

Recent Publications

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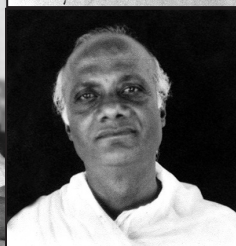
On 1 January 1969 the Mother had a powerful experience, which she later described as the descent of the superman consciousness. Although we cannot understand the full scope of her experience, the conversations in which she spoke of it, published in *Notes on the Way*, give us some hints of its consequence. The Mother, just six weeks after the descent of the superman consciousness, said that she “understood absolutely what it was to have the divine consciousness in the body”.

Our lead article looks back, fifty years later, on how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, in their writings and talks, had characterised this intermediary consciousness between the human and the supramental and its action on the spiritual evolution of consciousness on earth.



The Ashram School: Glimpses of the Early Years is the subject of a book review-cum-reminiscence by one of the first students of the school when it opened in December 1943. Travelling back through her memories we see a lively picture of how a handful of children lived in the Ashram before the school officially opened, and how their lives changed when the Mother took charge of their education.

Some of the very first teachers appointed by the Mother: clockwise from top left—Pavitra, the Director of the school, Violette (a sketch by the Mother), Sisir Kumar Mitra, and Pavita



CONTENTS

The Superman: Intermediary between the Human and the Supramental Being 2

Book Review

The Ashram School: Glimpses of the Early Years 8

Recent Publications 12

Ordering Information 16

Book Reviews

Of Mystics and Miracles and other Essays 17

The Dawn of Auroville: (1964–1973)
A brief history in photographs 18

Sri Aravinda Sarit Sagara—Part 1 21

Alipore Bomb Trial 1908–1910 (Volume 2)
Arguments in Courts and Judgements 23

The Superman: Intermediary between the Human and the Supramental Being

For the further evolution of consciousness on earth, Sri Aurobindo described a number of levels above the ordinary human level of mental consciousness that needed to be scaled and their powers and transforming effects brought down and integrated with the existing human consciousness. He described a succession of intervening planes of the higher mind, the illumined mind, the intuition*, and the overmind that led upwards towards the supramental consciousness, the last described as the truth-consciousness, beyond the limiting effects of mind. The establishment of the supramental consciousness in the earth consciousness would be the next major step in the evolutionary progression and was Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's primary aim, achieved in 1956. This only meant that it would be there in the earth consciousness as a principle, like mind and life are already there, not that it would be available to everyone. Individual souls would still need to evolve to its level, though its establishment and presence would have a general uplifting effect. Sri Aurobindo made clear that the intervening levels leading towards the supramental consciousness, supermind for short, were not merely higher forms of cognition, but "domains of being, grades of the substance and energy of the spiritual being, fields of existence which are each a level of the universal Consciousness-Force constituting and organising itself into a higher status" (*The Life Divine*, CWSA 21–22, 973). The ascent of the consciousness into these domains and their descent into the lower nature progressively transforms the entire consciousness into a subtler, more powerful, luminous, and ecstatic energy and substance, and prepares it for the realisation of the supermind.

This ascent and descent and integration and transformation of the consciousness is not a linear, clearly demarcated progression; there are mixtures of influences which gradually become purified and heightened. The higher levels in their descent become obscured by the lower levels all the way down to the subconscious and inconscient foundations, and the obstacles of the lower consciousness cannot be entirely swept away by anything less than the descent of the supramental consciousness and force into matter. In their descent, the transforming action of the various levels of spiritual consciousness work more effectively on the higher and inner parts of the nature, their effects on the lower and outer parts take longer to manifest. The higher levels of the spiritual consciousness do not necessarily wait to descend until the lower intermediate levels are fully established; there is an order, but a flexible, overlapping order. In addition, the individual's consciousness is continually in interaction with the consciousness of others and the world around; there is a circumconscient part of the consciousness which receives these outside influences that also must be spiritualised to nullify the lowering outside effects or else to transmit a transforming power on the world *around*.

Sri Aurobindo indicated that in November 1926 there was a descent of Krishna, the Overmind Godhead, into his physical being, and through him, into matter (for his comments on this and the following, see *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA 35). Through much of the 1930s, Sri Aurobindo wrote in his letters that his efforts were directed at bringing the supramental consciousness

* Sri Aurobindo made a distinction between the plane of Intuition, which is true in itself, and the intuitive mind, where the truth intuition gives may be mixed or imperfectly put by the mind.

and force into matter and into the earth consciousness. He noted that the intermediate levels of spiritual consciousness leading up to overmind had already descended and, while not available to everyone, could be attained through *tapasya*. He mentioned that the overmind, which had been the support of the present earth-nature, was undergoing a change under the pressure of the supramental force, and was gradually becoming supramentalised. He also explained that supramentalisation of the physical consciousness and of matter were necessary for the full supramentalisation of the mind and life principles, as they also have a physical component in them. In the late 1930s and in the 1940s, he noted there was a focus on bringing the supramental light and force into the subconscious and inconscient, the latter being the “fundamental basis of all resistance in the individual and in the world to the victory of the Spirit and the Divine Work” (CWSA 35, 367).



Sri Aurobindo's last prose writings, eight essays which appeared in the Ashram quarterly *Bulletin of Physical Education* in 1949 and 1950, and which were published as a book in 1952 under the title *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, provided a detailed consideration of the transition from the human to the supramental being. He reserved the term supramental being for a new type of divine being that in the future would live on earth alongside human beings. The third chapter introduces the idea of intermediary beings between the human and the supramental being:

It might be also that the transformation might take place by stages; there are powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region which are yet potentialities of a growing gnosis lifted beyond our human mentality and partaking of the light and power of the Divine and an ascent through these planes, a descent of them into the mental being might seem to be the natural evolutionary course.... Still these levels might become stages of the ascent which some would reach and pause there while others went higher and could reach and live on superior strata of a semi-divine existence.... The large mass of human beings might still remain for long content with a normal or only a partially illumined and uplifted human nature (CWSA 13, 537–38).

The fourth and fifth chapters describe the nature of the supramental consciousness and the likely effects of its descent on the mind, life, and body, transforming them, ameliorating or removing their limitations and defects. The sixth chapter begins with a clear statement regarding the transitional being, the superman:

A new humanity would then be a race of mental beings on the earth and in the earthly body, but delivered from its present conditions in the reign of the cosmic Ignorance so far as to be possessed of a perfected mind, a mind of light which could even be a subordinate action of the supermind or Truth-consciousness, and in any case capable of the full possibilities of mind acting as a recipient of that truth and at least a secondary action of it in thought and life. It could even be a part of what could be described as a divine life upon earth and at least the beginnings of an evolution in the Knowledge and no longer entirely or predominantly in the Ignorance (CWSA 13, 578).

In the seventh essay, writing of this new humanity, Sri Aurobindo notes that

from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature. Even, the highest manifestations of a mind of Light would be an instrumentality of the supermind, a part of it or a projection from it, a stepping beyond humanity into the superhumanity of the supramental principle (CWSA 13, 585).

He further indicates:

In this inevitable ascent the mind of Light is a gradation, an inevitable stage. As an evolving principle it will mark a stage in the human ascent and evolve a new type of human being; this development must carry in it an ascending gradation of its own powers and types of an ascending humanity which will embody more and more the turn towards spirituality, capacity for Light, a climb towards a divinised manhood and the divine life (CWSA 13, 587).

The final chapter of *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth* was published in November 1950, shortly before Sri Aurobindo left his body on 5 December. It appears that the series of essays was left incomplete, and the last paragraph suggests that he may have intended to further explain the nature of the Mind of Light and its powers and its possibilities.



We now turn to the Mother's account of the transitional being. In a conversation in 1972, she stated that when Sri Aurobindo left his body, "all this supramental force which was in him passed from his body into mine. And I felt the friction of the passage" (CWM 11, 328). In another place she noted that "[a]s soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he has called the Mind of Light got realised in me" (CWM 13, 63).

Soon after Sri Aurobindo left his body, the Mother's inner work seemed to be focused on the transformation of the consciousness of the body, its penetration and transformation by the supramental Light and Force. For example, in April 1951, she said:

Now it has become the very movement of the cellular consciousness. All weaknesses, all responses to adverse suggestions (I mean the smallest things of every minute in the cells), are taken in the same movement of offering (and these come sometimes in waves, to such an extent that the body feels it will swoon before this assault), and then comes a light, so warm, so deep, so powerful, which puts everything back in order, in its place, and opens the way to transformation (CWM 4, 338).

She continued working on this level in the years that followed, occasionally commenting on her progress. In 1954 she wrote, "In this intensity the aspiration grows formidable, and in answer to it Thy Presence becomes evident in the cells themselves, giving to the body the appearance of a multicoloured kaleidoscope in which innumerable luminous particles in constant motion are sovereignly reorganised by an invisible and all-powerful Hand" (CWM 15, 282). Her formidable work in the cells of the body was tenably a factor leading to the descent of the supramental consciousness into the earth atmosphere on 29 February 1956. Following that descent, she indicated that the transformative process had accelerated and there was a change in the earth atmosphere. Some of her own experiences were discussed in her classes with disciples and the students of the Ashram school, and others were recorded by a disciple and published in *Notes on the Way* (CWM 11).

On 16 April 1958, she indicated that there was already the beginning of the realisation of the superman consciousness and that this realisation was attainable by others:

Anyway, we have now reached a certitude since there is already a beginning of realisation. We have the proof that in certain conditions the ordinary state of humanity can be exceeded and a new state of consciousness worked out which enables at least a conscious relation between mental and supramental man.

It can be asserted with certainty that there will be an intermediate specimen between the mental and the supramental being, a kind of superman who will still have the qualities and in part the nature of man, that is, who will still belong in his most external form to the human being with its animal origin, but will transform his consciousness sufficiently to belong in his realisation and activity to a new race, a race of supermen.

This species may be considered a transitional species, for one can foresee that it will discover the means of producing new beings without going through the old animal method, and these beings – who will have a truly spiritual birth – will constitute the elements of the new race, the supramental race.

... It seems – it is even certain – that the very substance which will constitute this intermediate world that is already being built up, is richer, more powerful, more luminous, more resistant, with certain subtler, more penetrating new qualities, and a kind of innate capacity of universality, as if its degree of subtlety and refinement allowed the perception of vibrations in a much wider, if not altogether total way, and it removes the sensation of division one has with the old substance, the ordinary mental substance.

... One may conclude from this that the moment a body, which was of course formed by the old animal method, is capable of living this consciousness naturally and spontaneously, without effort, without going out of itself, it proves that this is not one single exceptional case but simply the forerunner of a realisation which, even if it is not altogether general, can at least be shared by a certain number of individuals who, besides, as soon as they share it, will lose the perception of being separate individuals and become a living collectivity (CWM 9, 313–15).

Then on 1 January 1969, there was the descent of a powerful new consciousness, which the Mother later identified as the superman consciousness. On 4 January the Mother explained:

It was something very material, I mean it was very external – very external – and it was luminous, with a golden light. It was very strong, very powerful; but even so, its character was a smiling benevolence, a peaceful delight and a kind of opening out into delight and light. [...] [M]y own impression was that of an immense personality – immense, that is to say, for it the earth was small, small like this (*gesture, as though holding a small ball in her palm*), like a ball – an immense personality, very, very benevolent, which came for... (*Mother seems to lift this ball gently from the hollow of her hands*). It gave the impression of a personal divinity (and yet it was... I do not know) who comes to help, and so strong, so strong and at the same time so gentle, so all embracing (CWM 11, 149–50).

At first the Mother wondered if it might be the supramental personality. She then talked about how concrete it was, that it did not pass through an inner being, through the psychic being, but came directly on the body. After making this observation, she reaches the conclusion that this was perhaps the superman personality, not the supramental:

I have the feeling that it is the formation which is going to enter, going to express itself – to enter and express itself – in the bodies... that will be the bodies of the supramental.

Or perhaps... perhaps the superman, I do not know. The intermediary between the two. Perhaps the superman: it was very human, but a human in divine proportions, I must say.

A human without weaknesses and without shadows: it was all light—all light and smiling and... sweetness at the same time. Yes, perhaps the superman (CWM 11, 151).

A few days later she confirmed: “Yes, it is that. It is the descent of the superman consciousness. I had the assurance later on” (CWM 11, 153). Two weeks later she commented:

There is within it a consciousness – a *very* precious thing – which gives lessons to the body, teaching it what it must do, that is to say, the attitude it must have, the reaction it must have.... I have already told you many a time that it is very difficult to find the process of transformation when there is no one to give you any indications; well, it was as though the reply; it came to tell the body: “Take this attitude, do this in this way, do that in that way”, and so the body is satisfied, it is completely reassured, it can no longer be mistaken (CWM 11, 154).

The Mother indicated that this consciousness was acting on a large scale, and that it was also working in others, only that they, not being accustomed to observing themselves, would notice it less, though its action would essentially be the same. She indicated that there had been marked changes in those individuals who had been touched by its descent on the first of January: “it is particularly... indeed a precision and a certitude that has entered into their way of thinking,” and she felt that she had been “given the charge of putting it into contact with all those who come near me” (CWM 11, 156). On 12 March she told a disciple that it has come to materialise and that it was looking for instruments, and then she added that she had great hope in little children. She had already noted two years earlier, in answer to a question about whether the date 4.5.67 would mark the beginning of the new race of supermen, that “since a few months the children born, amongst our people mostly, are of a very special kind” (CWM 15, 105). Later, in 1971, she mentioned, “I believe really that it is among the children that will be found those who can begin the new race. Men are... crusted over” (CWM 11, 252).

On 15 February 1969, she said that the superman consciousness was very active and acted as a mentor to her, something she often repeated, and then described a powerful experience she had that morning:

During these few hours (three or four), I understood absolutely what it was to have the divine consciousness in the body. And then this body here, that body there, that body there (*gestures to this side and that side and all around Mother's body*), it did not matter; it went about from one body to another, altogether free and independent, knowing the limitations and possibilities of each body [...]

It is... yes, I believe the only word that describes the sensation one has, is: it is an Absolute [...] absolute Knowledge, absolute Will, absolute Power.... Nothing, nothing can resist it. And then, it is an Absolute which is (one has this kind of sensation, concrete) of compassion! [...] And it is That, everywhere. That is everywhere. And it is the experience of the body; and to That, the body gives itself entirely, totally, asking for nothing, nothing at all. Only one aspiration (*same gesture, palms opened upward*): to be able to *be* That, what That wants—to serve That; not even so: to *be* That.

But that state, which lasted for several hours, nothing similar to that happiness has this body ever felt during the ninety-one years it has been here upon earth: freedom, absolute power, and no limits (*gesture here and there, everywhere*), no limits, no impossibilities, nothing. It was... all other bodies were itself. There was no difference, it was only a play of consciousness (*gesture as of a great Rhythm*) going about (CWM 11, 157–59).

The superman consciousness continued to guide the Mother. A year and a half later, on 5 August 1970, she said, “It is an excellent mentor for this body, it is giving it lessons continually...” (CWM 11, 240).

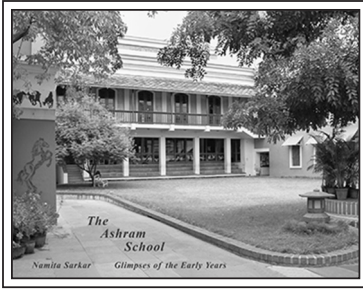
Also, her body consciousness was changing: “I have the feeling that even the consciousness of the body has a minimum of the personal in it. At times I no longer have the feeling of the limits of my body.... I do not know how to say it.... Yes, it is that, it is almost as though it had become fluid. [...] it is a force, a consciousness which is *spread* over everything. I do not feel any limit, I feel it is a thing spread out, even physically...” (CWM 11, 242). Yet this state would oscillate with states of resistance in the body. For example, in October 1971 she said, “The body is in a state in which it sees that everything depends simply on how it is linked with the Divine—upon the state of its receptive surrender. [...] The same thing which is the cause of a – more than a discomfort – a suffering, an almost unbearable ailment, with just a change in the receptivity of the body towards the Divine disappears all of a sudden—and can even move to a blissful state. [...] I might say: the cells of the body must learn to seek their support only in the Divine, until the moment when they are able to feel that they are the expression of the Divine” (CWM 11, 273).

Up until the end, as the various cells and the functioning of her body and organs were being transformed and learning this attitude of surrender, the Mother continued to oscillate between experiences of suffering and bliss. One of the important things she kept mentioning during this time was the need for complete surrender. For example, on 17 May 1969, she said: “The body is not concerned at all with itself; it is like this (*Mother opens out her hands*), it is all the time: ‘What Thou willest, Lord, what Thou willest’... and with a smile and a perfect joy” (CWM 11, 168).

Similarly, a few months later, speaking about the world situation, she said, “Finally, I am fully convinced that the confusion is there to teach us how to live from day to day, that is to say, not to be preoccupied with what may happen, what will happen, just to occupy oneself day by day with doing what one has to do [...] and then to let the All-Consciousness decide....[...] By giving great importance to things dangerous and harmful, you only add strength to them” (CWM 11, 184–85). In the same conversation, she said that when we are assailed by disorder and confusion, we should enter into the consciousness where there is only a single Unity and everything is taking place within this Unity. “More and more,” the Mother confirmed, “more and more, the certitude is there: this is the *only* solution.”

—Larry Seidlitz

Larry Seidlitz, Ph.D., is a psychologist and scholar focusing on the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He is presently associated with the Indian Psychology Institute (IPI) and with the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR), where he facilitates online courses on Sri Aurobindo’s teachings. He edits Collaboration, a USA-based journal on the Integral Yoga, and has authored the books Transforming Lives and Integral Yoga at Work.



a reminiscent book review

The Ashram School: Glimpses of the Early Years

—Namita Sarkar

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department,
Pondicherry

49 pp, ISBN: 978-93-5210-170-2, Rs 110

Size: 24 x 18 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Footsteps in the Courtyard...

Namita has brought out a fine booklet, tracing the founding of the Ashram School and its growth into our times. She has delved into this lived history and shared with us some precious documents, old photographs of our friends and teachers, and detailed drawings of the early buildings. We are beholden to her for this carefully researched presentation, which will stand the test of time.

Reading this book has moved me to share with the readers of this newsletter a personally accentuated journey that some of us lived as children before The Mother started the School. We hold this time in our beings in so vivid and precious a manner. Around the years 1940–42, some of us came to the Ashram with our parents. Some of us had come even earlier. As in a kind of converging stream, we came from different parts of the country to be home in the Ashram, as a family of children who belonged together. That sense of being one with each other, with The Mother and Sri Aurobindo as our centre, was a powerful experience and remains a bond till today.

We walked through the main gate of the Ashram, and ran into the courtyard and all around it with nimble feet. In twos and threes we came—and made the space our home. Home it was in every way, from morning till late in the evening. We played under the watchful eyes of the ‘great beings’, the disciples who lived in the rooms surrounding the courtyard. We met The Mother three or four times a day. And we knew that Sri Aurobindo was ‘up there’, in his room.

The courtyard was a sacred space. The Presence of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother filled the space to overflowing. The measured tread of those beings devoted to Them was heard in the silence of the paved squares. And then, unannounced, the pattering of our little feet burst forth into the silence, but didn’t disturb it, rather blended into it, as though that sound belonged there. This was our life, and of any other we had no need.

The Mother arranged for us to spend some time with the disciples in their homes, to be with them and to learn.



Standing under the guava tree at Violette’s house in 1942—on the left: Aster, Amita Sen, Probir Nahar and on the right: Lucy Nahar, Gauri Pinto, Kucku, Pratip Nahar, Mahavir Agarwal (rear)

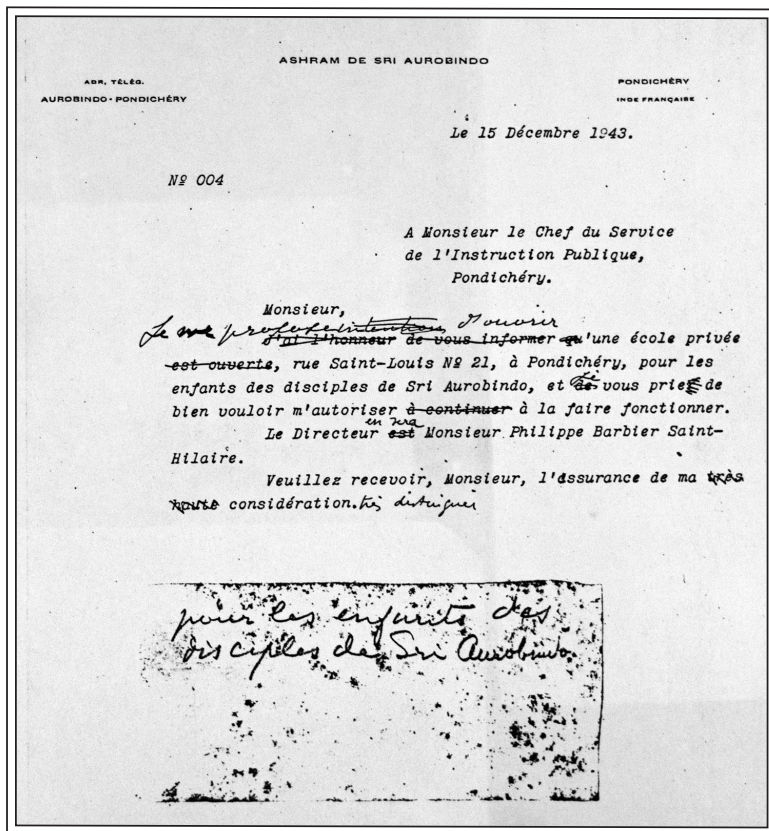
Mornings were with Sisirda, on a stone bench under the champa tree. Others went to Violettedi and sat under a guava tree in her house. There were evenings with Puraniji, he sitting in his canvas chair and we on the floor, listening to tales from the epics. In the home of Dilip Kumar Roy, we heard his music, still resounding in our ears today. Afternoons were spent with Nishtha* telling us stories of early America.

Mother asked me to work in the flower room, which was in the Ashram courtyard. On all fours, I would collect the Service flowers that fell from the tree, count them, and arrange them on big platters, which were then taken up to Sri Aurobindo's room. It was beautiful to see the huge brass platters full of those flowers. In my mind's eye I still see them—in all their golden yellow splendour.

On the days of the Darshan – and a few days before – everything felt different. There was a special air in which we lived. That air was very full. We were as if bathed in this fullness. As children, we could not describe it, but the feel of it is with us. We were a small, close family in the very loving and great presence of the people around us. We could feel their presence, each one had his own, as something very special. They were very concentrated; we didn't then know this word but felt that there was something, some purpose they were there for. And that nothing else mattered to them. How to put it? As children, we felt a kind of one-pointedness in them. We were not in awe of them, we were happy to be with them and live in their atmosphere.

Namita has shared a photograph of Nirodda, a resolute visage, along with his statement that when the children arrived, 'Our Ashram life also took a different turn; the old barriers completely broke down under this influx. No longer a hermitage of peace, silence and inner expansion and acquisition, it had to be tested in the crucible of outer life. We soon became one spiritual family.' In his later years, when we offered him our gratitude for all he had given us, he replied quietly, 'That was our work for The Mother.'

Then one day, Mother announced that She would start a school. We were very excited. A school—what would it mean? We had no idea except that this would be something new. We had



Draft of the Mother's letter to the Chef du Service de l'Instruction Publique, Pondichéry, requesting permission to open a school

* President Woodrow Wilson's daughter, who lived in the Ashram.

one classroom, three teachers and about a dozen of us—and no books! But we had Mother. She said She would guide the teachers and organise what we had to do together. She looked into each detail of the subject to study and the teacher-student relationship. It was a first exercise, at that young age for us, in learning and becoming.

She moulded us in every way, all of us children, as well as the teachers. There is so much to share of how She did this, but this newsletter would run out of space if I were to do so. It is best to leave it at that, except for a few things. She would tell us, every so often, 'Find the psychic being. Be conscious.'

During the latter part of the war years, we would go with our parents to see Her. Sometimes it was almost nightfall. Mother would sit on a chair in the landing at the top of the staircase. She would often go into a trance for quite a while—and we waited for Her to come back to us, to give us a flower and ask us to return home with our parents. Even today, these moments are real and very enigmatic to me: from that state of trance to return to us little humans in one sweep, without any kind of apparent transition. On one such occasion, when Mother was in an unusually long trance, my younger brother, Kucku, who was about 7 years, was in front of Her. He put his head on Her lap and went to sleep! I was standing a little behind with our mother, Violette. Mother returned from Her trance, woke him up, gave him a flower, and said, 'Go home with your mother.'

The School grew, more children came, more teachers joined us. New subjects were added, and young teachers, who were also students at the time, were trained by The Mother. The book records the personal experiences of several of the older students whom The Mother asked to take up teaching. She told Manoj, who was to teach mathematics, 'My child, I want you to teach them how to think. They should learn how to think.' To Richard, an English teacher, She said that when he is asking the students, one by one, to answer a question, he should look at the answer and not at the child, and judge by the truth of the answer.

One day, when I was about 15 years old, Mother said to me, 'I want you to take the kindergarten class. I said, 'Mother, but I am studying.' Prompt was Her reply, 'You can do both. It is good to be with children.' I replied, 'I don't know how to teach!' Mother: 'I will tell you how to do it. Give the children freedom.' I asked, 'To give freedom at that young age?' Mother: 'One is never too young to be given freedom. But one must create the right atmosphere.' She asked me to bring the children to Her each morning at 9.30 at Pranam time in the Meditation Hall in the Ashram. Often She would say something about how to handle each child. I used to write a daily report to Her about the work we did. She corrected my mistakes of language and sent Her Blessings. That notebook is with me still.



Aster with Tarini and Tarulata at the Kindergarten

Namita also writes about the growth of the arts in the School and describes how the early dramatic presentations

were made to mark the anniversary of the School. May I share the memory of a precious occasion here? One day, Mother called Amita and me upstairs—we were both about 16 years of age. She said, ‘Sri Aurobindo has written something. We will dramatise it.’ She gave us typed sheets of ‘The Debate of Love and Death’ from *Savitri*, although the poem had not yet been published. She gave Amita the role of Love and me the role of Death. At that age, this was awesome, to say the least! I asked Mother, ‘Why have you given me this role?’ She straightened up – I remember how She drew Herself up to Her full height – and said firmly, ‘Death is nothing to be afraid of. It is a great power that has to be conquered. Let us get to work.’ Those were Her exact words.

Mother trained us in the long room upstairs, in front of the Darshan Seat. She would stand with Her back to the Seat and we would be at the other end of the room. She would read each part, demonstrate how to project the voice, and we would repeat after Her. The power with which She read, especially some lines, resounds in me still.

After a period of training – I can’t say exactly how long that was – She said, ‘Now, we will do the dress and make-up.’ She brought out Her treasure trove of *maquillage*—Guerlain was the brand at the time. I had fairly long curly hair which She left loose on the shoulders and then She applied make-up on the face. There was no department for this like there is now. She brought out a gown of black French Chantilly lace, with a small Chinese type of collar, buttoned down the front, with long sleeves. It had belonged to Her Egyptian grandmother. It fitted me perfectly. Amita was dressed in flowing white robes.

When Mother finished with this, She said, ‘Sri Aurobindo will hear us.’ Our joy was boundless—a fifth Darshan this year? But no, He only sat in the middle room, where we sit today before going into His Room. He heard us as we recited, all dressed and made up, in the next room, facing the Darshan Seat.

Namita writes about the higher courses of study that were set up as the School extended its vistas. There is mention of Science and the Humanities and a five-year course in Engineering Technology. At the same time, there were also five-year courses in Philosophy, taken by Sri Naren Das Gupta, in Integral Psychology, with Indra Senji, and in Literature, with Tehmiben. The School, long since known as the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, has become a renowned seat of learning and becoming. Its former students have been doing pathbreaking work in many fields of research and creative innovation. We hope Namita will work on a further publication tracing these areas of work in detail.

Sri Aurobindo used the word integral about a hundred years ago. Today, the term ‘Integral Education’ is used all over the world. The old patterns of education have served their purpose and can no longer meet the challenges of a world reshaping itself. The methods of knowing, of living, of feeling, of acting that we have been accustomed to prove inadequate for a future that is creating our present. A new education calls for a deeper and vaster exploration of a more conscious way of being. *The Ashram School: Glimpses of the Early Years* shows us how The Mother drew up a blueprint for that exploration.

—Aster Patel

Aster was brought up in the Ashram since early childhood and studied and taught at SAICE. She later earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. It was the first time Sri Aurobindo’s work was presented in a doctoral dissertation at the University. She is at present in Auroville, working at Bharat Nivas. She also teaches Integral Psychology at Knowledge, the Higher Course of SAICE.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

Compilations from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Reprints from All India Magazine booklets
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry

Rebirth

50 pp, Rs 60, ISBN: 978-81-7060-405-1
Size: 14 x 20 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Religion & Spirituality

49 pp, Rs 60, ISBN: 978-81-7060-403-7
Size: 14 x 20 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Other Authors

Of Mystics and Miracles and other Essays

—Manoj Das

Publisher: Sagnik Books, Kolkata
376 pp, Rs 600, ISBN: 978-93-84101-39-8
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

This collection of articles and transcribed talks by the creative writer Manoj Das offers the reader the opportunity to explore a different aspect of his writing. Solicited to speak by various institutions or organisations or asked to write by editors on any number of topics, the author shares his insights and perceptions on literature and education, mysticism and yoga, mythology and legends, social issues of the day, and some thoughtful pieces on a few great writers and Indian revolutionaries. Every essay evidences something of his style as a storyteller, and throughout these pages runs the stream of Sri Aurobindo's thought and the influence it had on the author's life and development.

See review on page 17

(previously introduced in the December 2018 issue)

The Ashram School: Glimpses of the Early Years

—Namita Sarkar

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication
Department, Pondicherry
49 pp, Rs 110, ISBN: 978-93-5210-170-2
Size: 24 x 18 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

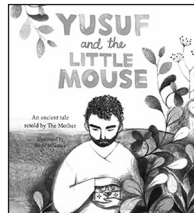
A simple narrative of historical events with more than fifty photographs to enliven the story, the book begins with the opening of a small school for thirty-eight children in December 1943 and moves ahead to the founding of the University Centre in 1952 and to the creation of the Higher Course and the Free Progress system in 1968. The aims and values of the school, the Mother's guidance in all matters, and her methods of training for the teachers are explained through her own words. The overall development of the child included physical education activities and lessons in the fine arts, such as music, dance, and drama. The true aim of the Ashram school education is to prepare children for a higher life where they can thrive as living souls and express their true beings.

See review on page 8

Yusuf and the Little Mouse

—Illustrated by Ruchi Mhasane

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research, Auroville
28 pp, Rs 200, ISBN: 978-93-82474-20-3
Size: 21 x 23 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



During a Friday evening class in the Playground in March 1957 the Mother read out to the children a story meant to illustrate the value of patience and perseverance. The young man in the tale, seeking initiation from his guru, learns the hard way that in order to truly possess any knowledge, one must put it into practice, one must master one's nature in order to express that knowledge in action. Only after understanding this truth is he worthy to receive initiation from his guru. Illustrated with numerous drawings, this picture book for children presents the story told by the Mother and her comments to the children of the Ashram school.

Sri Aravinda Sarit Sagara—Part I

—Prema Nandakumar

Publisher: Ravi Mohan Rao, Chirala

620 pp, Rs 300, Size: 14 x 22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

In Part I of this bilingual volume the author has written an introductory essay on the life and work of Sri Aurobindo followed by sets of three essays on themes central to each of the first fifteen volumes of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (1972). A Telugu translation of these essays appears in the second half of the book. Apparently, Part II will cover the second fifteen volumes. Although the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL) edition of Sri Aurobindo's writings is now out of print, these essays can be read profitably for the relevant volumes that form part of the Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, which includes all of the works published in the SABCL and around 3000 pages of previously unpublished material.

See review on page 21

(previously introduced in the December 2018 issue)

Dear Aurovilians: Inspiration from Karan Singh's Auroville Collaboration

With a Special Addendum—Light on Karan Singh

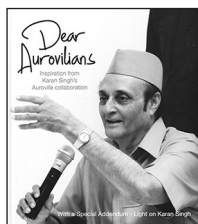
—Compiled and edited by Aryadeep S. Acharya

Publisher: Prisma, Auroville

215 pp, Rs 600, ISBN: 978-81-933675-5-1

Size: 22 x 24 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

In 1988, when the Parliament of India passed the Auroville Foundation Act, Karan Singh was appointed its first chairman. He served four more terms as Chairman, presiding in that capacity over the growth of Auroville for twenty-two years. This book is a collection of some of Karan Singh's speeches, selections from interviews on his association with Auroville, a few articles he wrote on Auroville, selected letters and messages to Auroville, a look back on his early connections to the Ashram and Auroville, and an addendum of tributes to his person and his achievements. The



book includes many large photographs in colour and in black and white, and five QR codes that can be scanned to watch videos featuring Karan Singh in Auroville.

The Process of the Integral Yoga

—A compilation from the

Mother's writings and an

essay by Paulette Hadnagy

Publisher: Auroville

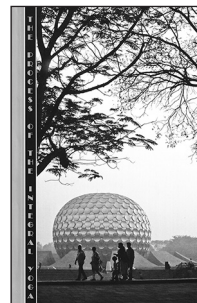
Foundation, Auroville

476 pp, Rs 450

ISBN: 978-81-933675-6-8

Size: 14 x 22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



In this work, the compiler has gathered extracts from the Collected Works of the Mother focussing on some of the major aspects of the Integral Yoga, specifically highlighting the triple transformation at the core of the *sadhana*: the psychic, the spiritual, and the supramental. In the section on the supramental transformation, she quotes heavily from *Notes on the Way* (Volume 11) where the Mother describes her work on the mind of Matter and the cellular mind. The book concludes with an appendix written by the compiler to highlight the transition from spiritualisation to supramentalisation as elucidated by Sri Aurobindo.

The Dawn of Auroville

(1964–1973) A brief history in photographs

—Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research

Library in collaboration with Auroville Archives

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication

Department, Pondicherry

236 pp, Rs 850, ISBN: 978-93-5210-171-9

Size: 22 x 28 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

A collaboration between the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library and the Auroville Archives, this book of photographs, woven together by a simple historical narrative, traces the growth of Auroville during the Mother's lifetime. Based on an exhibition presented in February 2018

to commemorate Auroville's fiftieth anniversary, it covers the conception and initial planning of Auroville, the preparation for and description of the inauguration day, 28 February 1968, and then the construction of the Matrimandir through 17 November 1973. Included are some of her messages on the aims and ideals of Auroville and a few then-and-now photographs of the centre of Auroville that portray the transformation of that landscape.

See review on page 18

Sri Aurobindo's Commentaries on Krishna, Buddha, Christ and Ramakrishna

Their Role in the Evolution of Humanity

—Wilfried Huchzermeyer

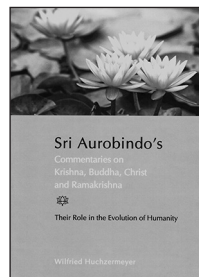
Publisher: Prisma, Auroville, in collaboration with Verlag W. Huchzermeyer, Germany

115 pp, Rs 300, ISBN: 978-81-939500-0-5

Size: 14 x 20 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

In this short work, the author studies the various statements and commentaries made by Sri Aurobindo, and a few by the Mother, on the life and work of these Avatars of the past. The interpretations revealed in these commentaries indicate that he saw all four as messengers who came to earth with a special mission, to support and accelerate the evolution of humanity in a particular way. The chapters discuss what Sri Aurobindo has written in his major works and in his letters to disciples on each of the four Avatars, beginning with Krishna, who played a significant part in Sri Aurobindo's own *sadhana*. Comments by the Mother shed additional light on these subjects.



Alipore Bomb Trial 1908–1910 (Volume 2)

Arguments in Courts and Judgements

—Compiled, Edited and with an Introduction by Amiya K Samanta

Publisher: Frontpage, Kolkata

470 pp, Rs 1495, ISBN: 978-93-81043-27-1

Size: 15 x 23 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

The second of two volumes bringing to light all the unpublished documents related to the Alipore Bomb Trial, this book deals with the arguments presented in the Sessions Court and the High Court and the judgments rendered in both. In the Introduction, the editor revisits justice in colonial India, beginning with the East India Company's efforts to protect colonial race relations. He argues that the bloodshed of the 1857 uprising made the British realise that a new and fair system of justice had to be implemented to quell the stirrings of a widespread revolt and cement the balance of power in favour of the colonial regime. The arguments and judgments presented demonstrate how far the principles of fair and impartial justice were actually adhered to. The Epilogue details the British Government's efforts to muzzle and condemn Sri Aurobindo and summarises the aftermath of the Alipore Bomb Trial in terms of how the authorities moved to tackle what they viewed as the problem of revolutionary terrorism.

See review on page 23

(previously introduced in the December 2018 issue)

The English of Savitri: Volume 5 (Book Two—The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds) Part One—Cantos One to Four

Comments on the language of Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri

—Shraddhavan

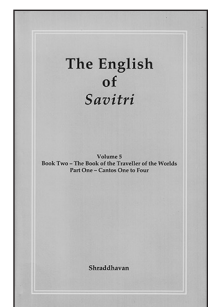
Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville

301 pp, Rs 550, ISBN: 978-93-82474-27-2

Size: 14 x 22 cm

Binding: Hard Cover

Like the previous volumes in this series, this book is based on the transcripts of classes held at Savitri Bhavan. Its aim remains the same, to read the poetry according to the natural rhythms of English speech and to gain a better understanding and appreciation of *Savitri* by explaining Sri Aurobindo's vocabulary, sentence structure, and imagery. The book begins with an Introduction that explores two questions inspired

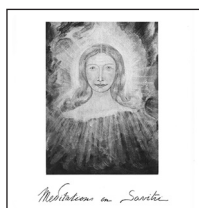


by the title of Book Two: “Who is the traveller?” and “What and where are these worlds?” The author then studies line by line the first four cantos of Book Two. The remaining eleven cantos of Book Two, Cantos Five to Fifteen, are summarised in a page each at the end of the volume. The Afterword places the content of this volume in the context of the series.

Meditations on Savitri—II

Book Two: The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds,
Book Three: The Book of the Divine Mother

—Paintings by Huta under the Mother’s guidance
 Publisher: The Havyavahana Trust, Pondicherry
 258 pp, Rs 1250, ISBN: 978-81-87372-38-7
 Size: 23 x 23 cm, Binding: Hard Cover



This is the second volume in a series that will present all of the 472 paintings on *Savitri* made by Huta under the Mother’s guidance. From 1961 to 1966 the Mother and Huta meditated together

on lines chosen from Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*, and when an image appeared to the Mother she described it to Huta with the help of a few strokes. Huta then completed the work in her studio as an oil painting. The Mother named the series of paintings *Meditations on Savitri*. This volume of 111 paintings accompanied by the corresponding lines from *Savitri*, covers Book II, “The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds” (94 paintings) and Book III, “The Book of the Divine Mother” (17 paintings).

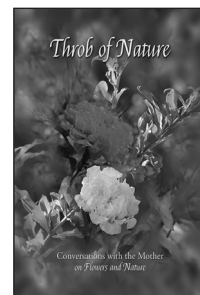
Throb of Nature

Conversations with the Mother on Flowers and Nature

—Recollected by Mona Sarkar
 Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry
 241 pp, Rs 325, ISBN: 978-93-5210-161-0
 Size: 18 x 25 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

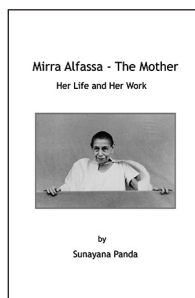
The compiler has collected his notations on Nature and flowers from his numerous conversations with

the Mother. The notations are organised into chapters such as “Flowers Have Their Own Language”, “Aspiration”, “Transformation”, “Promptings of Nature”, and “The Universal Game”. Each chapter begins with the picture of a flower with the significance given by the Mother, along with her comment. In these conversations the Mother reveals her identity with the powers and forces of universal Nature, how to communicate in joy and harmony with this subtle world, and the ways in which she used flowers to transmit to her disciples the vibrations and spiritual qualities carried by each flower.



Mirra Alfassa—The Mother Her Life and Her Work

—Sunayana Panda
 Publisher: First Feature Ltd., London, UK
 145 pp, Rs 200
 ISBN: 978-0-9562923-4-6
 Size: 12 x 18 cm
 Binding: Soft Cover



Essays about the Mother written by the author over a period of fifteen years are collected in this volume, whose stated aim is to introduce the Mother and her work to a wider audience, outside the environs of the Ashram and Auroville communities and people associated with them. Starting with the biographical facts of her birth, her family, and her education, the essays then look more closely at how her early life prepared her for the work she undertook with Sri Aurobindo in India, her cultural background, her life in Paris and her training as an artist, her sojourn in Japan, her spiritual seeking, her literary and artistic works, her contribution to the field of education, and her spiritual collaboration with Sri Aurobindo.

ASSAMESE

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Asimer Lilapathey—Supriyo Bhattacharya, hc Rs 400
Shudhu Tomar Jonyo: A Collection of Poems

—Dheemoyee, sc Rs 100

Sri Aurobindo Smaranika—Trija Roy
ISBN: 978-81-9316-254-5, sc Rs 70

GUJARATI

Chaitya Purush—Sri Aravind ane Sri Matajinar
akshararashimathi sankalit

ISBN: 978-93-5210-168-9 , sc Rs 160

Sadhanamarganan Bhayasthan—M. P. Pandit
sc Rs 30

Savitri Shabdarnut-9—Shraddhavan, sc Rs 220

Purnatane Panthe—Rambhai Chunibhai Patel
sc Rs 60

ITALIAN

Colloqui Serali con Sri Aurobindo (Volume 2)
—Trascritti da Purani, ISBN: 978-93-5210-183-2
sc Rs 650

Riflessioni sul tema “La donna”—Nolini Kanta
Gupta, ISBN: 978-93-5210-176-4, sc Rs 350

RUSSIAN

Savitri: Legenda i Simbol (Tom 1: Knigi I–II(1))
—Sri Aurobindo, ISBN: 978-5-88947-051-9
hc Rs 900

TAMIL

Eric—Sri Aurobindo, hc Rs 250

TELUGU

Prarthana – Japamu—Compiled from the Writings
of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, sc Rs 25

Santhoshamu – Prasantata—Compiled from the
Writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother
sc Rs 30

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BOOK REVIEWS

Of Mystics and Miracles and other Essays

—Manoj Das

Publisher: Sagnik Books, Kolkata

376 pp, Rs 600, ISBN: 978-93-84101-39-8

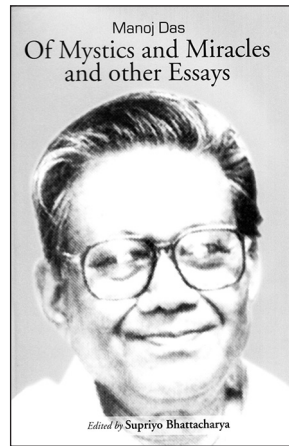
Size 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover



There are books one reads for information, entertainment, or inspiration, but there are also books one reads simply for the good company they provide. Manoj Das's *Of Mystics and Miracles and other Essays* belongs to that last category. Those who have read or heard his stories before may find things they already know, but the book is none the less for it. The simple presence of the author is in the end what makes this book a joy to read. Although it may take time to read the book from beginning to end, you will not regret buying it, because of the wonderful cover from which his smile will delight you.

This is not to say that it does not provide information, entertainment and inspiration, it does all that, but, for me at least, that is not its greatest merit. The cover of this book says it contains essays, but most of them are actually slightly reworked transcripts of talks given by the author on a surprisingly vast range of occasions. Manoj Das has a huge, perhaps unequalled, stock of anecdotes up his sleeve — from literature, history and his own rich life — and the storyteller that he is, he uses from there whatever it takes to populate and enrich the tapestries he weaves to fit the various occasions on which he is asked to speak.

A typical example is a short essay on the theme of translation, about which he spoke at the 20th World Book Fair in 2012. It begins with the story of the ancient Babylonians who attempted



to build a tower that would reach the heavens. To punish them for their audacity, the gods made them wake up one morning to discover none could understand the language of the other, so that in the end all went off in different directions, leaving the tower incomplete.

Manoj Das then speaks

of the role translations played in the history of India; relates how an Odia translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* brought tears to a local woman's eyes; and ends with a sophisticated theory of translation illustrated with Sri Aurobindo's rendering of Kalidasa in English.

In "The Lost World of Ancient Raconteurs" we are treated to a touching description of the aides to the priests attached to a major temple, who would go to distant villages to collect pilgrims who longed for the *darshan* of their favourite deity. As they journeyed together, intimacy grew, and the pilgrims posed their questions on the mystery of suffering and death—questions that were answered through stories. Mystic mendicants who accompanied travellers also entertained them with stories full of wit, insight, and, on occasion, the revelation of spiritual truth. Manoj Das, a supreme raconteur himself, then tells a series of stories to illustrate various issues. From the *sadhu* who solved the problem of a farmer's recalcitrant cow, to the simple lad Bholanath who came in a roundabout way to the realisation that he too was Brahma, we experience the warmth of the author's own conviction in the wisdom of these tales.

Still, this book is not only a collection of stories. There are also serious essays that show his concern for the social and political upheavals of our times. A typical example is “The Message of the Departing Century” in which Manoj Das looks at the lessons of the two great world wars and the collapse of the institutions belonging to the old world order – monarchy, empires and colonies, feudalism – noting that their ghosts found renewed life in the cold war between the superpowers and the entitlement and privilege assumed by the “petty politicians who conducted themselves like potentates”. He ends that essay with extensive quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the remark that, while freedom may have been won on many fronts, the ultimate freedom is still to be won: our freedom from Ignorance.

Some of the essays are really striking, others perhaps less so, but what makes each essay a joy to read is the love and respect that is present in all of them for the “weird and wonderful” tribe to which we humans belong. Even where he is perfectly clear that he condemns the things we do — especially all that is ugly, and the senseless cruelty people inflict on each other — underneath that condemnation one can still feel his love, not only for the victims but even for those who commit men’s endless list of crimes and follies. It is the depth of his concern for humanity that is the real message of this book.

—Matthijs Cornelissen

Dr Cornelissen teaches Psychological Aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s Work at the SAICE and is the founder-director of the Indian Psychology Institute.

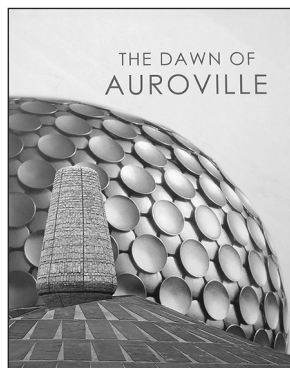
The Dawn of Auroville

(1964–1973) *A brief history in photographs*

—Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library in collaboration with Auroville Archives
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

236 pp, Rs 850, ISBN: 978-93-5210-171-9

Size: 22 x 28 cm, Binding: Hard Cover



Looking back fifty-plus years on the inspiration and manifestation of Auroville yields its own special delight, to remind us what the first years were like when Mother was alive and having frequent contact

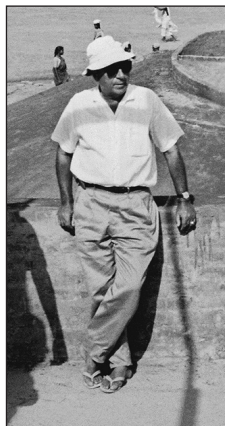
with the various managers and architects and “pioneers” coming from all over the world to live on this barren plateau in South India. One is reminded of this terrific outpouring of energy and effort, and that when she blesses the project in 1964, Mother is eighty-six. The inauguration ceremony was held shortly after her ninetieth birthday.

The complexity of getting local, state, national, and international parties on board, when even long-distance phone calls were rare and difficult in Pondicherry, is testimony to the extraordinary efforts and the perseverance and good will of all involved. Navajata, Shyamsunder, Roger, Nolini, Udar, and Gene Maslow appear in many of these photographs.

Many favorite stories are included, like Udar Pinto’s effort to overcome the USSR’s objections to the presence of the word “Divine” in the Auroville Charter. And this is a pivotal moment because once Moscow agreed to send delegates to the inauguration, the entire Soviet bloc followed suit, and participated in the ceremony.

On the land itself, there is so very little. Just the Banyan at the center with a few palmyras here and there. One could see all the way to the sea, there were so few trees. And then there were the canyons, cutting deep scars through a barren moonscape.

So there are stories of the superhuman efforts needed. Nata has to lead a team, working day and night to prepare the amphitheater and grandstands for the inauguration ceremony:



Nata at the amphitheatre construction site

The work went on 24 hours, with 8-hour shifts. The work involved the construction of an Amphitheatre with a diameter of 150 metres and, around it, space for 10,000 persons sitting on mats, on the ground, and stands and steps for 2,000 persons. Towards the south-east of the centre of the Amphitheatre rose a mound on which was an Urn which would

contain the earth from all the Indian States and the countries of the world. And there had to be adequate sanitary arrangements as well as provision for drinking water. On the 25th of February, 3 days before the scheduled date of the ceremony, everything was ready, including 8 kilometres of road, 1.5 kilometres of water pipes, and parking space for 300 cars.

And then there is the anecdote regarding Vincenzo, who, within the span of only two weeks, had the responsibility for cladding the urn with more than 2000 small marble chips. The urn was designed to hold the soil from all the nations, and was to be the focus of the entire inauguration ceremony:

A controversy arose because while Vincenzo was working, he was smoking and

drinking coffee, and this led to complaints by the Ashram's more austere sadhaks, who wrote to the Mother: "Mother, Vincenzo is smoking in the Ashram... Mother, Vincenzo is drinking coffee in the Ashram..." to which Mother replied, "Leave Vincenzo alone."

Hundreds of dignitaries and representatives from the 124 countries invited are put up in the homes of Ashramites, so literally there was a cast of thousands called to act in this dramatic moment.

The second half of the book is focused on the Matrimandir. Photos of early designs and plans document the evolution of the building which is a collaboration between architects Roger Anger and Paolo Tommasi, with Piero Cicionesi overseeing the actual construction. Udar's early drawings of the inner chamber are also included.

In 1970, Mother gives her first message: "The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection. Union with the Divine manifesting in a progressive human unity."

A number of the famous early photos by Dominique Darr are included, but one should also see her *Matrimandir: Hymn to the Builders of the Future* for a complete chronicle. Fortunately, a couple of Fred Cebron's stunning drone shots of the completed Matrimandir bring us to the present. The book ends with a series of remarkable then-and-now photographs showing the same locations in Auroville fifty years ago and today.

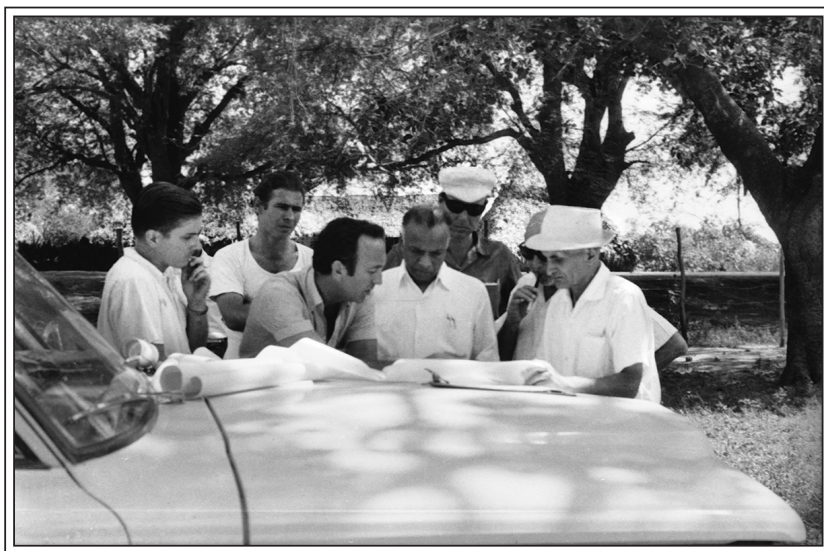
The Appendix contains photos of representatives of each Indian state and all the countries putting soil into the urn. In some cases, Ashram children stood in for those countries who did not send a representative. And interestingly, both Nationalist China and Communist China are included as well as Tibet. Canada is represented, as is, separately, the province of Quebec, so the ceremony reflects a mélange of background stories showing the crosscurrents of the time.

In all, this collaboration between the Ashram and Auroville Archives is very well designed, tracing a flow of beauty, imagination and the power of manifestation coming from so many different directions. One does miss photos of the first Aurovilian settlers though—the early pioneers out on the land in the heat and sun planting the saplings and protecting them from the goats with thorn fences, for those trees are now part of an amazing forest, creating new microclimates and repopulating flora and fauna back on the land.

Perhaps this book could be considered part of a trilogy, including *Auroville, the First Six Years* by Savitra and the subsequent *Dawning of Auroville* by William (B) Sullivan, both of which chronicle the early years, but without the color photographs and drawings which provide so much beauty and elegance in this retrospective.

—Julian Lines

Julian is President of Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center in Mount Tremper, New York, USA, and serves on the Board of Auroville International USA.



Roger Anger showing his plans to Navajata at Promesse, Auroville, sometime in 1967

Boys and girls from the Ashram working to prepare a road in Auroville



Sri Aravinda Sarit Sagara—Part I

—Prema Nandakumar

Publisher: Ravi Mohan Rao, Chirala

620 pp, Rs 300, Size: 14 x 22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



One is never sure, as one reads Dr Prema Nandakumar's essays in English on the first fifteen volumes of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL), whether to continue to enjoy reading her or to put down her work and directly take up Sri Aurobindo's writings, which she introduces with such infectious enthusiasm as well as as dignified devotion for the Mahayogi.

The book being reviewed is the brainchild of Sri Ravi Mohan Rao, who persuaded Dr Nandakumar to pen essays in English on all the volumes of the SABCL. The present book, Part I of this two-part series, comprises forty-four essays in English on the first fifteen volumes of SABCL, followed by the Telugu translations of the essays.

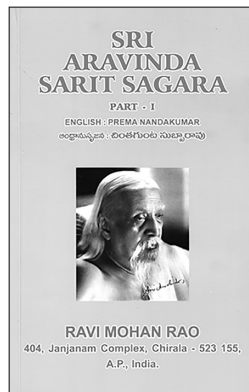
The book begins with an introductory set of five essays that expatiates on Sri Aurobindo's life as a scholar, patriot, and yogi, and on some highlights of the Mother's life. Three of these introductory essays are on Sri Aurobindo, and nimbly tell of his life, leaving out nothing that might be of interest to a reader of his works. Nandakumar divides her biographical sketch of him into three phases, starting with his early life in England as a student and scholar, his return to India and subsequent involvement in politics, and his life as a yogi in Pondicherry. One may safely say that none who has felt the need for a biographical backdrop to Sri Aurobindo's writings will be disappointed by the brief, lively

narration of his life story. The remaining two introductory essays are on the Mother, and they concisely touch on the high points of her life and her role in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. These five prefatory essays complete the Introduction, after which Nandakumar passes on to her work proper, namely the essays on Sri Aurobindo's writings themselves.

The first nine volumes of the SABCL contain Sri Aurobindo's political writings, cultural writings from early in his life, his writings in Bengali, his poems and plays, his translations into English from certain other Indian languages, and his thoughts on poetry, literature, and art. Nandakumar has three essays on each of these nine volumes, each essay being a paean to Sri Aurobindo's stature as a nationalist, littérateur, translator, and critic.

She is herself a passionate student of literature and a creative writer on Sri Aurobindo's works, and her twenty-seven exuberant essays on these nine volumes see her relishing his writings, a relish that will infect even the most blasé reader. But it is not only as a lover of literature that she writes; in her discussions on his political writings, her own passion for her country clearly comes through in her comments on his politics and political pieces.

Her praise of Sri Aurobindo's writing is not all unqualified, however. For where there is a necessity to distinguish between his lesser writings and his masterpieces, she does not mince words. She thus says unequivocally of some of his early poems that it is the work of a student of English poetry who has not yet gone beyond the limits of meter and rhyme. By the time we get into her essays on the ninth volume, *The Future Poetry*, we see her not only establishing Sri Aurobindo as one of the great nationalists of his time, but also as an evergreen writer, poet, and critic. It is in her writings on these first nine volumes that she is truly in her



element. If her essays on the next six volumes of the SABCL illuminate in a savant-like way Sri Aurobindo's treatment of complex themes in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, on India, and on social and political philosophy, these come nowhere close to the sheer rapture for Aurobindonian literature that characterizes her first twenty-seven essays.

The author is herself a passionate student of literature and a creative writer on Sri Aurobindo's works, and her twenty-seven exuberant essays on the first nine volumes see her relishing his writings, a relish that will infect even the most blasé reader.

The next eleven essays in this book are on Volumes Ten to Thirteen of the SABCL — *The Secret of the Veda*, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, *The Upanishads*, and *Essays on the Gita*. These essays elucidate Sri Aurobindo's original treatment of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita. In them she explains Aurobindonian motifs in his interpretation of these classics of Indian sacred lore. It is noteworthy here that her essays are useful to both those familiar with the contents of these volumes as well as those who feel the need for an introduction to them.

Her last six essays in this book are on the volumes titled *The Foundations of Indian Culture* and *Social and Political Thought*. The former volume comprises a defense of Indian civilization, writings on the art, literature, and polity of India, and on the renaissance in India. To each of these topics Nandakumar devotes one essay. The latter volume, and the last one

that is treated in this book, houses three more or less independent pieces by Sri Aurobindo: *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and *War and Self-determination*. Nandakumar devotes one essay to each of these works.

Throughout the book, we have delightful tidbits on the publication of the SABCL, and how greatly it pleased her to see all of Sri Aurobindo's then available works brought together in one uniform set of volumes in 1972. These anecdotes fit in here precisely because this book does not merely summarize the contents of the SABCL, but also contains Nandakumar's personal take on them as a devotee and an Aurobindonian scholar.

The forty-nine incisive essays, at once instructive and entertaining even though the material they deal with is often dense, will no doubt leave in the reader enough curiosity to want to delve into the original texts by Sri Aurobindo. And if it does this much, one can conclude with certainty that the purpose of writing these essays is fulfilled. Nandakumar's skillfulness goes further, however. It is probably no exaggeration to say that what remains with the reader at the end of her forty-ninth essay is a desire for more; a desire that can be quenched by an early release of Part II of the series, with essays on the remaining volumes of the SABCL.

—Sivakumar Elambooran

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

Alipore Bomb Trial 1908–1910 (Volume 2)

Arguments in Courts and Judgements

—Compiled, Edited and with an Introduction by
Amiya K Samanta

Publisher: Frontpage, Kolkata

470 pp, Rs 1495, ISBN: 978-93-81043-27-1

Size: 15 x 23 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

Amiya K Samanta's erudite presentation of the famous Alipore Bomb Trial is now complete with the publication of the second volume of the proceedings, which elaborates the arguments and judgements [or judgment, the conventional spelling in legal contexts] made both in the Sessions Court and, pertaining to the appeals, in the High Court. Mr. Samanta has done a yeoman service by presenting a rich database of documents relating to the Alipore Bomb Trial that will be used by future researchers for reconstructing that historic trial. Moreover, he has removed several misconceptions and myths through the use of sequenced evidence. As for many historic events, initial accounts are often based more on hearsay than on facts. A scientific presentation of facts has the advantage that future researchers can draw varying interpretations of the same event. It is this variability that adds richness to the discourse and stimulates ongoing research. Thus, the question of whether Barin's confessions were aimed at saving his own skin or taking the blame to spare others has been kept open to debate. One has to consider several factors before making an assessment, and Mr. Samanta has wisely presented a great deal of data on which several assumptions can be made on a number of important issues. This dilemma is explicit even as Chief Justice Jenkins delivered his judgment in the appeals: "The question of punishment is one of considerable difficulty; those who have been convicted are not ordinary criminals:

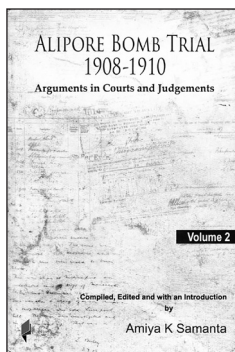
they are for the most part men of education, of strong religious instinct, and in some cases of considerable force of character."

Mr. Samanta's editing is highly commendable as he has methodically sequenced the data which otherwise would be difficult for the reader not versed in legal jargon. He has kept his editorial comments interspersed in the text precise so as not to interfere with the flow. He has also tried to present several viewpoints wherever there are controversial issues, such as when some

British officials assumed a partiality in Beachcroft's attitude that influenced his judgement— because he and Sri Aurobindo had been contemporaries at Cambridge University. Certain issues have been painstakingly followed, such as that of Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code, mischievously added by Magistrate Birley, without any government sanction, to facilitate death sentences. The arguments, which

are reproduced in detail, led the High Court to dispense with the unauthorised section.

As one follows the trail of arguments stretching from the Sessions Court to the High Court, one observes how Barrister C. R. Das's stature and acumen grow from those of a pleader to those of a visionary and statesman. Mr. Samanta has been able to re-create the distinctive character of that age, and his judicious editing has successfully conveyed the romanticism implicit in C. R. Das's



Alipore Sessions Court

arguments before Beachcroft that culminated in the historic appeal of 31 March 1909, an appeal that resonated not only in the courtroom but in the annals of history, venerating Sri Aurobindo as “the poet of patriotism” and “the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity”.

This book is a treasure house for law researchers as it shows how arguments were put forward with force and tact to impress British judges, with a depth and acumen that at times surpassed those of the Englishmen themselves, not only by reasoning but also by oratory. At times, serious arguments were presented with a wry sense of humour. When Justice Carnduff wanted to know if bomb-making was being taught at the Garden House as a large number of chemicals were found there, Das replied that Chemistry was being taught; such a huge amount of chemicals was not needed for a few bombs. Das had earlier submitted to the Sessions Judge that chemical ingredients were not necessarily needed for bombs; they were being used to make matches as part of indigenous Swadeshi efforts.

There are numerous instances and anecdotes in the compilation which are not only interesting to read but can be useful material for further explorations. These few examples are noteworthy: Abinash Bhattacharya’s daring publication *Bartaman Rananiti*, a Bengali book on “The Modern Art of War” whose introductory chapter was headed “War is the Order of Creation”; the inspired compilation of *Jugantar* articles *Mukti Kon Pathe* or *Which Way Lies Salvation*, a big seller until banned by the police; Lele’s presence at Sil’s Lodge, Baidyanath, ostensibly to impart yoga training to the bomb-making team, an effort that ultimately proved counterproductive; Beachcroft describing Sushil Sen as likely being flattered by the idolisation he received for being whipped

at the behest of the dreaded Kingsford, and adding that the ceremonial *lathi* (staff), with a spearhead at one end and a heavy weight at the other, that Sen received from Leakat Hossain was an extraordinary weapon, though in reality it was useless as a weapon of offence; and the confession of Inspector Narendra Kumar Mullik that he intentionally failed to identify a key accused in the test identification parade as the accused’s sister had approached his sister, a new bride in the same village as the accused, to weaken the case.



Calcutta High Court, 1903

This book, rich with data and erudite scholarship, deserves a rightful place in the libraries of students of history, law, and Aurobindonian studies.

—Dr Soumitra Basu

Dr Basu is a psychiatrist exploring the consciousness paradigm of health, psychology, and psychotherapy from the integral perspective of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. His review of Volume 1 of Alipore Bomb Trial 1908–1910 appeared in the August 2017 issue of Recent Publications.