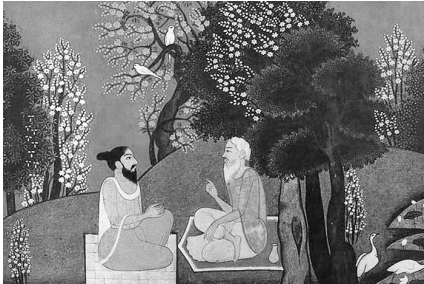


Recent Publications

S a b d a



This Self is to be won by the Truth and
by an integral knowledge

Mundaka Upanishad

Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 659

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In a series of essays written in 1909 titled “The Brain of India”, Sri Aurobindo asked: “What was the secret of that gigantic intellectuality, spirituality and superhuman moral force which we see pulsating in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, in the ancient philosophy, in the supreme poetry, art, sculpture and architecture of India? What was at the basis of the incomparable public works and engineering achievements, the opulent and exquisite industries, the great triumphs of science, scholarship, jurisprudence, logic, metaphysics, the unique social structure?”

He concluded that “without a great and unique discipline involving a perfect education of soul and mind, a result so immense and persistent would have been impossible” and that we could find the secret of such accomplishments “in a profound knowledge of human psychology and its subtle application to the methods of intellectual training and instruction”.

Our lead article looks at how Sri Aurobindo's vision of education can pave the way for a new academic culture in the country.

Sri Aurobindo and the Modern Academic World

The most direct path to catastrophe is to treat complex problems as if they are obvious to everyone.

—Stephen Marche on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Chat Box

The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secret of the mud from which it grows here...you must know the whole before you can know the part... That is the province of the greater psychology awaiting its hour.

—Sri Aurobindo on modern psychology

How does one make an estimate of Sri Aurobindo's place in the modern academic world on his 150th birth anniversary? What are his singular contributions to intellectual history at the national and global level?

I shall argue that while the reception of Sri Aurobindo's thought in the mainstream academia of India and the West may have undergone a change after his passing, and some academic disciplines may not be as hospitable to him as before, newer vistas like Global Studies, International Relations, Consciousness Studies, Cosmopolitanism, Indic Studies, and Integral Education may witness the growing influence of Sri Aurobindo in the academic world.

Like all institutions, the modern university system has undergone changes spatially and temporally in historical terms. To talk about the reception of Sri Aurobindo without taking into account contextual and historical factors would not be a viable proposition. These dimensions, howsoever briefly, will figure into the present discussion.

A caveat is perhaps called for: there is no claim here that the viewpoint suggested in this article is definitive; indeed, other approaches are possible with alternate readings of the reception of Sri Aurobindo in modern academia as we trace a future trajectory.

In his *New Ways in English Literature* (1917)¹, Irish poet-critic James Cousins saw Sri Aurobindo as the harbinger of the poetry of the future. Aldous Huxley, the foremost novelist-thinker of the twentieth century, author of *The Perennial Philosophy* who had a great affinity with Indic traditions, cited the Master's magnum opus *The Life Divine* as an extraordinary work of literature. Likewise, Nobel laureates Pearl S. Buck and Gabriela Mistral nominated Sri Aurobindo in 1949 for the coveted Nobel Prize in Literature.²

Similar nominations were made by a group of eminent Indian academics and men of letters in 1949 for the Nobel Prize in Literature.³ Harvard professors of philosophy in the late 1940s recognised the world vision of Sri Aurobindo in philosophical terms. Dr S. Radhakrishnan, acclaimed philosopher-statesman of modern India and former President of the Indian Republic, called Sri Aurobindo 'the greatest intellectual of our age'.⁴ On 11 December 1948, Sir C. R. Reddy, then Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, bestowed upon the Master a special prize for 'eminent merit in the humanities'.⁵ The distinguished historian R. C. Majumdar noted the outstanding contributions of Sri Aurobindo in the domain of Indian historiography,⁶ in particular the latter's

refutation of the so-called Aryan invasion theory that K. D. Sethna in later years would develop at considerable length in linguistic and archaeological terms.⁷

Leading poet-critics of modern Bengal like Buddhadeva Bose, in the post-Tagore phase, held up the poetry and poetic genius of Sri Aurobindo as exemplary models for the younger generation of Indian poets. Other litterateurs such as K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, V. K. Gokak, C. D. Narasimhaiah, and Raja Rao, all doyens of modern Indian English literature, lavished praise on Sri Aurobindo. Dilip Kumar Roy, Kuvempu, Prema Nandakumar, and others added their admiration in later years.

The makers of modern India as well as leading politicians of all hues⁸ recognised Sri Aurobindo as a builder of modern India and his thought-vision worthy of study in the Indian university system. The authors of the two University Commissions in post-independence India, Dr S. Radhakrishnan and Dr D. S. Kothari, singled out the educational tenets of Sri Aurobindo's thought as worthy pedagogic precepts and practices for university learners and young adults.

And yet Sri Aurobindo's presence in mainstream Indian and Western academia today, barring notable exceptions, is evident by its absence. Generations of students of Indian higher education know about the philosopher K. C. Bhattacharya's idea of *Swaraj*, M. K. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, B. R. Ambedkar, and others. They know about the Western and Afro-Asian contributions to the decolonisation of the mind through the study of the works by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, and others; they have read with profit the slave narratives of the United States by Frederick Douglass, the Indian Subaltern historiography edited by Ranajit Guha, the works of Raymond Williams, Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak, Michel Foucault, and Walter Benjamin. But they do not hear the voice of Sri Aurobindo whose pioneering contributions in *The Foundations of Indian Culture* laid the ground for post-colonial studies. They know about the translation theories of Susan Basnett, but not those of Sri Aurobindo, who had ably translated the Vedas,⁹ the Upanishads, and the Indian epics. Surely, this must be on account of the eurocentric bias in our knowledge system as well as the continued cultural imperialism in the so-called third world.

Literature: early critics

In the sixties and early seventies of the last century, noted Indian English poets and critics like P. Lal, Raghavendra Rao, Nissim Ezekiel, and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra joined issue with Buddhadeva Bose and found Sri Aurobindo's poetic credo and practice lacking in inspiration for the younger poets in India. It was claimed that in order to appreciate Sri Aurobindo's poetry, one had to be a disciple or a devotee like Iyengar, Gokak, or Sethna. In an interview, Mehrotra asked rhetorically: 'Where was the sense of tradition going to come from? It was not going to come from Sarojini Naidu or Sri Aurobindo.'¹⁰

Similarly, P. Lal claimed that in reading *Savitri*, one 'has the effect of a gushy, comical experience with alas no mystical movements which are "deeper than the deeps"'. He would change this unsympathetic viewpoint at a later period.¹¹

Sympathetic voices contested such disparagement and made qualified responses. For instance, in his insightful essay, 'The Indian Imagination', K. D. Verma, the former editor of a leading American journal, *South Asia Review* (SAR), declares that 'Aurobindo is mostly known as a

philosopher and a poet, but his stature as a critic remains somewhat unassured and deeply undervalued and perhaps overshadowed by the unsurpassed brilliance and originality of his work in other areas.¹² He adds, 'One must say unhesitatingly that *The Future Poetry* is an important and unique document in literary history and critical theory.' Verma surmises that Sri Aurobindo's departure from England a 'quarter of a century ago,' and his 'distance from contemporary English literature' are possible reasons for his eclipse from the critical scene in India. Similarly, Narasimhaiah,¹³ while declaring Sri Aurobindo to be the 'inaugurator of modern Indian literary criticism', says, 'For more than a century, he has not found a follower in a land celebrated for followers.'

Contextual factors and contested categories

One must dispassionately look for deeper reasons for the relative absence of Sri Aurobindo in today's mainstream academic and intellectual culture. Some of these reasons, one may argue, would be found by historicising our account. The idea here is not to be reductive and exclusive, but to suggest possible explanations for the change in sensibility and worldview. And thereby we may discern possibilities for the future.

Fin-de-siècle counter culture

Post-colonial critic Leela Gandhi is correct in her assumptions in her pathbreaking book *Affective Communities*, 2009, that fin-de-siècle Europe and the Edwardian era in England generated worldwide interest in counter-culture movements in the domains of occultism, vegetarianism, theology, and alternative living. D.H. Lawrence's search for the ideal utopian commune in the deep Southwest of the United States led him to the company of the native American Indians of Taos, New Mexico; the journey of James and Margaret Cousins took them to India at the invitation of the noted theosophist Annie Besant; the romantic-mystical poetry of AE, W.B. Yeats, Stephen Philips, Manmohan Ghose, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, and others dealt with the subjective experience of the inner world. The Bengal School of Art spearheaded by Nandalal Bose, Abanindranath Tagore, and art critics like A.C. Gangooly promised to usher in what Sri Aurobindo considered the subjective era in human civilisation, a new cosmology for the world.

However, by 1922 the publication of *The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot and the rise of modernist-imagist poetry spearheaded by Eliot and Ezra Pound began a new movement in literary modernism in the Anglo-American world. Poetry must deal with commonplace, quotidian experience and capture the angst and anomie of modern existence, it was claimed. Eliot, Pound, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, and the 'Movement Poets' in England created newer modes of poetic idiom and sensibility. D.H. Lawrence, Philip Larkin and later poets like Ted Hughes influenced the newer generation of Indian English poets. A.K. Ramanujan, Dom Moraes, Adil Jussawala, Keki Daruwalla, Jayanta Mahapatra, Shiv K. Kumar, R. Parthasarathy, Arun Kolatkar, and others wrote poetry that dealt with the empirical experience, using a pronounced modernist idiom. The reign of secular modernity and cultural Marxism in various disciplines led to the marginalisation of the earlier era of spiritual/mystical poetry and its underlying metaphysics/view of life.

The subjective nature of critical canons and taste

Sri Aurobindo saw the reasons for such a bias in the domains of literature and culture. In a letter dated 5 October 1934, he wrote to a correspondent:

Most labour to fit their personal likes and dislikes to some standard of criticism which they conceive to be objective, this need of objectivity, of the support of an impersonal truth independent of our personality, or anybody else's, is the main source of theories, canons, standards of art. But the theories, canons, standards themselves vary and are set up in one age only to be broken in another.

Radical changes in academia, challenges to Western modernity, insights from Sri Aurobindo

In varied measures, the dominance of literary modernism and the larger project of Western modernity were challenged by philosophies/movements beginning in the 1960s. In language studies, the postulates of Ferdinand de Saussure were challenged by structuralism and post-structuralism in Western academia. The 'language turn' in literary-cultural theory/criticism came through Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Harold Bloom, and J.Hillis Miller. The work of Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and others paved the way for the new era of cultural materialism/criticism. Meaning, cognition effect, and symbols came centre stage in the study of literature and culture.¹⁴ On the surface, the new paradigms may not share much with the Aurobindonean worldview; however, we may argue that Sri Aurobindo's critique of Western modernity, anchored to the primacy of Reason and Rationality, merits the critical attention of scholars in the field. His twin essays in *The Life Divine*,¹⁵ 'The Methods of Vedantic Knowledge' and 'Reality and the Integral Knowledge',¹⁶ have much to offer Western epistemology.

Language, literature, culture, and international living: a new cosmology?

The tech-centred world of today witnesses the blurring of the earlier boundaries between the word and the world, the text and the context. New Historicism, propounded by Harvard Professor Stephen Greenblatt, argues that historical truths must recognise 'the inadequacy of stories told' and that the study of multiple narrations could lead us closer to the so-called authentic account/narrative. Language and self-reflexivity therefore become pivotal to such a critical enterprise. This is a truth that appears to be close to the Indic imagination, which lays a primary emphasis on the subjective experience, with language as a key category and determinant. Its import and implications need to be explored further in the cross-cultural context.

In the domain of literature, concepts and platforms such as digital texts, graphic novels, graffiti work, meta-fiction, digital humanities, Instagram chatboxes, ethno-musicology, and medical, digital, and environmental humanities are increasingly becoming subjects of avant-garde research in the leading universities of the world.

Writing in the 6 December 2022 issue of *The Atlantic* magazine, Professor of Pedagogy Mike Sharples says that the undergraduate essay that has been at the heart of humanistic education in America is currently threatened by the open Artificial Intelligence (AI) chat box. Similarly, the

novelist Stephen Marche argues that the blurring of distinction in the digital domain between mere opinion vis-à-vis grounded understandings necessarily leads us to 'wilful obliviousness'.

One may, however, argue that contrary to prophets of doom, Literature and the Humanities are not doomed; nor does the Liberal Arts University face obsolescence. Marche adds prophetically: 'The most direct path to catastrophe is to treat complex problems as if they are obvious to everyone.' As Steve Job declares, 'It's in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough—it's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing,' and 'The broader one's understanding of the human experience, the better the design we will have.'

Following the lead of figures like Stephen Marche, Mike Sharples, and Steve Job, we may say that the literary-cultural world, supported by newer visions of the university, must lead mankind towards a better and more harmonious future through a new cultural imaginary. The new humanities in academia must address such concerns without being enslaved blindly to technology and consumer culture. Sri Aurobindo's considered views are timely reminders about the pitfalls of a tech culture.

Academic relevance of Sri Aurobindo

It is in this context that the neglected socio-cultural and global vision of Sri Aurobindo could pave the way for a new academic culture. Sri Aurobindo shows an astute understanding of language and literatures of the world; he sees the seminal importance of multilingualism, of diversity and decentralisation. Scholars may fruitfully turn their attention, in this context, to his works *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and *War and Self-Determination*.

Sri Aurobindo's views on internationalism, in contrast to the presently dominant and hegemonic 'global modern' that stands for the Americanisation of the world, would appeal to the modern academic world rooted in a liberal culture and thinking. They would be found instructive to civic planners in the domain of multicultural education, envisioned by thinkers like Charles Taylor and Anthony Appiah.¹⁷ The latter advocates the need and possibilities of maintaining a pluralistic culture of many identities and sub-cultures while retaining the civil and political practices that sustain natural life in the classic sense. Such a view finds powerful echoes in Sri Aurobindo.¹⁸ As Sri Aurobindo writes:

But uniformity is not the law of life. Life exists by diversity; it insists that each group, every being shall be, even while one with all the rest in its universality, yet by some principle or ordered detail of variation unique.... Order is indeed the law of life, but not an artificial regulation. The sound order is that which comes from within as the result of a nature that has discovered itself and found its own law and the law of its relation with others. Therefore the truest order is that which is founded on the greatest possible liberty; for liberty is at once the condition of vigorous variation and the condition of self-finding.

Integral education

Sri Aurobindo's progressive and futuristic views on education and the aim of life have found powerful resonance in the domain of contemporary teacher-training institutes and centres for alternative education¹⁹ in India. His views on the theory and practice of an integral education find

reflection in India's New Education Policy 2020. Child-centred learning, the need to free students, across the board, from bondages to textbooks and examinations, for the sake of holistic education, these are now an article of faith at the National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT] and other centres of teacher education.

Sri Aurobindo and consciousness studies

As in the case of International Relations, Global Studies, and the study of contemporary multiculturalism, discerning scholars in India and abroad today, are silently carrying out research in the field of Yoga psychology and consciousness studies, following the leads given by Sri Aurobindo. The pioneer in this field was clearly Prof Indra Sen²⁰ who shared close professional ties with his counterparts in India and abroad. Aligned to an interest in Indic Studies and the study of the indigenous knowledge systems, the subject is being avidly researched in institutes such as the California Institute of Integral Studies in the United States and the Indian Psychology Institute in India.²¹

Final thoughts

University systems in the East and the West have served their mission well and are destined to do so in future. It is too early to write an epitaph for the Liberal Arts University. The newer views of life, literature, and society that have emerged in recent years in academia may find echoes in the prophetic writings of Sri Aurobindo. For him, the matter-spirit binary, the empirical and spiritual divide, has been a great stumbling block for the betterment of the planetary world.

I have underlined in this essay some of the key ideas of Sri Aurobindo that could be taken forward for further treatment in academia, both present and future. All the same, a fundamental question remains: Why should a yogic consciousness bother about the rational mind that is at the heart of university education?

Sri Aurobindo, we may recall, devotes an entire chapter to 'The Office and Limitations of the Reason' in *The Human Cycle*. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, he draws our attention pointedly to the 'seeking intelligence', while showing us the place of the intellect in spiritual life.²² In this explanation, we may discover a larger truth, namely, the *raison d'être* of the modern university. As Sri Aurobindo says:

The intellect cannot be a sufficient guide in the search for spiritual truth and realisation and yet it has to be utilised in the integral movement of our nature. And while, therefore, we have to reject paralysing doubt or mere intellectual scepticism, the seeking intelligence has to be trained to admit a certain large questioning an intellectual rectitude not satisfied with half-truths, mixtures of error or approximation and, most positive and helpful, a perfect readiness always to move forward from truths already held and accepted to the greater corrective, completing or transcending truths which at first it was unable or, it may be, disinclined to envisage.

Right from his Cambridge days through the Bengal, Baroda, and Pondicherry phases, Sri Aurobindo evinced a keen interest in the development of the university system. He was deeply concerned about the 'thought phobia' that afflicted the Indian nation, as he wrote with concern to his younger brother Barin. Sri Aurobindo was not drawn to pedantry, or an arid scholarship that was not related to life. At Baroda and Bengal, he disfavoured the soul-killing rote learning that

destroyed originality and creativity in learners. The Mother founded the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE) on his principles.

Sri Aurobindo wrote extensively on national education, an education that is progressive and futuristic in character that could take the nation forward in a national resurgence and towards a greater future. It is time the nation heeded his message.

—Sachidananda Mohanty

Dr Mohanty is former Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Hyderabad. Winner of many national and international awards, such as the Katha, British Council, Fulbright, Charles Wallace, and the Salzburg, he has published extensively in the field of British, American, Gender, translation and post-colonial Studies. His books have appeared in Oxford, Sage, Routledge and Orient Longman, among other notable publishing houses. He served as a former Vice Chancellor of the Central University of Odisha.

Notes and References

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2. See Gautam Malaker, 'Sri Aurobindo and the Nobel Prize' for a fuller treatment of the subject, *Mother India*, Vol. LXXVI, No 1, January, 2023, pp.82–92.
3. Ibid, pp.84–86.
4. Quoted in K.D. Verma, 'Sri Aurobindo as a Critic', *The Indian Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, <https://rb.gy/3q6u5>). See the various anthologies of Indian English poetry edited by Makarand Paranjape for a sympathetic approach and the study of Sri Aurobindo's literary work especially in the context of Tagore by Goutam Ghoshal, formerly with Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan.
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6. See the work of Peter Heehs on Sri Aurobindo in the context of modern Indian history. Similarly, the study of Indian history in the light of Sri Aurobindo, by Kittu Reddy in several volumes with a nationalistic perspective, would be of interest to scholars in the field. See the earlier pioneering work in the domain of Social Sciences and related disciplines by Kishor Gandhi, Sanat K. Banerjee, Sisir Kumar Mitra and others.
7. See K.D. Sethna, *Ancient India in a New Light* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1997); Sethna, *The Problems of Ancient India* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2000). Also see, *K.D. Sethna: A Centenary Tribute*, Ed. Sachidananda Mohanty (USA: The Integral Life Foundation, 2004).
8. See, in particular, Dr Syama Prasad Mukerji's address at the convention to inaugurate the Sri Aurobindo University Centre at Pondicherry in 1951 as well as the address of Dr Karan Singh in the Indian Parliament in connection with the passing of the Auroville Foundation Act. See also Dr Karan Singh's book *The Prophet of Indian Nationalism*.

9. See M.P. Pandit's writings on Sri Aurobindo and the Vedas and the pioneering work by Kapali Shastri. In recent years, Debashish Banerji of the California Institute of Integral Studies and his team have carried out research on Sri Aurobindo, especially on the ancient Indian texts.
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13. C. D. Narasimhaiah, 'Aurobindo: Inaugurator of Modern Indian Criticism,' *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 24, No.1, Winter-Spring, 1989, pp. 87–103, published by the Asian Studies Centre, Michigan State University.
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19. See the works of Ameeta Mehra and team at the Gnostic Centre New Delhi and more importantly, the pivotal experiments carried out at the SAICE, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Society, Sri Aurobindo Ashram—Delhi Branch, and at SAIER, Auroville over half a century.
20. See Haridas Chaudhuri, (1975). "Psychology: Humanistic and Transpersonal", *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 15 (1), 7-15; Haridas Chaudhuri, *The Evolution of Integral Consciousness* (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 1988); Indra Sen, *Integral Psychology: The Psychological System of Sri Aurobindo* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education 2020); Shirazi, Bahman (2001) "Integral psychology, metaphors and processes of personal integration", Matthijs Cornelissen (Ed.) *Consciousness and Its Transformation*, (Pondicherry: SAICE) [online]
21. Similarly, A.S. Dalal, Kireet Joshi, Matthijs Cornelissen and their students have carried out valuable research on Sri Aurobindo in the context of Indian psychology. See also Kireet Joshi Archives: *Sri Aurobindo and Integral Yoga Psychology*. Likewise, Arindam Basu, Madhusudan Reddy, M.V. Nadkarni, Aster Patel, and in more recent years, R.C. Pradhan, Ananda Reddy (SACAR), Alok Pandey and others have written on the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo at the wider level.
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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

WORKS OF THE MOTHER

New Correspondences of the Mother II

—The Mother

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication
Department, Pondicherry

469 pp, Rs 320, ISBN: 978-93-5210-257-0

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This second volume of *New Correspondences of the Mother* contains her correspondence with nine disciples, all of them members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram: Amrita, Amal Kiran, Sanjiban, Kirankumari, Jagannath, Debou, Madanlal, Gautam Chawalla, and Shyam Sunder. A brief life sketch of the disciple precedes each correspondence, and the letters are presented in chronological order. These correspondences were not published as part of the Collected Works of the Mother, but appeared later in various issues of the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* or in independent volumes. Five of the correspondences are published here for the first time. The Note on the Texts at the back of the book provides further details that should enhance the reader's understanding and appreciation of each series of letters.

See review on page 17

COMPILATIONS FROM THE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

All India Magazine :

Nearness to the Mother—Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry
41 pp, Rs 60, ISBN: 978-81-7060-448-8
Size: 14 x 20 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Our Divine Destiny

—Selections from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; compiled by A.S. Dalal
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication
Department, Pondicherry
91 pp, Rs 65, ISBN: 978-93-5210-263-1
Size: 12 x 18 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

In Sri Aurobindo's teaching, the Reality of existence is Consciousness and evolution consists in an increasingly higher manifestation of the inner consciousness behind matter, creating progressively higher material forms for its embodiment. He wrote: "The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being." This compilation highlights the role of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga in the process of this spiritual evolution, a conscious collaboration in the realisation of the divine destiny of the world.

See review on page 19

OTHER AUTHORS

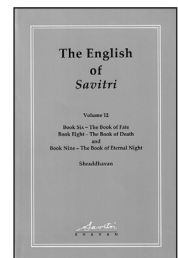
The English of Savitri, Volume 12 (Books Six, Eight, and Nine)

Comments on the language of Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri

—Shraddhavan

Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville
433 pp, Rs 600, ISBN: 978-81-955260-3-1
Size: 14 x 22 cm
Binding: Hard Cover

Volume Twelve, the last volume of the series *The English of Savitri* covers Book Six, *The Book of Fate*, Book Eight, *The Book of Death*, and Book Nine, *The Book of Eternal Night*. In Book Six, the sage Narad arrives to reveal the foreknowledge of Satyavan's death, and his



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

Mystic Fire: *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*

—Atulindra Nath Chaturvedi

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

192 pp, Rs 395, ISBN: 978-93-5520-778-4

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This biography of Sri Aurobindo concentrates on his involvement in the political life of India as a participant and later, after he retired from politics, as a keen observer of Indian and world affairs who even made public statements supporting the Cripps Mission and the Allied Powers during World War II. The author aims to deliver Sri Aurobindo from a limited historical role and relocate his life and work as a visionary who elevated India's role in modern history. He highlights the relevance of Sri Aurobindo's writings to the world today and to its future, calling them a living, provocative mass of ideas. Pointing out the themes of evolution and the liberation of the human being in Sri Aurobindo's teaching, he claims that the importance and necessity of freedom is the critical lesson from Sri Aurobindo even today.

(previously introduced in the February 2023 issue)

See review on page 24

Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of History

—M.P. Ajith Kumar

Publisher: Kurukshethra Prakasan, Kochi

304 pp, Rs 300, ISBN: 978-81-952379-8-2

Size: 14 x 21 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The author sets out to consider Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of history from several viewpoints. First, as the progress of history determined by humanity's mental evolution, Sri Aurobindo sees history as the path humanity treads towards truth through the ages. History reveals truths about man himself, about his struggles in search of self-perfection. The author discusses Sri Aurobindo's views that the nature of history is cyclical, that culture is an integral part of historical development, and that the role of nationalism has shaped the progress of history. Finally, it is the ideal of human unity based on the recognition of the universal oneness of all things that will lead to a new world order. The author's research also looks at other philosophers of history in the light of his appraisal of Sri Aurobindo's thought.

(previously introduced in the February 2023 issue)

See review on page 26

Rethinking Leadership

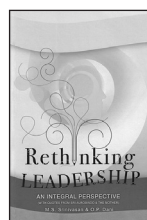
An Integral Perspective (with quotes from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)

—M.S. Srinivasan & O.P. Dani

Publisher: AuroPublications, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry

278 pp, Rs 650, ISBN: 978-81-7060-434-1

Size: 14 x 21 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



Aimed at bringing a deeper and wider vision to corporate business leaders, this book focuses on two apparent lacunae in current discussions on leadership: internal focus and values. The integral

approach to this topic embraces the belief that a greater focus on creating a work environment favourable to the inner progress of the individual

and its consequent expression in the collectivity will ultimately lead to the desired bottom-line goals of the business. The book also discusses best practices in management, including some case studies on effective leadership. The final section contains quotes from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on leadership. Several of the articles appearing here have been previously published in professional journals devoted to management.

Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery

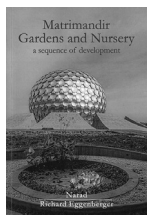
A sequence of development

—Narad (Richard Eggenberger)

Publisher: PRISMA, Auroville

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

Binding: Soft Cover



A semi-autobiographical and historical account of the development of the Matrimandir Nursery and Gardens by Narad, a central figure in both the planning and execution of the gardens, this is

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

Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Volume II *Part I: The Yoga of Divine Works (Chapters 1–3)*

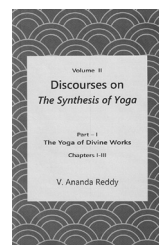
—Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

353 pp, Rs 390, ISBN: 978-93-85391-30-9

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

In the first chapter, the author writes at length about the four pillars of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga: the knowledge of the principles and powers that govern the realisation; the action, or the force of our personal effort, laid down by this knowledge; the influence, suggestion, and example of the teacher or guru; and the instrumentality of Time. In the second chapter, he addresses Sri Aurobindo's definition of the self-consecration required to embark on the path, the decision of the mind and the will to accept a new upward orientation in the being. A dynamic self-surrender in works is Sri Aurobindo's subject in the third chapter, and the author takes up a discussion of the common point between the Integral Yoga and the Yoga of the Gita.



Insights Into *Savitri*

Explorations of some aspects of Savitri

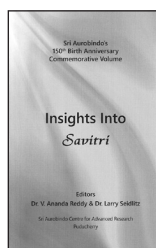
—Essays by various authors; Dr V. Ananda Reddy & Dr Larry Seidlitz, eds.

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

280 pp, Rs 320, ISBN: 978-93-85391-29-3

Size: 15 x 24 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

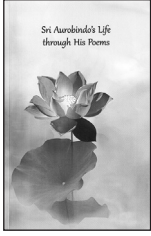
Prefaced by a talk of the Mother on *Savitri* as recorded by Mona Sarkar, this volume presents insights on Sri Aurobindo's epic poem by a group of contributors who delivered talks on the subject between August 2021 and August 2022. The first three talks are on the nature of the relationship between *Savitri* and Satyavan. The next eleven cover different thematic approaches such as the debate of Love and Death, the first steps of Aswapati's Yoga, transformation and transcendence, and insights on avatarhood in *Savitri*. The final five talks fall under the rubric *Savitri*: "A Super



Epic” and look at subjects as diverse as *Savitri* as mantra, *prakriti* and the manifestations of spiritual consciousness, and the powerful and irresistible presence of Savitri in the epic.

Sri Aurobindo’s Life through His Poems

—Compiled and annotated by Alok Pandey
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry
60 pp, Rs 100, ISBN: 978-81-7060-445-7
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



The compiler of these poems by Sri Aurobindo has attempted to create a kind of “poetic biography” of Sri Aurobindo’s life. Classified into ten phases such as “The Revolutionary Yogi”, “The Cave of Tapasya”, “The Master of Integral Yoga”,

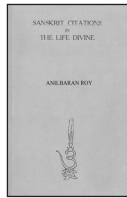
“Leader of the Human March”, and “The Divine Sacrifice”, the poems are introduced by editorial statements that briefly interpret the subject of the poem in light of one of the ten categories or by longer prose passages that provide historical detail. Quotes from Sri Aurobindo’s letters or from the Mother afford insights on several of the poems.

Sanskrit Citations in *The Life Divine*

Text of the quotations under the headings of the chapters and of the passages referred to in the body of the book

—Anilbaran Roy
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Samiti, Kolkata
107 pp, Rs 200
Size: 14 x 21 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

First published in August 1943, this book provides the original Sanskrit texts from the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, and the Puranas cited by Sri Aurobindo in his English translations at the head of each chapter in *The Life Divine*. Other texts quoted or referred to in the body



of the book are also given in Sanskrit. While preparing the 1943 volume, Anilbaran Roy used the first edition of Volume I of *The Life Divine* (1939) and the first edition of Volume II (1940), citing page and line numbers of those editions. This new edition is published from Kolkata in honour of Sri Aurobindo’s 150th birth anniversary, August 2022.

Explanations of *Essays on the Gita*, Vol. One

First Series: Chapters 1–4

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry
270 pp, Rs 300, ISBN: 978-93-85391-24-8
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

In these talks delivered in 2006 and 2007, the author examines the first four chapters of *Essays on the Gita*. “Our Demand and Need from the Gita” clarifies that our true approach to the Gita is not an academic one but rather a search for its essential and living message: to help mankind seize its highest spiritual welfare. “The Divine Teacher” stresses the circumstances in which Sri Krishna delivers this essential message to Arjuna. He is the God in man towards whom all human life moves, the secret Master of works and sacrifice. In “The Human Disciple” Sri Aurobindo gives a psychological analysis of Arjuna, the human disciple who represents all of us. “The Core of the Teaching” considers various interpretations of the Gita before following the interaction between teacher and disciple, in which Arjuna is allowed the full freedom to question and argue with Sri Krishna until he finally receives the glorious, revelatory core of the Gita’s teaching.

See review on page 21

Explanations of *Essays on the Gita*, Vol. Two

First Series: Chapters 5–7

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

199 pp, Rs 280, ISBN: 978-93-85391-27-9
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

In these talks delivered in 2007 and 2008, the author examines the Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of *Essays on the Gita*. In the chapter titled “Kurukshetra,” the battlefield’s centrality in the entire epic Mahabharata is highlighted because that is where the holy dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna occurs. The next chapter, “Man and the Battle of Life,” focusses on parallels between the particular war actually being fought at Kurukshetra and the battle we all wage in daily life. The last chapter discussed in this volume, “The Creed of the Aryan Fighter,” goes into some detail about the nature of an Aryan, a spiritual understanding of a noble concept, and the duties and qualities of a truly heroic man, possessed of a divine compassion, not the weakness of self-pity, which had descended on the distraught Arjuna.

See review on page 21

Sri Aurobindo: An Extraordinary Phenomenon

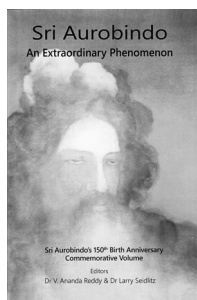
Glimpses of His Multifaceted Personality

—Essays by various authors; Dr V. Ananda Reddy & Dr Larry Seidlitz, eds.

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

397 pp, Rs 480, ISBN: 978-93-85391-20-0

Size: 16 x 24 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



This commemorative volume on the occasion of Sri Aurobindo’s 150th birth anniversary is a collection of twenty-five essays by various eminent contributors on the many facets of his multidimensional personality. Edited by Dr V. Ananda Reddy and Dr Larry Seidlitz, the book

is an interesting exploration of the wide-ranging aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s personality

that extend from his roles as a teacher, family man, revolutionary Nationalist, and poet and dramatist, to political philosopher, visionary thinker, and spiritual guide.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine*: Vol. XIV (Book II Part II: Chapters 25 and 26)

Chapterwise Summary Talks

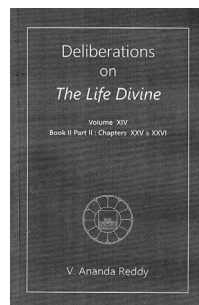
—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

370 pp, Rs 425, ISBN: 978-93-85391-26-2

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The author’s deliberations are concerned here with the second two chapters of the last six chapters of *The Life Divine*. The Mother gave considerable importance to these final six chapters because they reveal Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the future. “The Triple Transformation” describes the psychic change, the spiritual change, and the supramental transmutation, the stages of development of the human personality, and the stages of the soul’s emergence. In “The Ascent towards Supermind” the subject of the supramental transformation is more thoroughly explored, especially the conditions required for the descent of that consciousness, and the total surrender of the human instrument necessary for the supramental change to take place. The author delves into Sri Aurobindo’s description of the ascent towards the supermind through the higher mind, the illumined mind, the intuitive mind, and the overmind, as well as the complexity of integrating each step of the ascension until the supramental power effects the change of the whole being.



**Deliberations on *The Life Divine*: Vol. XV
(Book II Part II: Chapters 27 and 28)**

Chapterwise Summary Talks

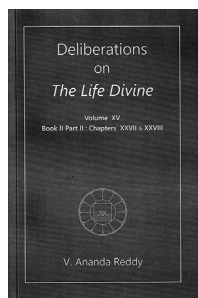
—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced
Research Trust, Pondicherry

417 pp, Rs 500, ISBN: 978-93-85391-28-6

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The author's deliberations on *The Life Divine* conclude with this volume, which looks at the last two chapters of the book. The Mother gave considerable importance to these final chapters because they reveal Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future. They were not written originally for the *Arya*, but were added in 1939 and 1940. The author stresses that while previous chapters dealt with philosophic thought as it applies to the past and the present, the "Gnostic Being" and "The Divine Life" give us Sri Aurobindo's vision for humanity's future. Sri Aurobindo describes how the race of gnostic spiritual beings will descend as the next step in the evolution, and the infinite diversity inherent in such a manifestation. The first essential condition of a divine life on earth is the spiritual fulfillment of the urge to individual perfection and inner completeness of the being. The evolution in the Ignorance is only the first stage; it must lead inevitably towards an evolution in the Knowledge, a self-revelation of the Divinity in all things.



***Savitri*: Its Profound and Magnificent
Significance (Volume One)**

Book I: Canto I and Canto II

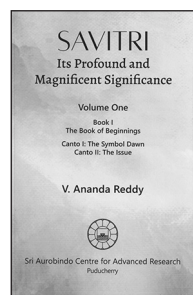
—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced
Research Trust, Pondicherry

216 pp, Rs 275, ISBN: 978-93-85391-31-6

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Originally the subject of two workshops held in 2000 and 2001, these transcribed talks cover Book I, Cantos 1 and 2 of *Savitri*. The first canto represents the evolutionary march of this creation described in poetry reflecting the subtlest of details. Canto 2 deals with the issues of death and life, the purpose of birth, and the evolution from birth to birth on the road to the discovery of the psychic being, that conscious entity that can lead man to the divine. The author has chosen highlights from each canto to underscore certain concepts, primarily the importance of finding the psychic being as the basis of the Integral Yoga. Extracts from Sri Aurobindo's letters and the Mother's conversations lend depth and insight to the text.



Bougainvilleas—Protection

With their messages revealed by The Mother

—Compiled from the writings of Sri

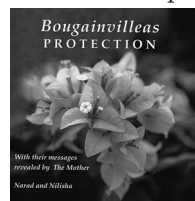
Aurobindo and the Mother

Publisher: PRISMA, Auroville

106 pp, Rs 590, ISBN: 978-81-957301-0-0

Size: 20 x 20 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

A book of colour photographs of bougainvilleas interspersed with quotations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the theme of protection, which is the spiritual



significance given by the Mother to this plant species. It includes a short section on bougainvillea culture for interested gardeners.

BENGALI

Aprakashit Itihas ek Prishtha—Suresh

Chandra Chakravarty, Rs 120

Srima-Sriaurobinder Aloke Karmayoga, Bhakti-yoga, Jnanayoga—Deepshikha Reddy, Rs 80

Dibyakripa Dibyaashis—Conversations with the Mother, recollected by Mona Sarkar, Rs 320

FRENCH

Le moi multiple—Extraits des œuvres de Sri Aurobindo et de la Mère, ISBN: 978-93-5210-269-3, Rs 200

GERMAN

Moral, Idealismus, Religion und Yoga: *Die Bedeutung von Spiritualität*—Auszüge aus den Werken von Sri Aurobindo und der Mutter, ISBN: 978-93-5210-251-8, Rs 160

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Savitri Shabdarnut - 15—Shraddhavan, Rs 300

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Baji Prabhou—Sri Aravind, Rs 30

Yoga ka Marg—Srima tatha Sri Aravind ki rachnao se sankalit, ISBN: 978-81-7060-446-4 Rs 100

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ISBN: 978-81-7058-912-9, Rs 475

Sri Aravindanche Jeevan—A. B. Purani
ISBN: 978-93-5210-271-6, Rs 250

Sriaravindvirachit Savitri (Bhavanuvad)
Khand 1 & 2—Pradnya Sukhatankar
ISBN: 978-93-5811-193-4, Rs 2100

Sri Aravind ani Maharashtra—Lekhan va Sankalan—Suhasini Deshpande, Rs 300

Sri Aravind Likhit 'Savitri': *Alp Parichay*
—Dr Uttara Shastri, Rs 150

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Sri Aravindar Neengatha Ninaivugal
—Shyam Kumari, Rs 220

Sri Annaiyin Arpuda Alaigal—Shyam Kumari
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—Anandi Durai, Rs 150

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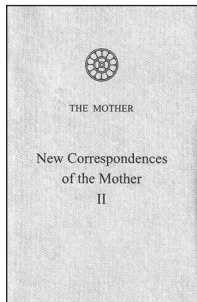
BOOK REVIEWS

New Correspondences of the Mother II

—The Mother

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

469 pp, Rs 320, ISBN: 978-93-5210-257-0, Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



This new collection of nine correspondences has the same general features as the first collection. Each correspondence is large enough to have a personality of its own. The names of the correspondents are given, along with a brief life sketch of each person. The entries in each correspondence are in chronological order and presented in a question-and-answer format, enabling the reader to sense the relationship between the Mother and the correspondent. But in one important way the new collection differs: several of its correspondences may be characterised primarily as “work correspondences”

The first correspondence, for example, is that of Amrita, who was general manager of the Ashram for forty-three years; there is almost no spiritual instruction in it. To the fore is the Mother who was the daughter of a banker and, to be sure, an astute and skilled administrator. As manager, Amrita had many duties, and the Mother helped him to fulfil them. Kind but capable, fair but firm, she excelled in purchasing property, renting houses, handling officials, dealing with demanding paid workers and satisfying disgruntled *sadhaks*. Poor Amrita sometimes got scolded by her, but he took it well and emerged as one of the Mother’s most effective instruments.

The closest thing to spiritual instruction in Amrita’s correspondence is perhaps her earliest advice to him: “Be truthful, sincere, awake”, and again: “Be simple, sincere, straightforward”—advice written at the front of work notebooks. When Amrita got angry at a fellow-*sadhak* who called him a “loving brother”, he informed the Mother, “I am Your child and nobody’s brother.” She simply said, “If you are my child, then you are the brother of all my children.” Such was her way of restoring harmony. When Amrita told her that another *sadhak* was much vexed with him, perhaps for good reason, she remarked, “Even if one is right, one is always wrong to be vexed.” And so goes this unique correspondence with dozens of solutions to practical problems.

There are other work correspondences as well: the Mother’s instruction to the aspiring young artist Sanjiban; her advice to Kirankumari who was in charge of cleaning and repairing stoves and water-filters; her guidance to Jagannath Vedalankar, the Sanskrit scholar who first worked at the Ashram Press before teaching in the Ashram school; her encouragement to Gautam Chawalla who worked for several years growing coconuts on an Ashram farm. When Gautam proudly informed her of the number of “cocos” harvested, whether 4350, 4188, 5698 or 2568, her comment was always the same: “Bravo!” Later, he developed a knack for asking interesting questions: “What

are the conditions to be observed in order to earn money for you?”, “What is the power of a prayer?”, “Many people here have lost their sense of security. Why?” The Mother’s answers are incisive. And when Gautam needed support, she was always there for him. “Guide me,” he wrote, “I cannot see anything.” “You can count on me,” she replied. “I will open your eyes.”

Then there is the correspondence with Amal Kiran, writer, poet and editor. The Mother gave him spiritual counsel, but she also told him how to manage his family affairs and run his monthly review, *Mother India*. For more than six decades Amal edited this journal and for twenty-five of those years the Mother kept him on track. She knew how to bridle this bold, brilliant, persistent disciple without dampening his ardour. Regularly he would ask her permission to publish articles in his magazine. Most often she approved, but not always. When he wanted to publish a report of some “Words of the Mother”, she wrote, “This redaction [report] lacks in power and I can’t agree to have it published.” When he asked if he could publish the same report under a new title and as “Based on Some Words of the Mother”, she wrote back, “I say yes but without enthusiasm.” And when he asked if he could publish his article, “The Indo-Pak Conflict in the Spiritual Light”, she crossed out the entire text with an X, wrote a big “NO” beneath it, and penned at the bottom of his cover letter, “NO POLITICS in any of our publications.”

There is also a brief but touching correspondence with Debou, the younger brother of Pranabada. It opens with some remarkable prayers, including the first version of the Students’ Prayer, which begins “O divine Mother, sweet Mother, make of me the hero warrior I aspire to become ...” Gently she encouraged and consoled this sensitive young soul who was first a French teacher and then a homeopath. “Never be depressed,” she wrote to him, “it is ingratitude, and when I scold you, take it as a sign of my love and a grace. Your mama.”

The correspondence of Madanlal Himatsingka, a successful businessman who joined the Ashram at the age of forty-three, is compelling in its sincerity. His first question was, “Mother, is there any possibility for me to realise the Divine in this life?” She answered, “All depends on the sincerity of the aspiration. If the aspiration is sincere and steady, you are sure to reach the goal in this life. When one thinks like this, as you are doing, usually it is because things are ready in him for realisation.” Troubled by his lack of progress, Madanlal asked what to do. “Do not bother about the progress,” she counselled him, “it will come by itself with the growth of the sincerity.” Never sure that he was doing enough, he prayed for her help. “Madanlal, my dear child,” she wrote, “find your joy and satisfaction in being of service to the Divine’s work on earth – which is a realised fact – and the rest will come in due course, surely sooner than you expect.”

The largest correspondence, that of Shyamsundar, is 134 pages long. Not a work correspondence, it has much direct spiritual instruction. Shyamsundar’s questions and comments are brief and to the point; the best of the man comes out. And the Mother’s answers are sublime. “To become aware of the consciousness of the soul,” she wrote, “is the surest and easiest way to unite with the Divine.” When he asked how to “make up for all the lost time”, she said, “Whatever the past may have been, it is not time that is needed to establish contact with the Divine, but sincerity of aspiration.” “The path is long, very long,” he observed, “almost interminable.” “It is true that the path is very long,” the Mother responded, “but for one who follows it with *sincerity*, it is *truly very*

interesting, and at every step one is rewarded for one's trouble." This correspondence is filled with many helpful replies that clarify the path of the seeker.

New Correspondences II is the second of four volumes currently being published to supplement the seventeen-volume Collected Works of the Mother. The third volume, *New Words of the Mother*, consists of letters, private notes and public messages arranged by subject; it is almost ready for publication. The fourth volume, *New Writings and Talks of the Mother*, contains diverse material, such as early visions, prayers and correspondences, later minor correspondences, and a few talks. The next step will be to incorporate the material in these volumes into a revised and enlarged edition of the Mother's Collected Works. Meanwhile, the reader will benefit by perusing the four new supplementary volumes.

—Bob Zwicker

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

Our Divine Destiny

Selections from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

—Compiled by A.S. Dalal

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department,
Pondicherry

91 pp, Rs 65, ISBN: 978-93-5210-263-1

Size: 12 x 18 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



Dr Dalal's compilations are always a beacon shining on Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's wisdom. The unique feature of Dalalji's compilation is the thoughtful and logical arrangement of chapters and quotes, which bring an exemplary lucidity to the subject. *Our Divine Destiny* is a compilation of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's quotes on our spiritual destiny. The book begins with a thoughtful introduction and a chapter on Sri Aurobindo's teachings. The second chapter describes the process by which we emerge from unconsciousness or a "subhuman" consciousness to a higher consciousness. The third chapter answers with great clarity one of the most frequently asked questions, "What is spirituality?", and explains the difference between the ordinary consciousness and a spiritual consciousness. The fourth chapter brings out the role and limitations of morality, religion and idealism and how they can prepare the consciousness for the higher stages of spiritual evolution. The fifth chapter elaborates on the rationale behind the spiritual evolution beyond the mental and preparatory stages, towards a spiritual consciousness wherein lies our highest divine destiny.

The sixth chapter clarifies one of the most misunderstood concepts in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Yoga. Sometime back, someone was telling me that he was having some higher experiences

above his head and said with a certain conviction, “I think this is what Sri Aurobindo called the Supramental”, a statement that articulates the popular misconception of the Supermind as being a few inches or centimetres beyond the ordinary mind. It took me some effort to explain to this person that what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind is many dimensions above the many levels of the spiritual mind and beyond the consciousness of the cosmic godheads who rule the world. This chapter brings out the rationale behind the Supramental evolution, which Sri Aurobindo describes as “a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of earth’s consciousness for its upward ascent is not ended, and mind is not the last summit”. In this chapter, Sri Aurobindo explains the difference between the Overmind and the Supermind: in the Overmind the truth of the Supermind, which is whole and indivisible, plays out as differentiated truth-forces that move to fulfill themselves in this lower plane of consciousness. He adds that one cannot reach the supramental truth without having mastered and lived the truths of the Overmind.

The last chapter of the book provides a brief review of the aim and process of the Integral Yoga or, as Dalalji puts it, the path of “conscious evolution towards the Supramental.” The book will be of help to all seekers and students in the domain of Yoga and spirituality to understand the nature of our spiritual destiny as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

M.S.Srinivasan

M.S. Srinivasan works in Sri Aurobindo Society and is involved in the study, research and dissemination of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s teachings.

Excerpts from the book:

The supramental change is the ultimate stage of siddhi and it is not likely to come so soon; but there are many levels between the normal mind and the supermind and it is easy to mistake an ascent into one of them or a descent of their consciousness or influence for a supramental change. [CWSA 28, 299]

The appearance of a human possibility in a material and animal world was the first glint of a coming divine Light,—the first far-off intimation of a godhead to be born out of Matter. The appearance of the superman in the human world will be the fulfilment of that distant shining promise. [CWSA 12, 157]

The difference between man and superman will be the difference between mind and a consciousness as far beyond it as thinking mind is beyond the consciousness of plant and animal; the differentiating essence of man is mind, the differentiating essence of superman will be supermind or a divine gnosis [Ibid.]

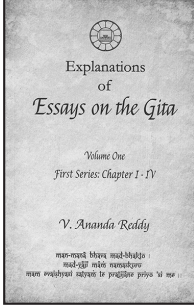
Man is a mind imprisoned, obscured and circumscribed in a precarious and imperfect living but perfectly conscious body. The superman will be a supramental spirit which will envelop and freely use a conscious body, plastic to spiritual forces. His physical frame will be a firm support and an adequate radiant instrument for the spirit’s divine play and work in Matter. [Ibid.]

Explanations of *Essays on the Gita*: Volume One

First Series: Chapter 1–4

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry
270 pp, Rs 300, ISBN: 978-93-85391-24-8, Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



In Sanskrit literature, there are various types of commentaries of which two are *ṭīkā* and *bhāṣya*. The first is a word-to-word exposition of the original text where the *ṭīkākāra*, or commentator unpacks every word without providing any extra subjective interpretation of the work. The *bhāṣya*, on the other hand, is a more elaborate commentary of the text whereby the author takes the liberty to develop the ideas presented therein in order to make the work more accessible and contextualised.

Dr V. Ananda Reddy's two-volume set titled *Explanations of Essays on the Gita* are the transcriptions of his summary talks on the first seven chapters of *Essays on the Gita* that he delivered during classes held at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR), Pondicherry, in 2006 and 2007. These two volumes based on Reddy's talks serve as *bhāṣya* on Sri Aurobindo's work by providing enriching and practical perspectives not just about the content of the original text but also by relating them to the lives and teachings of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, to their Integral Yoga and their philosophy of education with easily relatable examples and analogies from historical and contemporary scenarios to help us appreciate the relevance of the *Gītā* in the modern context.

The first volume starts with an Introduction and covers the first four chapters of the book, namely, "Our Demand and Need from the Gita", "The Divine Teacher", "The Human Disciple", and "The Core of the Teachings". In his second volume, the author delves into the next three chapters, namely, "Kurukshetra", "Man and the Battle of Life" and "The Creed of the Aryan Fighter". He deals with each of the topics in significant detail with several cross-references to other major writings of Sri Aurobindo, such as his *Bengali Writings*, which originally appeared in the journal *Dharma* between 1909 and 1910. The aim of these writings was to awaken the sense of civilisational pride and national self-esteem in the then dormant Indian masses, soon after his direct initiation to the deeper secrets of the *Gītā* by Sri Krishna himself during his intense solitary confinement in the Alipore Jail. Furthermore, he quotes extensively from Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus in poetry, *Savitri*, its counterpart in prose for the intellect, *The Life Divine*, as well as its parallel for practice in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and other works such as *The Human Cycle*, *The Secret of the Veda*, etc. In addition, Dr Reddy also includes references to important authors on Indic culture such as Ananda Coomaraswamy, thereby providing his audience with a valuable reading list to further their understanding and appreciation of the different dimensions of the *Gītā*'s teachings. As a result, the two volumes act as veritable teasers for readers, tempting them to study *Essays on the Gita* in greater depth, as well as to explore as many works of Sri Aurobindo

and The Mother as possible to absorb their teachings. Moreover, after reading these volumes, the reader would acquire a genuine appreciation for the perfect positioning of such a spiritual revelation in 700 verses in a worldly text like the Mahābhārata just before the start of a ghastly war.

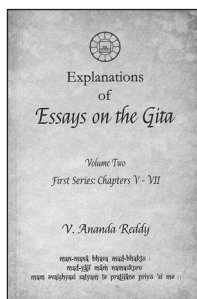
In the Introduction to Volume I, the author shares thoughts about the significance of the *Gītā* as a text, quoting Sri Aurobindo's comment that 'The Gita is as if the bottomless sea, the source of a myriad gems' (Vol. I, p.2) and that even a few of these jewels would be sufficient to enrich and transform an ordinary person into a wise and ardent devotee ready for inspired action in the face of the most challenging conflicts and life's circumstances as critical as Arjuna's dilemma of having to slaughter his beloved elders and teachers for a 'mere' kingdom. The poignancy of this theme is repeatedly addressed and elaborated upon from multiple angles in the subsequent seven chapters contained in these two volumes so that the readers understand clearly the premise of "Our Demand and Need from the Gita". We see that the *Gītā* is not meant to be yet another spiritual text revealed to an ascetic in the seclusion of a mountain cave. It is instead a clarion call for enlightened action in the midst of life, not just in moments of deep crisis, but potentially as a roadmap for every '(in)significant' step in life, relevant for seekers across cultures and all ages, offering a path to attain freedom in works by synthesising the three main streams of *yoga*: *jñāna*, *bhakti*, and *karma* pertaining to the *yogas* of knowledge, devotion, and action.

In the second chapter, “The Divine Teacher”, Sri Krishna is shown as the Lord of Yoga, the *Avatāra* and *Puruṣottama*, the highest Being, who is the knower of many births and who transcends all laws. The author quotes Sri Aurobindo:

The Teacher of the Gita is therefore not only the God in man who veils himself in the world of knowledge, but the God in man who moves our whole world of action, by and for whom all our humanity exists and struggles and labours, towards whom all human life travels and progresses.

He is the secret Master of works and sacrifice and the Friend of the human peoples

Sri Krishna specifically took a human birth in the age of the *Dvāparayuga* with a mission to reestablish *dharma* or righteousness on earth even if it involved war and complete destruction.



Explanations of *Essays on the Gita*: Volume Two

First Series: Chapter 5–7

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

199 pp, Rs 280, ISBN: 978-93-85391-27-9, Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The reader is made to realise, in no uncertain terms, that because the present condition of human consciousness is founded on a divisive mentality and perception of reality, it is incapable of living on the basis of a spiritual unity with the world around. Therefore, war becomes an inevitable result of human actions (‘Kurukshetra’ (Vol. II, Chapter 2). Contrary to the more ‘virtuous’ standpoint of a homogenised non-violent approach to reality despite provocations, the reader is shown how war, under present evolutionary circumstances, often acts as the

harbinger of great progress on various fronts when viewed through a broader lens. It leads to the establishment of a more unified world order as was the case with the formation of the United Nations after the two World Wars that were fought in quick succession during the past century. Similarly, the reader learns that Sri Krishna's purpose for allowing the large-scale war to happen was to take India to the next level of its evolution, from being a clan-centric assortment of kingdoms to a nation-centric one. The author shows that one of the prime objectives of the war was to bring together the scattered kingdoms in that age and forge a larger national unity—the Mahābhārata, 'Great-India', after which the *itihāsa* (literally meaning 'history' in Sanskrit) is named. This is, subsequently, said to have played a significant role in the conceptualisation and formation of the geo-cultural-political entity called India or *Bhārata* today. There are other interesting discussions regarding the historicity and symbolism of the text through direct quotes by Sri Aurobindo and other authors and by Reddy himself that can leave the reader pensive about their implications on the narratives that are woven around such impactful works today. More exact references would have helped keen scholars to locate them more easily in the original works, a change which can be included in future editions.

Moving on to the third chapter of Volume I, "The Human Disciple", the Divine Teacher identifies his ideal instrument, Arjuna, in order to achieve his goal of reinstating *dharma*. Arjuna is the most valiant *kṣatriya*, or noble warrior, who gets completely disoriented when faced with the gruesome prospect of killing those whom he reveres most. He feels justified in his weakness but is presented with an alternative, higher logic that he cannot fully understand but eventually concedes to. Sri Krishna chooses to reveal the teaching of the *Gītā* to him, despite his despondency, because he is not just the Lord's friend, but also an intimate one, who ultimately surrenders all his will and action to his Mentor when he is given the most secret of secrets—*guhyātguhyatamam*. Moreover, Arjuna represents the man of all ages, one who is eternally caught in the conflict of right and wrong actions/duties and is often weakened by morals and dilemmas. The author adds, 'We see two aspects of Arjuna. One is that he represents the human soul in crisis and the other is that he is an avant-garde. He is moving from the moral-religious consciousness towards the next level of the spiritual consciousness' as a *karmayogī*.

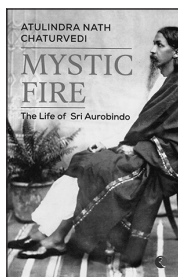
The fourth chapter, "The Core of the Teachings of the Gita", is a veritable manual for a *karmayogī*. It teaches the art of acting with perfect surrender, even with violence wherever required, to bring justice where *adharma* prevails, with an unwavering divine compassion instead of pity, as demonstrated by Kali and Shiva. The Lord calls upon Arjuna to continue to do his *kartavyam karma* or 'the action to be performed' in the second volume's chapter titled "Kurukshetra", which symbolises the battlefield of *dharma*. But to do so he must live up to his *dharma* as a *kṣatriya* and become a role model of "Man in the Battle of Life" for all ages by adopting the "The Creed of the Aryan Fighter". Through these subsequent chapters, the author provides insightful details on the map of liberated actions as revealed by Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the *Gītā*, and for a more integral living in the present age, based on his wide readings in Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's writings and teachings.

To conclude, this set of volumes shows at every step how the core message of the *Gītā* is fundamentally the same as that of the Integral Yoga. It also serves to demonstrate how both Sri Aurobindo and The Mother inspired humankind to achieve the next level of evolution by bringing down the Supramental Consciousness. This opens up a whole new dimension of exploration for the keen *sādhaka* or spiritual seeker—the possibility of first discovering the immortal Spirit within and then expressing the fullness of its light and liberty in the depths and darknesses of the material body leading to its eventual transformation. These volumes will, therefore, not just add value to one’s personal collection but, when carefully studied and applied, they will motivate their readers to become conscious of the choices that the various battles of life offer—either to succumb to the challenges one faces or to adopt the creed of the *Āryan* Fighter, to rise and fight for the manifestation of the Truth as declared in the Students’ Prayer given by The Mother on 6 January 1952 at the inauguration of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre:

Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest, and we may be ready to receive them. (Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 12, p.112)

— Anuradha Choudry

Dr Choudry, who attended the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, is the Coordinator (Outreach), Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Division of the Ministry of Education and Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagur. A passionate Sanskritist, she completed her PhD under Prof. K. E. Dharaneedharan from Pondicherry University on Vedic Psychology in the Light of Sri Aurobindo’s Interpretations, and teaches Indian/Yoga Psychology and Spoken Sanskrit.



Mystic Fire: The Life of Sri Aurobindo

—Atulindra Nath Chaturvedi

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

192 pp, Rs 395, ISBN: 978-93-5520-778-4

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

It has become kind of mandatory to start every biography of Sri Aurobindo and, as a consequence, also every review of such a biography with something Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1930 on the subject:

I see that you have persisted in giving a biography — is it really necessary or useful? The attempt is bound to be a failure, because neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for man to see.

—Sri Aurobindo, *Autobiographical Notes*, CWSA Vol. 36, p. 11

And it is true, one could well argue, that the only accurate in-depth account of Sri Aurobindo's life is his own *Savitri*. To understand integral yoga, there is again no better way than to read what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have written themselves, and for this, one can find a good starting point in the series of small compilations edited by A.S. Dalal. To get a broad overview of the entire range and depth of Sri Aurobindo's writings, one could do worse than taking up *Reading Sri Aurobindo*, edited by Gautam Chikermane and Devdip Ganguli, which has short essays by a wide variety of authors on each of the thirty-six volumes that together make up Sri Aurobindo's *Complete Works*.

The value of *Mystic Fire* does not lie in these things, but in what Atulindra Nath Chaturvedi writes about Sri Aurobindo's human side, how he developed in the context of the cultural and political life of his time. And there are good reasons for reading about the details of his outer life. Even if Sri Aurobindo called things like his record marks in Greek and Latin "trifles" (CWSA 36, p. 13), for us ordinary mortals reading about his outer life in England, Baroda, Calcutta, and Pondicherry adds something valuable. It makes him a bit more approachable as another human being, and it gives us courage to make at least an attempt at walking, on our own much diminished scale, in the same direction. Though we may never fully understand the heights and depths Sri Aurobindo reached at the end of his life, reading about where he started is inspiring—and it is enjoyable because Atulindra writes well.

One of the best parts of *Mystic Fire* are its descriptions of small but significant human interchanges, of moods, feelings, intentions, the fine details of life noted down by the people who met Sri Aurobindo or got acquainted with him in a wide variety of social settings. It is clear that Sri Aurobindo left a deep impression on the people around him, whether they were family and acquaintances impressed by his gentle inward demeanour and sense of humour, his comrades in the Indian struggle for political independence he initiated and that became a reality on his 75th birthday, his readers and co-authors who admired his wit and precision of style, or the British office bearers who considered him the most dangerous man in India. Atulindra describes all these encounters as if they are part of a single, pretty wonderful, and actually rather romantic story, in a style that stands out by a special kind of almost poetic psychological precision, which brings them vividly to life in the reader's mind.

But it is not only its style that makes *Mystic Fire* worth reading. The author has an acute sense of history and of what happens when different cultures, religions, political systems, and individuals with different spiritual sensitivities meet. One of the things he describes with outstanding clarity is how Sri Aurobindo, when he fought to get India its political independence back, stressed the need for India to recover first her spiritual roots, her soul. And it is here that the main message and significance of this biography can be found.

When Sri Aurobindo concentrated his efforts on the revival of Indian culture and religion, what he meant was not something narrow, exclusive, or communal. It was the ancient, all-inclusive spirituality that he would later call the original Vedanta. Atulindra stresses that Sri Aurobindo was right from the beginning perfectly clear and explicit about this, and it may be worth repeating here

the definition of the Sanatana Dharma that Atulindra quotes. It is the one Sri Aurobindo gave in the *Karmayogin*:

The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the World-Spirit moves.... This *sanatana dharma* has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra, nor could it reject the Bible or the Koran; but its real, most authoritative scripture is in the heart in which the Eternal has His dwelling.

Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, CWSA Vol.8, p. 26

Atulindra also quotes what Sri Aurobindo wrote on another occasion: “we do not understand Hindu nationalism as a possibility under modern conditions....under modern conditions India can only exist as a whole.” (Ibid, p. 304)

One of the most important messages *Mystic Fire* gives us is that using Sri Aurobindo’s authority to support communal thinking does a great disservice to India, to Sri Aurobindo, and to the work he came to do for the future of humanity.

Mystic Fire: The Life of Sri Aurobindo by Atulindra Nath Chaturvedi is a joy to read, and whole-heartedly recommended.

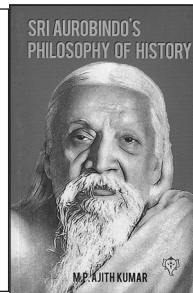
—Matthijs Cornelissen

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

Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy of History

—M.P. Ajith Kumar

Publisher: Kurukshethra Prakasan, Kochi
304 pp, Rs 300, ISBN: 978-81-952379-8-2
Size: 14 x 21 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



If one of the genres of the Philosophy of history is the speculative enquiry into the human past considered as a whole, and with the aim of interpreting its meaning and to find direction from such study (*A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd Ed., Antony

Flew), the author of this work is justified in seeing a philosophy of history in Aurobindonian literature. In his book, *Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy of History*, Dr M.P. Ajith Kumar amply demonstrates that according to Sri Aurobindo man’s mental evolution, his aspiration for progress, has determined the progress of history thus far. This will naturally lead to a compelling need for the unity of the human race as the next stage of evolution. Such a unity can only be made real if the highest shared ideal of humanity spiritualises itself and becomes the inner law of life.

This book is a scholar’s gift to the lay reader. Sri Aurobindo’s evolutionary theory of history is laid out in accessible language and is juxtaposed with those of thinkers from other cultures of the East and the West, but chiefly European philosophers of history. One only needs to look at the Bibliography of works by Sri Aurobindo and a host of writers on history and philosophy as well

as newspapers and periodicals cited to convince oneself that this book is no mere re-presentation of Sri Aurobindo's ideas, but an original work that draws on varied sources. Not only does the author meet his main objective of elucidating for us Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on the philosophy of history, he also draws our attention to significant parallels to other important philosophers' and historians' views. Although he does not develop his review of the philosophy of history in chronological order, there is enough in his book to show his easy familiarity with theories of the philosophy of history from its beginnings down to our own times, and how Sri Aurobindo's thoughts stand in such company.

Those unfamiliar with Sri Aurobindo's life will find the short biography that comprises Chapter One of the book useful. Chapter Two, the 'Cycle of History,' serves to demonstrate the early influence of European thinkers on an Aurobindonian philosophy of history. Chapter Three takes up the discussion of the subject proper, delving into every aspect dealt with in *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* that has a bearing on Sri Aurobindo's and other thinkers' views on the philosophy of history. The fourth chapter discusses 'culture' and its concomitant term 'civilisation' at some length, laying bare the significance that Sri Aurobindo attached to these constructs, and how they fit with other philosophers' explications of these terms. The fifth and last chapter emphasises the importance and relevance of Sri Aurobindo's contribution to the philosophy of history by means of drawing parallels with like contributions from several European philosophers of history. Finally, an Epilogue skeletally relates Sri Aurobindo as a philosopher of history with his wider thought as a philosopher and his vision as a mystic. This Epilogue ends with a note that says:

Aurobindo was typical of [a catholic] culture and he found in the harmony of the occidental and oriental ideals the threshold towards the desirable development of civilization and human unity....Hence the call of Sri Aurobindo to bring down to the world of mortals a life divine which is the only panacea for all the present ills.

The most striking reaction of the lay reader upon browsing through Dr. Kumar's book is its compendium-like character; side-by-side with Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on the philosophy of history is massed a list of brief treatments of the work by philosophers of history from other cultures, mainly European ones. And this is not only from those contemporaneous with Sri Aurobindo, but from ancient times to the present. So vast is the author's attempt that the lay reader's only grouse can be that too much is packed into too little a space, and that his organisation of his ideas seems to better serve the scholar rather than the book's intended audience.

One hopes that a second, better-edited, edition will soon become available specifically for the casual reader. This could include a more structured treatment that sets Sri Aurobindo's views side by side with those of other thinkers in a more systematic way, so that the reader is made aware of the significant contribution of Sri Aurobindo to the field of the philosophy of history. In the author's own words, "History is to [Sri Aurobindo] the revealer of the truth, the path humanity treads towards this truth through the ages. However, Sri Aurobindo's objectivism is not confined merely to the discovery of historical facts, but facts or truths about man himself. It is the discovery of man by man; it is the self-searching and self-discovery...which purifies and steels humanity in the final stage."

—Sivakumar Elambooranan

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.

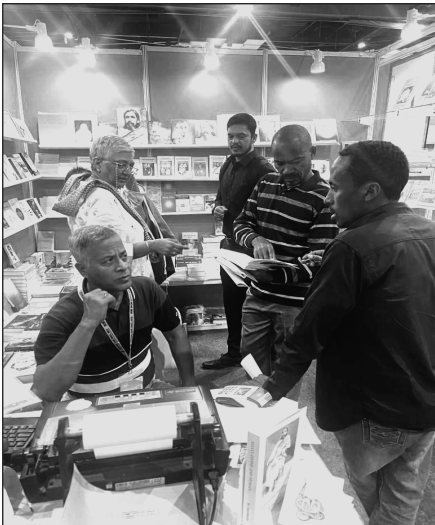
World Book Fair 2023

SABDA recently participated in the World Book Fair 2023 held from 25 February to 5 March at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Our thanks to the National Book Trust for inviting our participation and to Tara Jauhar and her team from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram—Delhi Branch, who gave their time and energy towards the success of our exhibit.

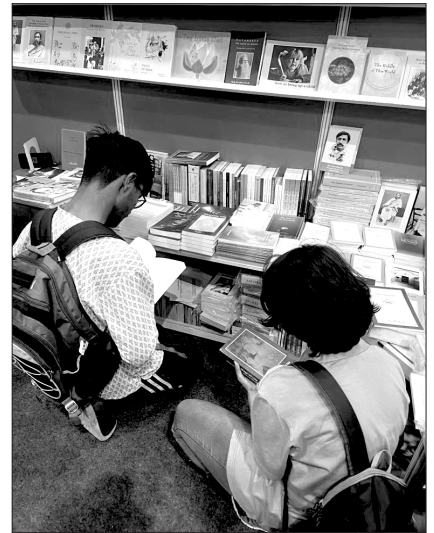
The World Book Fair affords us the opportunity to reach several types of readers, both here in India and abroad. Aside from those who are already familiar with the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and are interested in picking up recent publications, there are those who have heard of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother but would like to know more about their ideas and teachings. People without any acquaintance with their teachings but were just browsing the Fair were drawn to our stall and spontaneously purchased books such as *Savitri* and other prominent works.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS

- The NBT presented the Education Minister a set of books by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother outlining an educational discipline aimed at developing all the principal faculties of the individual, including a discipline of physical education.
- A team of Sikh boys from Sangroor in Punjab bought books on almost all the subjects Sri Aurobindo wrote on.



- The Tanzanian man in the forefront of the photo to the left bought several books of Sri Aurobindo's speeches, explaining that he hoped they would motivate his fellow countrymen.



SABDA has a worldwide network through Centres in India and abroad and through our online catalogue that is constantly updated when new publications arrive. And one can buy the Collected Works of the Mother and the Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo through the SABDA office.

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