massive. It came, did like this [*a gesture of sweeping at the level of the forehead*], descended like that, and stopped there [*the chest*]. And when they finished talking, I stood and went out. And then I noticed that I didn't have a thought in my mind—that I knew nothing any more, understood nothing any more, that I was absolutely in a complete *blank*. Then I gave thanks to the Lord, and thanked Sri Aurobindo in my heart. [*SAAR*, 116]

Nolini reports that the first time Sri Aurobindo happened to describe the Mother's qualities, he said he "had never seen anywhere a self-surrender so absolute and unreserved" [*Reminiscences*, 81]. Her openness to the descent of Silence as described above betokens such a complete surrender.

We do know, from the Mother's talks, some of the subjects that came up during those early meetings. She came ready with her questions, the very first being of utmost importance for their future work:

Truly speaking, it was the first question which came up when I met Sri Aurobindo. I think I have already told you this; I don't remember now, but I spoke about it recently. Should one do one's yoga and reach the goal and then later take up the work with others or should one immediately let all those who have the same aspiration come to him and go forward all together towards the goal?

Because of my earlier work and all that I had tried, I came to Sri Aurobindo with the question very precisely formulated. For the two possibilities were there: either to do an intensive individual sadhana by withdrawing from the world, that is, by no longer having any contact with others, or else to let the group be formed naturally and spontaneously, not preventing it from being formed, allowing it to form, and starting all together on the path.

Well, the decision was not at all a mental choice; it came spontaneously. The circumstances were such that there was no choice; that is, quite naturally, spontaneously, the group was formed in such a way that it became an imperious necessity. And so once we have started like that, it is finished, we have to go to the end like that. [CWM, vii, 409]



The first floor of 41 (now 37) Rue François Martin, where Sri Aurobindo was living when the Mother met him in 1914. In this view of the courtyard, one sees the windows of the long veranda, where Sri Aurobindo usually met visitors. The photograph was taken in the 1930s.

In another talk, dated 28 March 1964, she mentions that she “was born with a consciously prepared body—Sri Aurobindo was aware of that, he said it immediately the first time he saw me: I was born free. That is, from the spiritual standpoint: without any desire. Without any desire and attachment.” It was this quality that gave the Mother the power to withstand all the effort and struggle involved in the work of physical transformation. And when, about a year before Sri Aurobindo's passing, she remarked to him that she felt like leaving the body, his reply was immediate and firm: that could never be, for it was she alone who could do the material thing [Van Vrekhem, 332].

The Launching of the *Arya*

What happened after these early meetings was a veritable whirlwind of activity and work. As soon as the canvassing for the French elections that Paul Richard was contesting was over, he and the Mother were able to spend more time with Sri Aurobindo. At some point in the course of their discussions, the publication of a review that would expound Sri Aurobindo's views was mooted. The decision to launch the review was taken on 1 June 1914, with the first issue to come out on 15 August, Sri Aurobindo's forty-second birthday. Initially, it was to be called *The New Idea*, or *L'Idée nouvelle*, although the title was soon changed to *Arya*. The French edition was to be called *Revue de la Grande Synthèse*. In a letter to Motilal Roy, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

That attempt takes the form of a new philosophical Review with Richard and myself as editors—the *Arya*, which is to be brought out in French and English, two separate editions,—one for France, one for India, England and America. In this Review my new theory of the Veda will appear as also translation and explanation of the Upanishads, a series of essays giving my system of Yoga and a book of Vedantic philosophy (not Shankara's but Vedic Vedanta) giving the Upanishadic foundations of my theory of the ideal life towards which humanity must move. You will see so far as my share is concerned, it will be the intellectual side of my work for the world. [*Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, 208]

At some point, word had got out about the new venture. In his reminiscences, we have K. Amrita's account that prior to its publication, the review was widely talked about and eagerly anticipated, chiefly among the Tamil poet Subramania Bharati and his friends. It was said that the *Arya* would explain the secrets of the Veda and that Sri Aurobindo's new method of Yoga would be divulged. After the declaration

of war in July 1914, there was talk also that World War I was “but the unhealed sore in the human consciousness and the appearance of the *Arya* was destined to heal the sore.” [*Reminiscences*, 182]



The house at 7 Rue Dupleix (now 3 Nehru Street), which the Richards rented in early June 1914. The room at the corner was used as the “stack room”. The photograph as taken in the 1970s.

While the editorial office of the *Arya* was located on the ground floor of the house where Sri Aurobindo was living, the “stack room”, where *Arya* copies were kept, was on the ground floor of the Richards' rented house on 7 Rue Dupleix, which was also

the publication address of the review. The details of the *Arya*'s planning and execution were taken up by the Mother. On 14 June, she wrote in her diary that “it is a veritable work of creation we have to do: create new activities and new modes of being, so that this Force, unknown to the earth till now, may manifest in its

plenitude.” [CWM, i, 173] She maintained the subscription lists, kept the accounts, translated Sri Aurobindo’s writings into French, and generally helped to keep everything moving towards publication. At the same time, she started a new society, called *L’Idée nouvelle*, or The New Idea (the originally proposed title of the *Arya*), aimed at bringing together like-minded young men who were interested in pursuing a higher ideal in their individual life and in their social action. It was, in some way, like the work of the group she had founded earlier in Paris.

Writing from a Silent Mind

The *Arya*’s first issue would begin the serialisation of *The Life Divine*, *The Secret of the Veda*, and *The Synthesis of Yoga*, these three giving form to the philosophical, the mystical, and the psychological and spiritual expressions of Sri Aurobindo’s own yogic experiences [Rishabhchand, 385]. But by mid-June 1914 nothing was ready for the press. Sri Aurobindo was still absorbed in his regular yogic experiments, which he was noting down in his diary, *Record of Yoga*. But now there also appear references to his work for the review:

17 June

The first chapter of the Secret of Veda completed. The power of swift writing & the joy & force of inspiration have been entirely recovered; but cannot be used with sufficient continuity as yet, because of the obstructive tamas in the physical consciousness.

19 June

Study of Veda is beginning to take its proper form.
The Synthesis of Yoga commenced.

20 June

The day has chiefly passed in karma.
Synthesis of Yoga takes its final form; the first Book of the Life Divine begun (the Vedantic Affirmations).

25 June

Karma.
The first chapter of the Life Divine completed with great illumination in the thought & rapidity in its expression. Idea of a publication “The Divine Victory” or the “Conquest of Immortality” ie the Hymns of Vamadeva translated into English in their psychological sense; suggested by the rendering of verses to be prefixed to the first Chapter of the Life Divine.

Karma

The first instalment of Yogic Synthesis recommenced & rapidly completed. What was written before, is reserved for the second instalment.

27 June

Karma
Life Divine Chapter I recopied & corrected.

30 June

Karma.
Final draft of Synthesis of Yoga begun.
Veda IV. 1 completed & IV. 2. partly translated.

[*Record of Yoga*, 499–525 passim]

Within a few weeks Sri Aurobindo had written, from a completely silent mind, the bulk of the first issue of the *Arya*. In 1935, he wrote to a disciple about “a calm or silence which can support or produce action—that I know and that is what I have had—the proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the *Bande Mataram* for four months and wrote 6½ volumes of the *Arya*” [*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, 346].

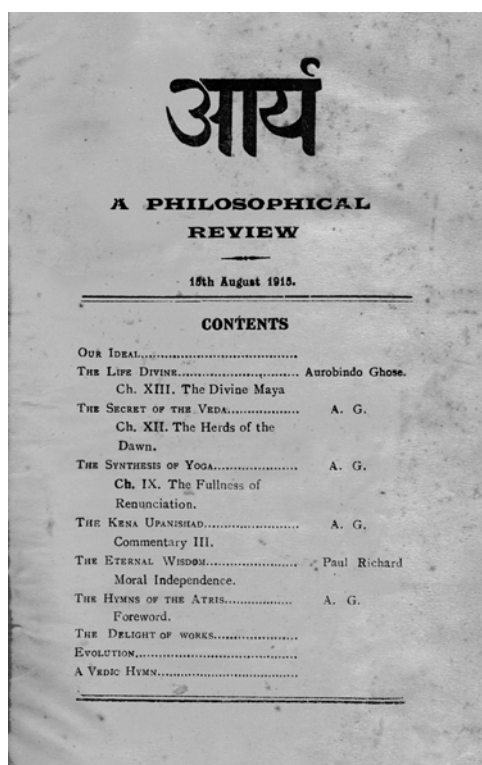
The War Intervenes

On 21 June 1914, the *Arya* was announced publicly. Meanwhile, the rumblings of war began in Europe. On 28 June, a week after the announcement, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo. Exactly one month later, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. By 4 August, less than a fortnight before the debut of the *Arya*, other European powers had joined in the conflict. When asked if there was a special significance in these dates, or whether they represented “a kind of parallel movement”, Sri Aurobindo replied that “the *Arya* was decided on the 1st June and it was agreed that it would start on the 15th August. The war intervened on the 4th. ‘Parallelism’ of dates if you like, but it was not very close and certainly nothing came down at that time.” [*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, 28–9] The outbreak of the war was a blow for the Richards, for Paul Richard was recalled to join the Reserve Army in France. They left in February 1915, which meant that after only seven issues, the French version of the *Arya* ceased publication, and Sri Aurobindo had to continue with sole responsibility for writing all sixty-four pages for each month’s issue. But the war and the peace which followed provided Sri Aurobindo with subject matter for some of his most forceful and prophetic utterances in the *Arya*. When the Armistice was signed, Sri Aurobindo wrote in the December 1918 issue of the *Arya* that “two great words of the divine Truth have forced themselves insistently on our minds through the crash of the ruin and the breath of the tempest and are now the leading words of the hoped-for reconstruction—freedom and unity.” [*War and Self-Determination*, CWSA, xxv, 621] The Treaty of Versailles, concluded six months later, failed to realise and act on this truth, and instead saw the major powers jockeying for position in the post-War world [Iyengar, 728–9].

And the World Heard

Sri Aurobindo’s major prose works – excepting *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, a much later work – were serialised in the *Arya* between August 1914 and January 1921. *Essays on the Gita* started in August 1916; and *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *The Psychology of Social Development* (now known as *The Human Cycle*) began appearing from September 1915 and August 1916 respectively. *The Future Poetry*, *Heraclitus*, *A Defence of Indian Culture* and some shorter works such as *Our Ideal*, *The Superman*, *Evolution*, *The Renaissance in India*, and *War and Self-Determination*, as well as commentaries on the Isha and Kena Upanishads came pouring forth on paper. Comments on the progress of the war, discussions on materialism, meditation, art, astrology, reviews of books and journals, translations, aphorisms and epigrams—all found a place within these pages. By any yardstick, this was a remarkable intellectual achievement in just a handful of years. As an enterprise, the review was successful, always meeting expenses and even generating a respectable profit. This is even more impressive when one considers the high tone and complex subject matter of the writings. Sri Aurobindo was clear about the challenge posed in the review:

The thought of the *Arya* demands close thinking from the reader; it does not spare him the trouble of thinking and understanding and the minds of the people have long been accustomed to have the trouble of thought spared them.... The *Arya* presents a new philosophy and a new method of Yoga and everything that is new takes time to get a hearing. Of course, in reality it is only the old brought back again, but so old that it has been forgotten. It is only those



The image shows the contents page of the 15th August 1915 issue of the *Arya*. At the top, the title 'आर्य' is written in large Devanagari script. Below it, the subtitle 'A PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW' is printed in English. The date '15th August 1915.' is printed below the subtitle. The section 'CONTENTS' is centered. Below it, a list of articles and their authors is provided. The articles include 'OUR IDEAL', 'THE LIFE DIVINE', 'THE SECRET OF THE VEDA', 'THE SYNTHESIS OF YOGA', 'THE KENA UPANISHAD', 'THE ETERNAL WISDOM', 'THE HYMNS OF THE ATRIS', 'THE DELIGHT OF WORKS', 'EVOLUTION', and 'A VEDIC HYMN'. The authors listed are Aurobindo Ghose, A. G., and Paul Richard.

OUR IDEAL.....	
THE LIFE DIVINE.....	Aurobindo Ghose.
Ch. XIII. The Divine Maya	
THE SECRET OF THE VEDA.....	A. G.
Ch. XII. The Herds of the Dawn.	
THE SYNTHESIS OF YOGA.....	A. G.
Ch. IX. The Fullness of Renunciation.	
THE KENA UPANISHAD.....	A. G.
Commentary III.	
THE ETERNAL WISDOM.....	Paul Richard
Moral Independence.	
THE HYMNS OF THE ATRIS.....	A. G.
Foreword.	
THE DELIGHT OF WORKS.....	
EVOLUTION.....	
A VEDIC HYMN.....	

Contents page of the 15 August 1915 issue of the *Arya*

who practise and experience that can at first understand it. In a way, this is good, because it is meant to change the life of people and not merely satisfy the intellect. [*Autobiographical Notes*, 224]

The war undoubtedly interfered with a wider distribution of the review, but it did find readers as far away as the United States. In 1926, Sri Aurobindo wrote that he had recently received letters from different parts of that country which indicated the beginning of a demand for his writings, and that he was interested in bringing out his works in America. He also corresponded with a small publishing firm in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, regarding their proposal to publish some of his *Arya* writings, saying, “I gather that, having view to the conditions in America you propose to print ‘War and Self-Determination’ first as a booklet, to start the standardised series with ‘Essays on the Gita’ and to follow with the ‘Life Divine’. I would have no objection to such an order of issue.” [*Autobiographical Notes*, 387]

Style and Substance

Writing of himself in the third person, Sri Aurobindo described his more important works serialised in the *Arya* as embodying “much of the inner knowledge that had come to him in his practice of Yoga. Others were concerned with the spirit and significance of Indian civilisation and culture, the true meaning of the Vedas, the progress of human society, the nature and evolution of poetry, the possibility of the unification of the human race.” [*Autobiographical Notes*, 9] Denying the appellation of “philosopher”, he said that in writing for the *Arya*, he was putting in mental terms an overmind view of things, and that was the reason he had sometimes to use logic: “For in such a work—mediating between the intellect and the supra-intellectual—logic has a place, though it cannot have the chief place it occupies in purely mental philosophies.” [*Letters on Yoga II*, 451] Elsewhere, he took pains to clarify that there was very little argument in his philosophy:

The elaborate metaphysical reasoning full of abstract words with which the metaphysician tries to establish his conclusions is not there. What is there is a harmonising of the different parts of a many-sided knowledge so that all unites logically together. But it is not by force of logical argument that it is done, but by a clear vision of the relations and sequences of the knowledge. [*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, 66]

Arjava (J. A. Chadwick), one of the early disciples, called the style of the *Arya* “global”, characterising both the wide reach of its thought and the manner of its expression. Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1947 to a disciple: “I heard it [global] first from Arjava who described the language of *Arya* as expressing a global thinking and I at once caught it up as the right and only word for certain things, for instance, the thinking in masses which is a frequent characteristic of the Overmind.” [*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, 158]

In his biography of Sri Aurobindo, K. R. S. Iyengar called Sri Aurobindo’s *Arya* style that of a teacher and prophet, and declared “it was the authority gained by his experience that weighted his writing with rich content.” [924–5] There can be little doubt of the force of Sri Aurobindo’s style evidenced in the cadence and power of the opening paragraph of *The Life Divine*, the words that appeared on the first page of the first issue of the *Arya*:

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.

As for plain substance, there is a letter to Motilal Roy written sometime in 1914–15, wherein Sri Aurobindo states categorically: “My business is now not man-making, but divine man-making.” The world was preparing for a new progress, a new evolution:

In the *Arya* I state the thought upon which this new evolution will be based as I see it, and the method of Yoga by which it can be accomplished. Of course, I cannot speak plainly yet my whole message... But the message is there, for those who care to understand. It has really three parts (1) for each man as an individual to change himself into the future type of divine humanity, the men of the new Satyayuga which is striving to be born; (2) to evolve a race of such men to lead humanity and (3) to call all humanity to the path under the lead of these pioneers and this chosen race. [*Autobiographical Notes*, 225]

Centenary of the *Arya*

In a recorded talk [c. 1976] about how the Ashram developed, Nolini spoke of the significance of the *Arya*. He first describes the humble beginnings of Ashram life: Sri Aurobindo with his four young followers in a single rented house, with a monthly expenditure that did not go beyond Rs 75. He went on to point out that

The first outward activity, the first step of the child setting forth in the wide world, taking its measure in the arena of its future adult adventures, was inspired by the Mother when she came for the first time and joined Sri Aurobindo. It was in the form of a monthly philosophical magazine, which was in effect a trumpet call to man for the life divine that awaits him here and now. For the divine life on earth is the destined goal for humanity to reach. It is the next stage to which Nature raises herself in the progressive march of evolution when man will be at the head of earthly creation, no more as mere rational animal but as spiritual being.

This year marks the centenary of the launching of the *Arya*. The review called on mankind to embody the ideals represented by the term *Arya*, which Sri Aurobindo chose because of its “noble history”. In reply to a question on the significance of the word *Arya*, he explained its fundamental sense as “an effort or an uprising and overcoming. The Aryan is he who strives and overcomes all outside him and within him that stands opposed to the human advance. Self-conquest is the first law of his nature.” [*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, 442–3] Self-conquest would lead to self-perfection and the knowledge that a divine Will, Consciousness, Love, and Beatitude will become the birthright of man. The word meant more than just an ideal: it held a vision of a more highly evolved race that would lead humanity to its ordained future of a life divine.

Sources

Quotations by Sri Aurobindo are from The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA).

Quotations by the Mother are from the Collected Works of the Mother (CWM) unless otherwise cited.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

Morality, Idealism, Religion and Yoga

The Meaning of Spirituality

— Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

174 pp, ISBN 979-81-7058-037-8, Rs 80

Size: 12x18 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

Spirituality may often be confused with morality, idealism, and religion, which play significant roles in regulating, controlling, and directing the lives of most men. But spirituality, or yoga in its more general sense, is essentially different because it proceeds directly by a change of consciousness and presents a radical new approach to life. This approach, which goes beyond the ego and its exclusive focus on the common habits of the mind, life, and body, reveals to man how to find his true self and seek union with the Divine. The editor has selected passages from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that define and clarify these fundamental differences and, in the final section, that describe how to prepare for and take up the path of yoga.

See review on page 12

Reprint from All India Magazine booklet

What Is to Be Done?

58 pp, ISBN 978-81-7060-345-0, Rs 30

Size: 14x20 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

What the Mother's Symbol Represents

49 pp, ISBN 978-81-7060-346-7, Rs 30

Size: 14x20 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Living in The Presence

— Shobha Mitra

Publisher: Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry

207 pp, ISBN 978-81-86413-57-9, Rs 150

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

These reminiscences date back to 1942, when the author first met the Mother, and describe how she eventually came to settle permanently in the Ashram in 1951, while still a teenager. Dance and music were her interests and later, in the Ashram, they became her field of work and *sadhana*. As well as performing, she taught singing and arranged cultural programmes. In this book, translated from the original Bengali, she gathers memories recorded over the years in her notebooks and brings them

to life in a series of vignettes. Through the intimate details of her exchanges with the Mother, a vivid portrait of her spiritual journey emerges from the pages.

See review on page 14

The Luminous Past

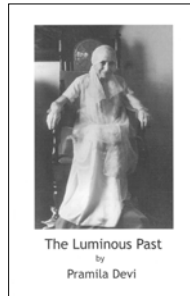
— Pramila Devi

Publisher: First Feature Ltd., London, UK

195 pp, ISBN 978-0-9562923-3-9, Rs 175

Size: 12x18 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



The anecdotes collected in this book, a translation of the original Bengali, span five decades, from the early 1940s to the late 1980s. Pramila Devi joined the Ashram as a young woman in 1941. She learned French, worked in the bakery and the laundry and also taught at the school. Such

sadhaks as Nolini, André, Amrita, Pavitra, Pranab, Janina, her cousin Jatin, and especially Bharati often figure in her recollections of these years. In 1962, the Mother asked her to look after the Jhunjhun boarding for students, a work she continued until her passing in 1995. This translation first appeared in serial form in *Mother India* between 2011 and 2013.

Earth, Love and Doom

Mythico-Symbolic Dimensions of Sri Aurobindo's Savitri

— Nanda Kishore Mishra

Publisher: Authorspress, Delhi

235 pp, ISBN 978-81-7273-383-4, Rs 550

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Hard Cover

This scholarly study begins with an overview of Sri Aurobindo's life and his philosophic and spiritual thought. The next chapter discusses Sri Aurobindo's poetics, in which vision is the characteristic power of a poet. Subsequent chapters deal with symbolism in his poetry, a comparative study of myth and symbol in world literature and in the context of *Savitri*, Aswapati's spiritual odyssey of the soul, and a look at the major symbols of fire, the sun, the dawn, light, and night in *Savitri*, with reference to the Vedas and Upanishads. The final chapters study symbolism in *Savitri* and the *Divine Comedy*, and the use of myth as an instrument of higher knowledge and vision in modern literature.

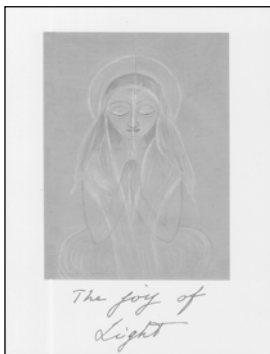
See review on page 16

The Joy of Light

— Compiled and designed by Huta

Publisher: The Havyavahana Trust, Pondicherry

83 pp, ISBN 978-81-87372-26-4, Rs 350



Size: 18x24 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

The forty-seven crayon sketches on tinted papers collected in this volume were done by Huta and were inspired by visions which the Mother had recounted to her. Every day over a period of about six months, Huta would do at least one picture.

After being shown each

drawing, the Mother would concentrate and then note down the significance of the sketch, such as “Unshaken Hope”, “Grateful Receptivity”, and “The Birth of a Consciousness”. These significances, in facsimiles of the Mother’s handwriting, are given with the drawings. The book also includes a few sketches done by the Mother as well as her comments on several of Huta’s drawings.

See review on page 20

OTHER LANGUAGES

DUTCH

Savitri : Een Legende en een Symbool — Sri Aurobindo
ISBN 978-90-70549-28-2 hc Rs 2800

FRENCH

Le Yoga du Sommeil et des Rêves

— Extraits des œuvres de Sri Aurobindo et de la Mère

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department,
Pondicherry

135 pp, ISBN 979-81-7058-012-5, Rs 80



Size: 12x18 cm

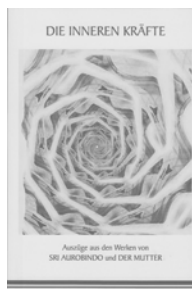
Binding: Soft Cover

Comment rendre le sommeil plus conscient, remplacer les rêves subconscients par des expériences conscientes et finalement transformer le sommeil en un état de repos yogique qui nous permet d’entrer dans les mondes intérieurs et d’y agir comme nous le faisons

dans le monde physique.

Appel: Invocations in Sanskrit and French

(Audio CD) Rs 275



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BOOK REVIEWS

Morality, Idealism, Religion and Yoga *The Meaning of Spirituality*

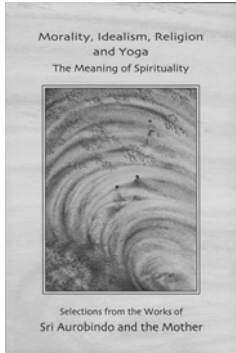
— Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication
Department, Pondicherry

174 pp, ISBN 979-81-7058-037-8, Rs 80

Size: 12x18 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



People everywhere have aspired for a better world, but we are still far from the rosy visions of a utopian life. As the search for better systems and models continues, it is becoming clear that the lofty ideals rooted in religion, morality and ethics have been

unsuccessful in the struggle to make the planet a better place. But what if it is not the systems and models themselves but something more fundamental that needs to be investigated? There is a growing awareness that the panacea to the problems ravaging our world is in a paradigm shift to spirituality. However, a fundamental confusion persists that equates spirituality with morality, idealism and religion. It is therefore of topical importance that Dr. A. S. Dalal has chosen this moment to bring out a compilation titled *Morality, Idealism, Religion and Yoga: The Meaning of Spirituality*.

After a short synoptic overview by the editor, the book is divided into four sections on the subjects indicated in the title, and thoughtfully subdivided into related topics with an excellent selection of mostly brief passages, impeccably arranged, from the works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. At the back are the references as well as a basic glossary of names, Sanskrit terms and special terms.

The first chapter aims to point out the differences between morality and spirituality, but without altogether rejecting the usefulness of the former in day-to-day life. Morality is a complex structure of rules and regulations, dos and don'ts to maintain social cohesion, but it is relative and varies according to communities, geographic locations and time. This moral ideal has even been ineffective in bringing about peace

and harmony within communities following the same set of regulations. As the Mother points out, "it [morality] proclaims itself as a unique type, a categorical absolute; it admits of none other outside itself; it does not even admit a variation within itself. All are to be moulded according to its single ideal pattern, everybody is to be made uniformly and faultlessly the same."

It is true that morality does help to control and regulate behavior. It creates norms by which the individual and society guide their mutual interactions and can therefore be considered indispensable, yet it is not a solution to the problem of what is right or wrong, of what is useful or harmful, of what is allowed or forbidden and of what is good or bad. The true solution lies in spiritual values that eschew all that is centered on the ego, the divisive sense of the individual separate from everybody and everything else. Spiritual life is founded on the principle of unity but "it works for diversity in oneness and for perfection in that diversity". The dissimilarity between the two, the moral and the spiritual, is that while the former advocates the rejection of base desires, the latter rejects desire altogether and insists that we grow out of the ordinary egocentric consciousness into another, higher consciousness, and live more and more under its influence. Even the voice of conscience that is meant to distinguish between good and evil, while useful in ordinary life, is an imperfect counsel in spiritual life because "there is only one true guide, that is the inner guide," which is free from the distortions of the mental consciousness.

Many of the passages in the second section, on idealism, help to clear the confusion that arises from the conflict between self-interest and altruism. Upheld as the highest putative goals in domestic and social life for the progress of humanity, the ideals of heroism, patriotism, altruism and philanthropy each remain "a mental and moral not a spiritual ideal". Even though these ideals necessitate the subordination of the individual ego to the larger good of the family, society and country, they nonetheless engender a larger ego, which is a "comprehensive edition or a sum of individual egos". Stated otherwise, service to others may not be a freedom from but rather an extension of the ego. Just as morality serves its purpose, the various

forms of idealism are of considerable value as a purification and a preparation for the spiritual life, but they still “belong to the mental evolution”. Sooner or later, however, the individual in pursuit of his own development is bound to clash with the larger interest of the community or the nation that demands his obedience and subordination. The conflicting standards between man’s need to affirm his individuality and the call to serve the greater good, says Sri Aurobindo, “is a groping of the mental Ignorance of man seeking to find its way and grasping different sides of the truth but unable by its wants of integrality in knowledge to harmonise them together”.

The important point of the third section, on religion – often confused with spirituality –, is the distinction made between religion and religionism or the esoteric and exoteric aspects of religion. The esoteric aspect is the crux of all religions, which are predicated on a revelation of a profound truth that has come down from a higher plane of consciousness, but is then distorted by its votaries with the passage of time. “It was certainly not Jesus who made what is known as Christianity, but some learned and very clever men put their heads together and built it up into the thing we see....And yet the excuse or occasion for the formation [of Christianity] was undoubtedly some revelation from what one could call a Divine Being, a Being who came from elsewhere bringing down with him from a higher plane a certain Knowledge and Truth for the earth.” At its core, then, religion, which has been an invaluable support to society, is an aspiration for something beyond the intellect and beyond the realm of our sensory perceptions, the search for the discovery of what some call God or Truth or Spirit.

Religion as it is commonly practiced – or its exoteric features such as codes of conduct, ceremonies, rituals and dogmas – can be a necessary scaffold for those who are naturally inclined to the path of devotion and need help to sustain their inner aspiration. Religion also acts as a helpful deterrent “for it serves as a corrective to collective egoism which, without this control, could take on excessive proportions”. But religion can also become an obstacle to the spiritual seeker who, preoccupied with and imprisoned in rites and rituals, can forget its real essence. “It is an impediment and a chain if you are a slave to its outer body; if you know how to use its inner substance, it can be your jumping-board into the realm of the Spirit.”

The fourth and final section of the book, among many other related topics, draws attention to the generic and specific meanings of yoga, lists its three classical approaches, distinguishes between prayer and meditation, and correlates the uniqueness of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s synthetic and integral approach with the traditional paths of yoga.

Yoga is also a general term for spirituality, which Sri Aurobindo describes as an awakening to the inner reality of our being and the resulting transformation of our nature. This change is not progressive, but paradigmatic, a change in consciousness replacing the ordinary with a higher consciousness: “It is a radical conversion as great as and greater than the change which we suppose evolutionary Nature to have made in its transition from the vital animal to the fully mentalised human consciousness.” One might say it is a quid pro quo of the self for the Self.

The term yoga is often restricted in its meaning to describe physical exercises and breathing techniques, or abstinence and asceticism. Neither is it only a theory, divorced from practice. Yoga is a generic name for a set of methodologies designed to accelerate the process that brings the individual in contact with the Supreme Reality and the concomitant freedom from the cycle of birth and death. While numerous approaches are possible, Indian tradition classifies them into three broad categories: the yoga of knowledge, the yoga of devotion and the yoga of works. There is no general rule for the order of importance of the approaches, rather “everyone must follow his path in accordance with his own nature, and there is always a preference for one way rather than another.”

Prayer and aspiration are common to all three and help to establish a conscious and living relation between the worshipper and the worshipped. The difference between the two is that “prayer is a much more external thing, generally about a precise fact and always formulated for it is the formula that makes the prayer. One may have an aspiration and transcribe it as a prayer, but aspiration goes beyond prayer in every way. It is much closer and much more as it were self-forgetful, living only in the thing one wants to be or do and the offering of all that one wants to do to the Divine.”

The ultimate goal that is the unique and distinctive feature of the Integral Yoga, the path that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have revealed to us, is not only a union

with the transcendent Reality but the bringing down of that consciousness upon earth to divinize earthly life. It is a spiritual adventure, never attempted before, that exceeds the objectives of traditional paths of yoga.

For skeptics, hesitant beginners, or muddled seekers to whom these might sound as empty words devoid of real-world experience, Sri Aurobindo assures us that “yoga is not a matter of theory or dogma...but a matter of experience. Its experience is that of a conscient universal and supracosmic Being with whom it brings us into union, and this conscious experience of union with the Invisible, always renewable and verifiable, is

as valid as our conscious experience of a physical world and of visible bodies with whose invisible minds we daily communicate.”

— Gautam Chatterjee

Gautam, who studied at SAICE and earned a master's degree from the Institut Universitaire d'Études du Développement in Geneva, has worked as an interior designer, furniture maker and builder for the last twenty years. Interested in history, economics, sociology, metaphysics, and the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, he also teaches history at SAICE.

Living in The Presence

— Shobha Mitra

Publisher: Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry

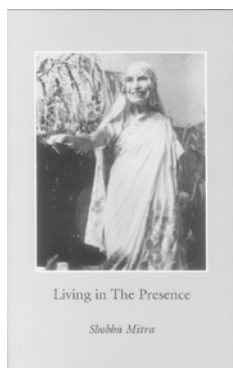
207 pp, ISBN 978-81-86413-57-9, Rs 150

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

It is now forty years since the Mother left her body. In these four decades, in most people's minds, she has acquired almost a mythic presence. People read about her, a figure who was at the head of such a large organization as the Ashram, and who led a group of seekers in every way. Sometimes we hear about how she healed someone or predicted a misfortune several years before it happened. These stories of divine intervention have been told and retold, and over the years they have taken on a far greater importance than the details of her day-to-day life. People in general now do not know very much about how she interacted with people and her way of working.

During the years when the Mother was in her physical body, people did not speak about their inner experiences, not even the words that were spoken in a personal context with the Mother. Deep spiritual experiences were supposed to be kept to oneself, as speaking about them could easily take away from what was gained from them. Because of this tradition, many never spoke about their personal exchanges with the Mother. Over the years, these precious moments remained unshared and unknown. Those who have died have taken away with them the stories of how the Mother worked on them as a part of her greater work for the whole of humanity.



Those who did speak about their contact with the Mother only shared what could be publicly recounted. These stories came down to the younger generation repeated by word of mouth, and everybody assumed that these stories were so well known that there was no need to write them down. This is why coming across a book where we read about personal experiences and the Mother's advice in particular situations is a rare thing. In this book, *Living in The Presence*, written by Shobha Mitra, we have the opportunity to look into the Ashram's day-to-day activities, and how the author was guided by the Mother in the most practical way.

The original Bengali book is titled *Sri Mayer Divya Sannidhye*, and was published in 2012. It was never in Shobha-di's mind to write a book, but those who are close to her persuaded her to put down in writing her memories of the years spent in close proximity with the Mother. Since she put down her thoughts in the language in which they spontaneously came to her, it was in Bengali that this book was first written. Shobha Mitra is a well-known figure in the Ashram, at least among those connected with its school. She has been the head of the music section since the 1960s. Half a century of work in a spirit of dedication in the field of music forms only one part of this book. The beginning is about how she came to the Ashram, and that in itself is a dramatic story. But from the beginning to the end it is the story of her contact with the Mother.

The book starts with Shobha Mitra's childhood and the story of how she came to the Ashram. Her life in Calcutta is depicted with vivid details, and, when the book moves to her early years in the Ashram, we can see the contrast between the two worlds. Born into a well-to-do family in Calcutta, she visited the Ashram when she was nine years old with her mother. She felt a deep attraction for the Mother, and was charmed by the life of the Ashram. When she joined the Ashram, along with her mother, at the age of eighteen, she became a student at the Ashram School. She was among the students of the second batch to complete their studies. From then on she lived a life completely dedicated to the ideals of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. As one reads the second half, one sees how everything in Shobha-di's life before coming to the Ashram was only a preparation for the real work she had to do.

There is an entire section about how she began the activities that were closest to her heart – singing and dancing – in the Ashram. Against all odds, she organized the music classes as well as the performances by visiting singers and musicians. And, in all this, we see the help she got from the Mother. The Mother's advice regarding introducing music to small children is noteworthy. She says, "Yes, make them hear good music. Listening to music is very beneficial. If they are very small, then ask them to lie on mats during the class. Ask them to relax their bodies and close their eyes. Play the music, then. Let the music flow, flow through the nerves and tissues of their body. Let it be absorbed."

Considering that there are few first-hand accounts of life in the Ashram, *Living in The Presence* has a historical value as it is a record of events and patterns of life through those decades. The story begins in the 1940s and ends in the early 1970s. We see in great detail the outward life of the Ashram through those years, and we can sense the inner life of the community that animated it. Through these episodes, we understand how an individual lived in constant touch with the Mother, and how the Mother guided the *sadhaks* and *sadhikas* in their inner and outer progress.

The great advantage Shobha-di had while writing this book is that she already had a notebook in which she had written down everything that the Mother had told her. The most important part of the book was already there. But she had to go back in her memory and remember all the details of the incidents in which the Mother had said those words. It was this work of writing down all that happened that took her so much time—four years. To those who know Shobha-di very well, this book will still come as a revelation because there are many things that are really personal that she speaks about for the first time. Not everybody would have had the courage to speak about such episodes, especially when the Mother points out faults and weaknesses.

To those who do not know much about the Ashram, this book will come as a treasure-house of information. It will show them that this Ashram is unlike any other. Instead of keeping away from singing and dancing, here is an Ashram that takes these forms of expression



Shoba-di with the Mother on Kali puja day

and turns them into a means of spiritual progress. People will discover how the head of this spiritual institution was so accessible and so close to each member. Most people who are not devotees cannot know how sweet and intimate was the Mother's relationship with her children, or how much she wanted

this community to live as a real family in a true fraternal atmosphere.

The English translation is smooth, and at no point do we feel that we are reading a translation of a Bengali book. The translator's hand is almost invisible. Translating from one European language to another is difficult in itself but translating into a language of a very different culture brings some fundamental difficulties. There are many words and expressions that cannot be translated with exactness. Sometimes one has to find an expression or a word that is close even though it does not represent a precise equivalent. That is where the translator's intuition comes in. Maurice Shukla has done this work with great skill.

This English edition has many photographs, and these pictures speak volumes. A special effort was made to add photos that show how the Mother participated in the activities of the School and the Playground. A whole new dimension is added to our comprehension when one can see the Mother watching a performance or present during a music concert. The book is full of anecdotes of how cultural programmes were prepared for the anniversary of the School and how she herself gave suggestions to the performers.

This book could be just what a young seeker needs. Here is an example before us of a life consecrated to an ideal. It is one thing to read the letters of the more experienced *sadhaks* concerning their inner difficulties and the Mother's answers to them, but it is quite another to read what was going on in the mind of a young

woman when she put her questions to the Mother and how she then followed her guidance. The anecdotes provide the context in which these questions were asked, and are truly inspiring. After reading her book when it was first published in Bengali, many living in Kolkata even told Shobha Mitra that they had found there the answers to their own problems. Those who are looking for spiritual direction can see that such a journey towards perfection makes life worth living.

— Sunayana Panda

Sunayana Panda, who holds an MA in English Literature, was a student at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. She is on the editorial team of The Golden Chain, the alumni journal of the SAICE, and has been actively involved in the staging of many of Sri Aurobindo's literary works.

Earth, Love and Doom

Mythico-Symbolic Dimensions of Sri Aurobindo's Savitri

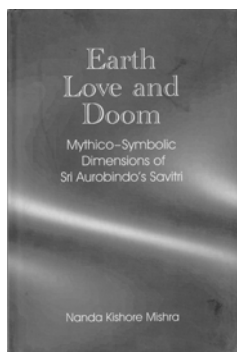
— Nanda Kishore Mishra

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Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Hard Cover



Earth, Love and Doom has many ingredients of a good book. It includes useful and interesting material on the use of symbolism in poetry, on many of the primary and minor symbols used in *Savitri*, and on comparisons with other symbolic poems. If it had gone

through a good editor, it could have been edifying. Unfortunately, it is plagued by errors, poor writing, and typos. There is a lack of attention to detail together with a deficiency in clear expression that is disappointing and sometimes exasperating. For most of the book there is not much insight or originality, rather it seems more an academic elaboration of relevant and sometimes not so relevant issues pertaining to the use of symbolism in *Savitri*, but the last chapter does introduce some new insights and fresh thought on the poem.

The book begins with a biographical sketch of Sri Aurobindo. After a somewhat circling chronology of major events in Sri Aurobindo's life, it attempts to outline the Integral Yoga. While this part of the chapter bears on the subject matter of *Savitri*, it is not a very clear exposition of this complex subject. It makes some of the main points, but lacks subtlety and depth of understanding.

The second chapter discusses Sri Aurobindo's poetics, emphasizing overhead aesthesis, that is, poetic inspiration from the higher spiritual consciousness. Again, it hits the main points well enough, but lacks precision in setting the context and explaining various details. In some cases, there are gross errors, though it is not clear whether this is due to lack of understanding or faulty expression, because often erroneous statements are later contradicted by appropriate ones.

Chapter Three discusses the use of symbolism in literature in general, and in Sri Aurobindo's poetry in particular. After describing various senses of the term, the author develops an interesting interpretation of symbolism: "the study of the correspondence between the natural orders as a whole to the supernatural order." He then introduces some important symbols in various poems of Sri Aurobindo as well as in those of other poets. These symbols also find expression in *Savitri*, but their use in *Savitri* is not elaborated at this point.

The fourth chapter discusses myth and legendary tales from psychological and literary standpoints, and then proceeds to a summary of the tale of *Savitri*. In between these two parts, the author seems to fall into a quicksand as he frames *Savitri* as “a mythicised romance with symbolic overtones.” He seems to place the poem into a genre to which it is ill-fitted and overemphasizes its romantic character while not appreciating the spiritual and cosmic dimensions it expresses and symbolizes. But, fortunately, these superficial interpretations are later contradicted by more apposite statements that situate the poem appropriately. The summary of the tale in the second part is passable, but is attended by various dubious interpretations and comments.

Chapter Five attempts to summarize Aswapati’s yoga and his discovery of the secret knowledge in Book I of the poem, as well as his travels through the inner and higher planes of consciousness in Book II. This is not an easy task, but the author is helped by liberally using quotes from the text, as well as quotes from other commentators. This compact prose summarization of important phrases and lines is attended by some commentary which helps to put it into perspective.

Chapter Six is called “Major Symbols” and Chapter Seven “Other Symbols.” Here one expects to delve into the symbolism of *Savitri*, but there is nothing much new or deep here. In the former chapter, the author discusses the symbols of the sun, dawn, light, and night, from the viewpoints of the Vedas and other spiritual traditions, and then in *Savitri*, by pointing out various instances of their use and interpreting their meanings. Chapter Seven considers symbols such as python coils, “the red Wolf”, the sphinx, and luminous herds of cows, sometimes briefly giving the meaning without further exploration. Overall, the study of these symbols is relatively superficial and repeats what others have already written.

The last two chapters contain some interesting and original thought. Chapter Eight compares the use of symbols in *Savitri* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Here the author fleshes out the significances of a few important symbols, most notably the symbol of light, in the two poems, with the aid of other scholars that he quotes. The final chapter, “Myth: A Creative Instrument of Knowledge and Vision,” is by far the best in the book. It employs original thought and reflection on the world situation, literature, and the work of *Savitri*. It begins with a perceptive and rather dark view of the

present world, and then discusses how several prominent twentieth-century writers have employed myth as a way to find meaning in it and a transformational path out of it. Here the author discusses works by T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, and W. H. Auden before turning to various works of Sri Aurobindo. Among the latter, he discusses many of Sri Aurobindo’s plays as well as two poems written in quantitative hexameters, the incomplete epic *Ilion* and the long poem *Ahana*. Finally, in the last six pages, he turns once again to *Savitri*, and pens a perceptive commentary on the poem.

— Larry Seidlitz

Larry works at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research in Pondicherry facilitating online courses on Sri Aurobindo’s teachings, and also edits and writes for publications related to the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Evolving Beyond Borders

The United Nations from the Perspective of Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy

— Kosha Shah and Dr S. Jacoby

Publisher: Readworthy Publications, New Delhi

212 pp, ISBN 978-93-5018-358-8, Rs 495

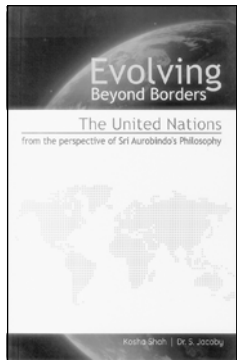
Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

Beginning with the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the world has seen unprecedented changes that have continued to occur at an ever-increasing pace. In particular, science and technology have provided the means for rapid transportation and communication not thought possible earlier. Even by the beginning of the twentieth century, continents and countries had been brought closer to the point where it became realistically possible to visualise human unity in the face of dramatic conflicts between empires and nation-States. But important issues needed to be addressed to make such unification worthwhile and meaningful.

From 1915 to 1920, Sri Aurobindo wrote a series of essays and articles, which, with a few exceptions, were afterwards compiled in book form as *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *War and Self-Determination*. Combining breadth of scholarship with deep psychological insight and far-sighted vision, these works constitute resource material of the greatest value

in understanding recent history and in following present-day global trends and events, as the world becomes more closely knit and momentum towards human unity gathers force. Sri Aurobindo revised the first two works in the late 1930s and again in 1949, adding footnotes here and there to take note of the evolving global scene. *The Human Cycle* was published in 1949. Shortly before the republication of *The Ideal of Human Unity* in 1950, he wrote a Postscript Chapter, which assessed the state of the United Nations and the



world order post-World War II. Over half a century later, this chapter, along with much of his other writing on the subject, remains abundantly relevant to the world situation today.

In his Independence Day Message of 1947, Sri Aurobindo speaks of five dreams which articulate his hopes for India and the world.

The third of these dreams is of a world-union which would provide the outer framework for a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. But he further affirmed that “an outward basis [for unification] is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.”

Evolving Beyond Borders is a work of commendable scholarship and contemporary relevance in dealing with issues that are of the greatest significance to humanity, and indeed the future of the world, by exploring Sri Aurobindo’s insights and vision on these and related topics, while examining the history and development of structures and organisations such as the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations. It notes that the UN and some of its specialised agencies, notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are subject to the hegemony of the big powers and discusses how they need to be changed to make way for greater fair play and equity in the international arena. Further, the book looks at the European Union

as a role model for possible emulation by other regions as steps towards the unity of all nations. Describing the evolution of the idea of a united Europe, it underlines the significant contributions of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman in establishing the foundations of the EU.

In the Prologue, the authors define the overall theme of *Evolving Beyond Borders*:

It has been clear to us from the beginning that this study of the UN would basically involve a selection of some issues which we feel need to be closely examined in the light of Sri Aurobindo because they seem fundamental to the future of the UN if it is to stay relevant to the future of humanity. Times have changed radically since the founding of the League of Nations and the United Nations in its present avatar. This has been widely recognized. What we would like to add is that perhaps there is a need to take a critical look at even the purpose of the UN. Much else will fall into place once we become clear about the future of humanity and the function of international organizations like the UN and those associated with it.

Throughout the book, the authors quote relevant passages from Sri Aurobindo as they take the reader through the development of ideas and the unfolding of events pertaining to their theme. Some of the most important aspects of these ideas are dwelt on in the following passages from *War and Self-Determination*:

The destiny of the race in this age of crisis and revolution will depend much more on the spirit which we are than on the machinery we shall use....

The whole difficulty of the present situation turns upon the peculiar and critical character of the age in which we are living. It is a period of immense and rapid changes so swift that few of us who live among them can hope to seize their whole burden or their inmost meaning or to form any safe estimate of their probable outcome. Great hopes are abroad, high and large ideals fill the view, enormous forces are in the field. It is one of those vast critical moments in the life of the race when all is pressing towards change and reconstitution. The ideals of the future, especially the ideals of freedom, equality, commonalty, unity, are demanding to be brought out from their limited field in the spiritual life or the idealism of the few and to be given some beginning of a true soul of action and bodily shape in the life of the race. But banded against any such fulfilment there are powerful obstacles, and the

greatest of them come not from outside but from within. For they are the old continued impulsions and obstinate recalcitrance of mankind's past nature, the almost total subjection of its normal mind to egoistic, vital and material interests and ambitions which make not for union but for strife and discord, the plausibilities of the practical reason which looks at the possibilities of the day and the morrow and shuts its eyes to the consequences of the day after, the habits of pretence and fiction which impel men and nations to pursue and forward their own interest under the camouflage of a specious idealism, a habit made up only partly of the diplomatic hypocrisy of politicians, but much more of a general half-voluntary self-deception, and, finally, the inrush of blinder unsatisfied forces and crude imperfect idealisms...to take advantage of the unrest and dissatisfaction prevalent in such times and lay hold for a while on the life of mankind. It is these things which we see dominant around us and not in the least degree any effort to be of the right spirit and evolve from it the right method....It [the destiny of mankind] is a subtler thing than that which is now putting its momentous problem before us, and if the spirit of the things we profess is absent or falsified, no method or machinery can turn them out for us or deliver the promised goods. That is the one truth which the scientific and industrialised modern mind forgets always, because it looks at process and commodity and production and ignores the spirit in man and the deeper inner law of his being.

Evolving Beyond Borders explores a number of pertinent issues, political, economic, social, military and legal, relevant to their theme, in the light of Sri Aurobindo. Perhaps the most important of these is the form that human unity needs to take, whether it should be a World-State or a free world-union. Sri Aurobindo considers a World-State may be inevitable given the present human conditions, but the ideal to be attained would be a free world-union. He expresses the view that, for all its gains and advantages, a World-State would eventually lead to a loss of vitality, and to stagnation and even decay. In *The Ideal of Human Unity* he states that "the only means that readily suggests itself by which a necessary group-freedom can be preserved and yet the unification of the human race achieved, is to strive not towards a closely organised World-State, but towards a free, elastic and progressive world-union." And in a later chapter he says that

in a free world-union, though originally starting from the national basis, the national idea might be expected to undergo a radical transformation; it might even disappear into a new and less strenuously compact form and idea of group-aggregation which would not be separative in spirit, yet would preserve the necessary element of independence and variation needed by both individual and grouping for their full satisfaction and their healthy existence. Moreover, by emphasising the psychological quite as much as the political and mechanical idea and basis, it would give a freer and less artificial form and opportunity for the secure development of the necessary intellectual and psychological change; for such an inner change could alone give some chance of durability to the unification. That change would be the growth of the living idea or religion of humanity; for only so could there come the psychological modification of life and feeling and outlook which would accustom both individual and group to live in their common humanity first and most, subduing their individual and group egoism, yet losing nothing of their individual or group power to develop and express in its own way the divinity in man which, once the race was assured of its material existence, would emerge as the true object of human existence.

Evolving Beyond Borders has a useful bibliography and is written in a very readable style. It is recommended to lay persons, students and scholars alike for its relevance to present global circumstances and as a guide to a better future for the world.

— Prakash Patel

Prakash-bhai joined the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education as a teacher over four decades ago, after completing the Higher Course there. He has been associated with the SAICE's Free Progress section and for more than thirty years has also been part of the team in charge of Project Ecolake, involved with environmental education and eco-restoration.

The Joy of Light

— Compiled and designed by Huta

Publisher: The Havyavahana Trust, Pondicherry

83 pp, ISBN 978-81-87372-26-4, Rs 350

Size: 18x24 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This book presents art work by Huta, inspired by Mother Herself.

Mother wrote to Huta: “I am sending some coloured paper for your nice drawings.” Huta accepted this wonderful opportunity and fulfilled Mother’s wish. The result is this precious little book that gives to the viewer “the joy of light”.



In this collection of drawings, there are faces of beings from occult and mystic worlds with their luminous subtlety. The calm, serene faces with their flowing lines in sober, soft colours evoke mystic depths in us, stirring our hearts to call and to aspire. Encouraged and inspired by Mother, Huta drew these pictures, which were at times completed or touched up by Her.

We see in these visions rare beauty representing different states of consciousness. This is strikingly felt because these pictures are titled and explained by Mother Herself: Beatitude, Blissful Peace, Perfect Surrender, Concentrated Serenity, Joy of Surrender, etc. They evoke a spiritual atmosphere. One becomes a captive of Joy and Peace. Mother’s revealing comments give us a deeper and richer understanding, filling our being with the truth of Her words.

As we look more intently at a few of the pictures, our limited vision and consciousness are shaken up by Mother’s stimulating comments. We are then able to view these drawings with a sharper eye, entering a new world.

In the sketch titled “The Joy of Light”, the rhythmic lines in a concentrated, soothing tone of golden brown, with touches of delicate white, present to us a pure being with a deep, inward look. This figure evokes these lines from *Savitri*:

In moments when the inner lamps are lit
And the life’s cherished guests are left outside,
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.

No wonder there is a divine communion and so a joy of light.

In “Sweet Safety”, we see a sweet little figure nestled close to a larger divine one who is radiating love, tenderness and protection. The little human psyche is securely cuddled in the divine embrace, eyes closed in a confident abandon, full of faith. When one is so intimate and united with the Divine, “What is there that can touch you, or whom need you fear?”

The drawing which Mother has called “Nobility of Detachment” brings to us a figure of rich aristocratic beauty, whose face, with its sharp, single-minded gaze, disregarding the world around, is absolutely unconcerned about externalities. He needs nothing and wants nothing. Aloof and mighty in his aloneness, he is in a supremely happy state of consciousness.

In this way, She exposes our narrow vision to the superior merits of each drawing. Our sight needs to learn to catch the inspired expression, breaking through the mere strokes of the brush, and sense its depth and message.

We feel Mother’s presence and Her divine touch, physical and subtle, which exalts our being, awakening in us a responding gratitude and aspiration.



Mother told us a most interesting story about these figures in the paintings. They come alive, out of the pictures, and visit Her in the subtle world:

They came one by one from the books which are with me now, and assembled in the sitting room. I wanted to be sure whether they were real, so I closed my eyes and saw with an occult eye that the books were absolutely blank, because the beings were sitting with us. We all meditated for half an hour. After that...I saw that the figures had all returned to the books. Really it was very nice!

Commissioned by Mother, Huta worked in a spirit of deep dedication. Mother appreciated her work and participated closely in the entire project.

This book is a boon of Divine Grace for art lovers.

— Nirata

Nirata-di came to Pondicherry as a child and joined the Ashram’s school in early 1945, the second year after its foundation. Since 1959 she has taught English and later painting at the Centre of Education.