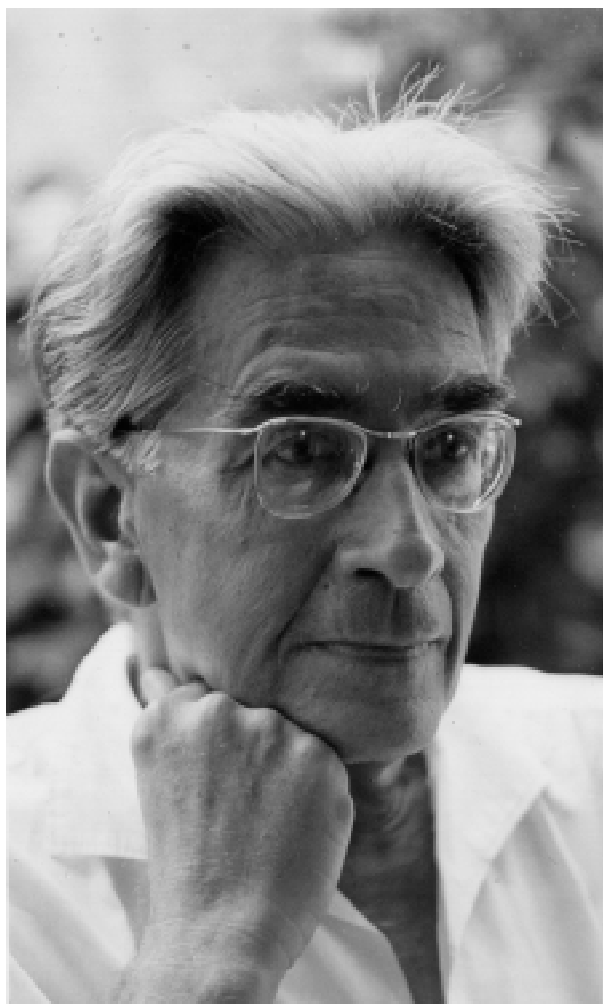


Recent Publications

Saba

Medhananda wrote with insight, humour, and a poetic style, revealing an original mind and an intuitive

spirit. Some aspects of his personality are fondly evoked in the three personal remembrances of him featured in this issue on the occasion of his birth centenary.



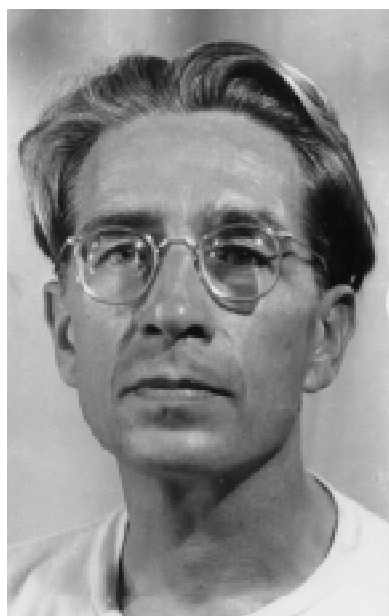
Included in the book review section are three articles on recent publications by educators well-versed in the subject of integral education as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

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In this issue we celebrate the centenary of Medhananda, whose 100th birth anniversary falls on April 28, 2008. He was the head of the Ashram's library for many years, an author and editor, a researcher into the meanings of ancient symbols and myths, one of the founders of the Identity Research Institute for fundamental psychology and consciousness, and a man of profound intellect who was alight with a psychic joy. Some of those who knew him well have shared their remembrances in the following articles. Debranjana Chatterjee offers a view of Medhananda that depicts the warmth of his personality and his wide circle of interests during the time they worked together at the Library. Shraddhavan, who helped with the preparation of some of his manuscripts, gives us a sense of the originality and scope of his research and writing, while Agnidhan proffers a personal and loving glimpse of Medhananda as her mentor along the path of the Integral Yoga.

Medhananda (1908–1994) was born in Pforzheim, Germany, the son of a wealthy engineer and industrialist. Despite his early interest in ancient cultures and their symbols and spirituality, he followed the wishes of his father and studied law at Munich, Heidelberg, and Paris. During this time he was privileged to study Chinese under the distinguished scholar Richard Wilhelm, translator of the Chinese I Ching, Tao Te Ching, and many other ancient texts. In 1934, although he was already launched on a promising



legal career, he left Germany with his French wife to escape the rise of Nazism. They went to Tahiti in French Polynesia and settled on its sister-island of Moorea, where they bought 200 hectares of virgin forest, built a small house, and established themselves as farmers, cultivating vanilla and coffee.

During the Second World War he was interned near Tahiti as an enemy alien. After his release in 1946 he came across the writings of Sri Aurobindo. In 1952 he joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry where he was put in charge of the Sri Aurobindo Library. He also taught the History of Religions at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, a position he was well-qualified for by his lifelong interest in and study of the spiritual cultures of different ages and parts of the world. In 1965 he became co-editor of the quarterly journal *Equals One*, for which he wrote numerous articles.

In 1978 he founded, together with his collaborator Yvonne Artaud, the Identity Research Institute, a non-profit foundation for psychological research. It was from about 1970 onwards that he started an in-depth exploration of the symbology of the hieroglyphs and pictorial imagery of ancient Egypt, using the psychological approach which Sri Aurobindo had initiated for the interpretation of the Vedas.

Interested readers may visit the website <http://www.medhananda.com> for more information.

Medhananda, passionate seeker of knowledge

We often split a personality into two parts: the outer and the inner, the surface man and the subjective man. And yet this division cannot be exclusive. The outer may reflect something of the inner self as much as the inner may be built up of external acts. There are rare personalities who plunge deep within to discover the secret of the self. It is usually a strenuous uphill journey, and mostly hidden from others.

Medhananda was just such a seeker of his inner self. He came thousands of miles from Tahiti to Pondicherry to live under the spiritual light of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

How far he travelled in his inner quest will remain hidden to us. But some rays of his inner light surely filtered through onto his external being. This added unforgettable charm to his personality. When I think of Medhananda the image that presses most clearly

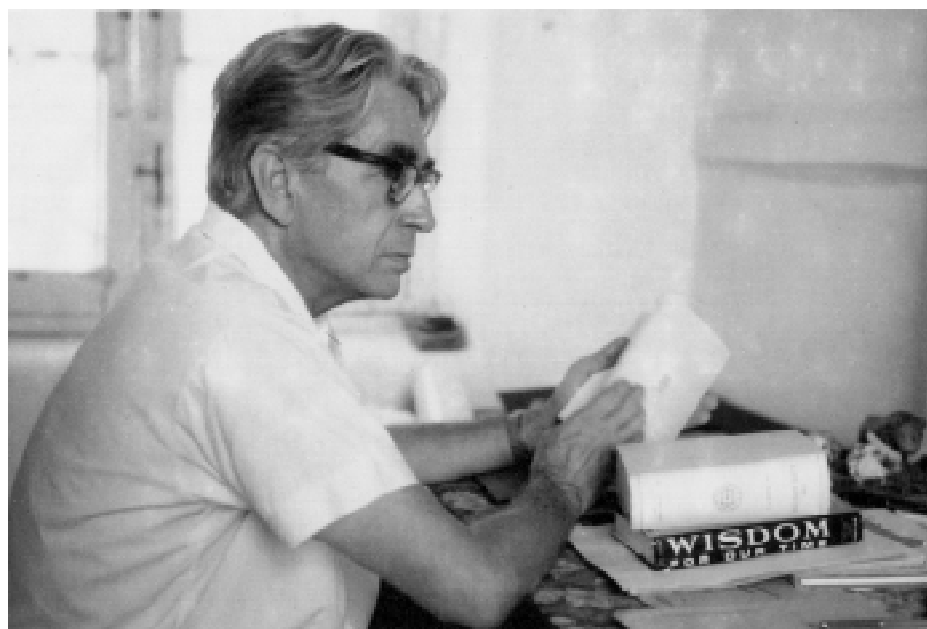
depressed or moody. A voracious reader, he was well chosen by the Mother to be our librarian. In fact, she often referred affectionately to him as Medhananda, the Librarian.

When I joined the work at the Ashram Library in the early 1960s, I was the youngest member on the staff. Even so, he treated me as he did the others, never interfering with any work he had assigned to me, but always stepping back and observing my work with a kindly attention—more like a benevolent father than a supervisor, or boss. It was this loving personality that endeared him to so many.

Medhananda was unique in that he combined a warm, expansive nature, inclined to hearty laughter and an amused perspective, with a keen intellect of the highest order. He believed fully in the education of the psychic and the higher emotions as an essential corollary to the development of the mental capacities,

and he practiced this with the many students who came to him for studies as he had done with his own three children. Two of them, Vero and Jean-Pierre, had stayed in the Ashram for a few months on their way from France to Tahiti. After seeing them the Mother said to Medhananda, "You have educated your children well."

The Ashram's library used to be in the reading room inside the Ashram



before me is a handsome man of a very robust physical stature, with penetrating eyes like crystals. He was very energetic, both physically and mentally. I never saw any sign of lethargy in his mind; he was constantly alert, always bright and happy, never

compound. And the Ashram school had its own library located on the landing at the top of the eastern staircase, which is where Medhananda worked. Books from both libraries were moved to the current location sometime in 1953–54, when the Ashram purchased

the building from its owner, a French businessman who exported semi-precious stones. The Mother once told Medhananda that in 1920, when she had stayed in Bayoud House, which is opposite to the Library entrance, she had noticed this magnificent house across the street and thought it would make a fine library! So when all was ready at the new Library, Medhananda also moved here and chose for himself a very small, unprepossessing room, with only a single window. One day the Mother came to visit and when she saw his room, decided it was too small. She toured the rest of the building and chose a larger, well-lit, better-ventilated room and provided a small kitchen and attached bath.

The Mother understood Medhananda's cultured nature and often when she received beautiful or particularly interesting objects, she would send them to Medhananda for the Library. In this way, he gathered statues and vases and picture postcards to enhance the atmosphere. He also started music collections and held musical evenings there.

Everyone knows of his passionate interest in Egyptology and how he gave a totally new

interpretation to Egyptian hieroglyphs in the light of Sri Aurobindo's own studies of the Vedas. He knew Greek and Latin, in addition to French, and guided many serious students of the humanities in their studies of history, literature, philosophy, and

comparative religions. He arranged small exhibitions at the Library on such subjects as the "oneness of the world", using scientific and historical facts combined with visual stimuli, to interest and encourage people to explore these subjects. He also had a great love for animals, studied the behavioural patterns of monkeys, and made interesting discoveries in the field of animal psychology.

Although he was a master of erudition, a creative and original thinker, and an inspiring writer, he was above all a child of the Mother, with whom he had the most extraordinarily sweet relation. It is surely that sweetness that became the nectar of his life and drew so many friends to his side.

— Debranjana Chatterjee

Debranjana-da is the librarian in charge of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library. He joined the Library after completing his studies at S.A.I.C.E. and worked closely with Medhananda for many years.



Medhananda on his birthday, after seeing the Mother

If you examine Egyptian statues, you will see that every one of them has one foot forward—the foot of becoming; but the point of balance is on the foot behind, the foot of the being's foundation. This world is only bearable if you have one foot in ecstasy—but this is not always possible....Now, the new consciousness established by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo makes it possible to have one foot in the transcendence and the other in the manifestation.

— Medhananda

Medhananda, exceptional mind in a “body of joy”

Medhananda was the name given by the Mother, on February 26, 1952, to a disciple of hers who had arrived in the Ashram only a few days earlier, on February 15th. He was born in Pforzheim, Germany, on April 28, 1908, the son of a prosperous self-made industrialist and his beautiful young wife. They named their son Fritz Winkelstroeter—a name which he came to dislike intensely. As a child he was constantly renaming himself as he identified with different characters and personalities. This trait re-emerged in later life, in Pondicherry, when he became co-editor of the journal *Equals One*: as its main contributor he enjoyed assuming the viewpoints of a large number of expressive *noms de plume*.

I met Medhananda on a few memorable occasions during his lifetime—for example, in 1978 when Paolo Soleri, the visionary architect of Arcosanti in Arizona and a disciple of the French mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, was on a visit to Auroville. Among other events, it was arranged for him to meet with Amal Kiran. Amal (K.D. Sethna) had written two books comparing the insights of Teilhard de Chardin with those of Sri Aurobindo, and the occasion was meant for a kind of philosophical exchange of views. Medhananda and Yvonne, who were staying in Fraternity at that time, hosted the occasion. Through my close friendship with Amal, I was one of the few privileged to be present. But though I can clearly visualise all of us sitting under a sort of thatched rotunda in the sunlit greenery of an Auroville afternoon, unfortunately I have not the slightest memory of any of the illuminations expressed by those present.

A more recent meeting took place at IRISI in Reddiarpalayam, the lovely garden to which Medhananda and Yvonne moved later in 1978. This might have been on New Year's Day or on Medhananda's birthday in 1989 or 1990. Yvonne maintained the custom of inviting a few of their close friends and co-workers on those occasions, and by then I had become a co-worker...of which, more later. On the occasion I have in mind, it would have been

well worth recording his remarks. By then he was deep into his Egyptian researches, and entertained us in his usual humorous and illuminating way, amongst other topics with an explanation of the hieroglyph for gnosis or wisdom, a small square of interconnecting lines, like that used for a 'noughts and crosses' game. He explained that this symbol showed the way in which everything is connected with everything else—it is like a net, or perhaps rather a woven mat or carpet. If we can truly experience the world like this, we can possess the wisdom that transcends the divisions and limitations of time and space—which is perhaps why and how the possession of a 'flying carpet' became the mark of a sage or a magician.

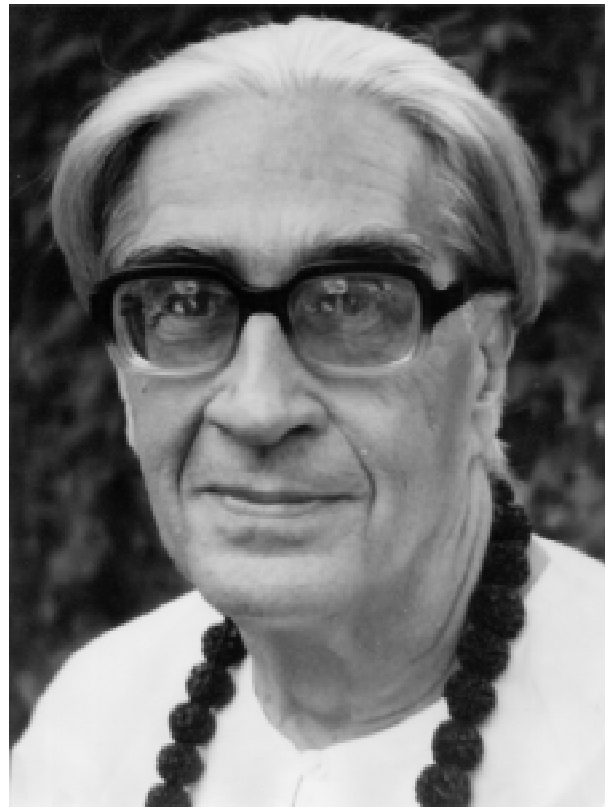
Medhananda himself seemed to possess this capacity of seeing unexpected connections, and of looking through the warp and weft of things to surprising underlying significances. And he was able to communicate these insights in a way that brought a smile of delighted discovery or recognition to his hearers or readers—an 'Aha!' reaction.

It was from 1988 onwards that I came into a closer connection with him and his unique way of seeing things. Of course, I had already been enjoying the various issues of *Equals One*, as they came out in the early 1970s. Also, I had been introduced to 'The Eternity Game', a set of 64 cards with symbols and significances which can be used for various games of self-exploration and psychological discovery, and which I have heard that Medhananda and Yvonne showed to the Mother on the last occasion when she received them, in February 1973. But from 1988–98 I worked with Yvonne, at first assisting her to computerise the notes she had been keeping in French of Medhananda's informal talks from the mid-1950s up to the early 1980s, a record which she called '*Au fil de l'Éternité*'. The first stage consisted of transcribing the *Au fil de l'Éternité* record from audio cassettes she had prepared, entering it into a computer, and providing her with a printed text for editing in consultation with Medhananda. When all

the eleven cahiers had been transcribed and corrected, and a twelfth one of texts in English had been similarly computerised, an index was required. Much later, after Medhananda had left his body on May 26, 1994, Yvonne made a selection from these texts for two books: *With Medhananda on the shores of infinity* (1998) which consists of autobiographical material; and *On the threshold of a new age with Medhananda* (2000) which gives a kind of overview of his thought. Meanwhile, she had asked for my help on the original versions of the five Egyptian books. The German version of the first of these, *The Way of Horus*, had already been published in Europe, but the texts she gave me were in English, and she relied on me for correcting the early drafts. These had to be very carefully prepared according to a special layout designed by Yvonne, and printed out so that she could insert the appropriate images in their places. Later on, the preparation of these texts for publication was taken up by another team, and the books finally appeared last year (2006). They mark only the tip of the iceberg of Medhananda's research—over 400 hours of recorded talks in German are still in the process of being transcribed and edited. In the meantime, I had been involved in the work of preparing another two compilations for publication, this time of Medhananda's stories from the journal *Equals One*. The outcome was the twin collections *The Way out is Up* (shorter stories) and *Guardians of Oneness* (longer tales), which were prepared in close collaboration with Yvonne. The most recent publications have been *The Garden of Man and other stories from ancient times* (2006) which consists of Medhananda's poetic presentations of three ancient Egyptian texts, and *Immortal Wisdom from ancient times in myths, tales and legends* (2006). This book again brings together writings first published in *Equals One*, this time ones in which Medhananda gives his distinctive interpretations of an ancient Greek myth, some Germanic fairy tales, one of the apocryphal gospels, two ancient Egyptian texts, and a Hindu legend. Now, to mark the centenary of his birth, a collection of his translations of poems by Sri Aurobindo is being prepared. Medhananda thought like a poet, and wrote like a poet in his mother tongue, German, so this is a fitting form of tribute

to a truly remarkable disciple of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

The name which the Mother gave to him contains two elements: *medha* (mind) and *ananda* (delight, bliss). And these two elements correspond to the distinctive characteristics which stand out when I recall him. He really had an exceptional mind, of great intelligence, developed by the very highest standards of Western education, and, moreover, deeply cultured—something which does not always accompany great intelligence or a high level of



education. From the time when he amazed his family by using his first pocket money to purchase a book on Hindu art and religion, Medhananda had immersed himself in the profounder riches of many civilisations. Moreover, there was something in him, apparently from early childhood, which predisposed him to take a deeper view of things. By the time he came in contact with the writings of Sri Aurobindo after the Second World War, he had already

experienced many enriching glimpses of inner worlds, as well as an overwhelming spiritual experience which lasted more than a month and left a permanent stamp on him. It was my privilege to be asked to translate from German his notation of this experience, which happened in Tahiti, found pencilled into a notebook which he brought with him to the Ashram. This appears in the book *With Medhananda on the shores of infinity*. Surely it must have been this deeper level of his being which radiated the *ananda* aspect. He seemed always to be taking things not quite seriously, playing with his great erudition and all the fascinating ideas that flourished in the rich ground of his mind. There was always a glint of humour, a twinkle of the eye, about his most profound remarks, which seemed to say, ‘You are allowed to take this with a pinch of salt, you know! It is true, but you don’t have to take it too literally.’ This very un-German trait both delighted and – sometimes – confused people who might have preferred to revere him as a Guru.

In answer to a question from an American seeker who was visiting the Ashram, Medhananda said, ‘Any time I lean back and want to be in my psychic being, I can do it.’ The questioner asked, ‘And does that give you some special feeling?’ Medhananda replied,

‘It gives the sense of independence, of freedom, of joy—and of several other things too, such as power. But the real hallmark of the psychic being is joy. It is our body of joy. Every time you feel a great joy, a joy which doesn’t have a material reason or something like that, if you are just joyful, you are living in your body of joy. Westerners to whom this experience happens don’t even know that at that moment they are having a spiritual experience....They have not been educated or made aware that joy is a very important religious and spiritual experience—because Western religions very early on, in medieval times, took some queer turn so that suffering was considered the quickest and nearest way to reach God. But it is just the opposite. God is joy, you see. And the body of joy he has given us is a glorious body, which can only feel joy. So if you are living in this body, then nothing else can happen to you.’

This is something I like to remember when I think of Medhananda.

— Shraddhavan

Shraddhavan, a long-time resident of Auroville, coordinates the activities at Savitri Bhavan and edits its journal Invocation.

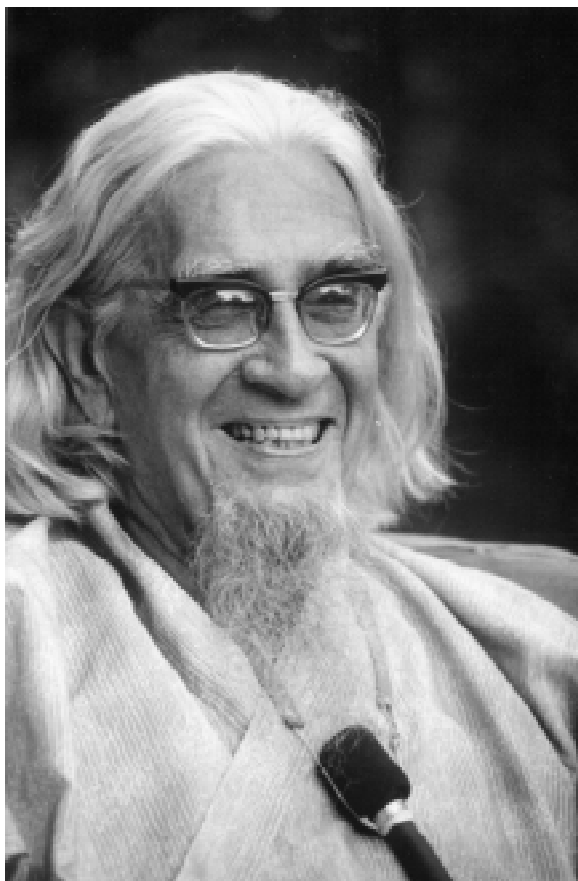
Medhananda, extraordinary teacher and guide

Medhananda—a formidable, multifaceted, radiant personality. He was so much ahead of us ordinary humans in terms of his spiritual evolution, having attained peak levels of consciousness, and we can see many of his extraordinary capabilities, experiences, and realisations as they are revealed in his autobiographical book *With Medhananda on the shores of infinity*. Reading about his fascinating inner and outer life happenings one is struck with awe and wonder.

In Tahiti, where he spent sixteen years, Medhananda had found exceptionally favourable conditions for delving deeper into the inner and higher realms of his being. Solitude, peace, and an

environment of paradisiacal beauty and harmony were naturally very congenial for his extended explorations of the vastnesses within, around, and beyond him. Very amazing were the extraterrestrial journeys he frequently undertook. In the above-mentioned book we read about one particular incident when, while standing one early morning in the marketplace in Tahiti, his consciousness happened to go out of his body and travelled to intergalactic spaces. When he wanted to return to his body, he realised he could not find the way back to his mother planet, Earth. But then he remembered, “Oh, I came from Sri Aurobindo’s planet!”, and the contact with his body was re-established.

The book sheds light on many other extraordinary happenings and encounters. He met subtle beings from Polynesia who had shed their physical bodies



but did not know how to move on to the higher realms. Medhananda, by the power and light of his consciousness, could help some of these beings to get liberated.

As we learn from the book, he had the capability to identify with manifested and unmanifested beings, with animals and plants, with the drops of a waterfall... His wide consciousness could contact and embrace everything. And he was a fearless fighter, a warrior to the core. Medhananda was one of the forerunners of the new consciousness. He always pointed out the importance of attaining the consciousness of Gnosis, which is knowledge by identity, entering into the heart of things and seeing

all manifested forms not only as expressions of the Divine but also as the One Divine.

Medhananda's intellectual powers were brilliant, outstanding. His was a mind that was not only highly cultured, complex, vast, and profound but which could see the various manifestations of life as a totality, as an organic whole where everything is connected. Illustrating this, he liked to use the image of a carpet where all the knots and threads are intimately interwoven to form a single whole. Whatever we see in the world of phenomena is just a knot in the big carpet; nothing is isolated, everything has an effect on everything else. And he would always emphasise the importance of *varuna*: to become wide and vast in order to open to and receive the new consciousness. From his notes: "The new consciousness of man does not manifest by solving problems but by inventing problems. The number of problems surrounding us shows that we are living in a golden age. Poor ages have only few problems. A widening consciousness naturally discovers new problems, problems which clamour not for a 'solution' but for a further widening of our awareness." In his talks and writings he stressed very much the fact that everything is vibratory. Everything is fluid, a process, a happening, and not a fixity. Also the soul is nothing "fixed", nothing we *have*. "The soul is a verb," he explained, "*We are it.*"

How did I come in contact with Medhananda, and what was he to me? He was my spiritual mentor, a compassionate friend and guide, a source of constant, unfaltering inspiration and encouragement. But for him, my life might have taken a totally different direction. When in the summer of 1969, apparently by chance, I had been led to the Ashram for a stay of three days only, I had absolutely no knowledge of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and felt very forlorn and out-of-touch with myself and the surroundings. It was through the intermediacy of Gajaraj-ji of the Reception Service that I was directed to Medhananda; and in that one decisive hour, when we were quietly sitting in the garden of the Ashram Library, Medhananda managed to do the miracle: he hooked me to the Mother. How did he do it? Not only by what he said. No, it was done

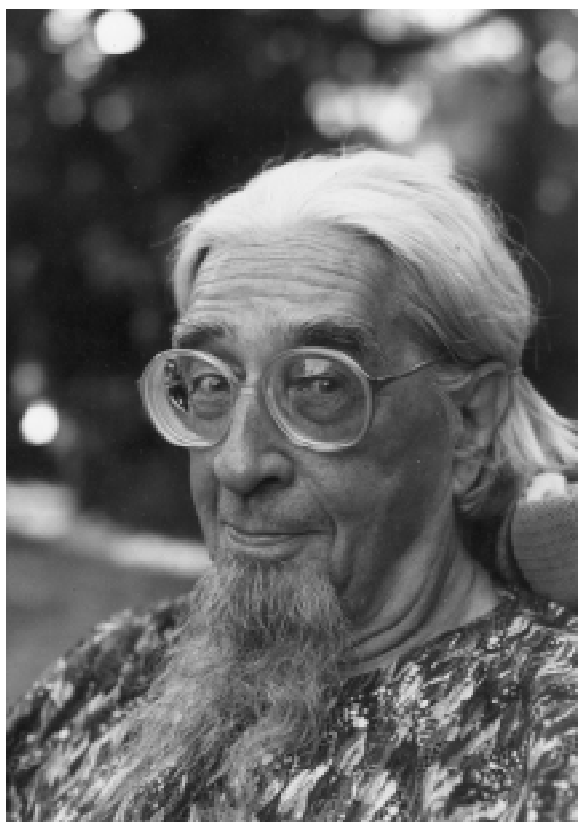
by the power of his consciousness (though at that time I was not aware of it). Medhananda had been the perfect instrument to turn an ignoramus into an aspirant for the pursuit of the Integral Yoga. And from that time onwards we became closer and more intimate. Until I settled here for good in 1972, I got an immense help through his beautiful, charged letters.

It was a great privilege to be with him, to breathe in his powerful, luminous atmosphere. Unforgettable are those beautiful hours in the afternoon when we, a small group of friends, would meet in the Library garden, asking questions and listening in rapt self-forgetfulness to what he shared with us from his vast store of knowledge and experience. His remarks were often spiced with a trace of provocation, and there was always this wonderful sense of humour, of amusement, and the hilarious laughter, the playfulness. He did not take anything too seriously.

He fired our aspiration towards self-perfection and a widening of consciousness; and by a mere look he could touch my inner being and help me to establish the connection. He could be uncompromising in terms of what he expected from us, and he was sometimes harsh like a Zen master. But then again he would be loving and gentle, showing infinite patience. How deeply he understood us! He had the capacity to enter into someone's consciousness and see there the "hidden things", antagonistic movements, struggles, hurdles, and the psychological complexes. I became aware that I could conceal nothing from him; he could look straight inside me. He had the striking power to temporarily change the state of consciousness of some of us; he could do it by a mere look. One morning it happened that I was in a state of extreme anguish, almost terror, and I went to see him, trembling, unable to speak. He quietly looked at me, just for a few seconds—and immediately a wave of peace descended into me, enveloping me like a cocoon. It was a peace unfathomable, solid, compact, almost material, which stayed with me the whole day.

I remember the points he stressed as crucial for

the growth of consciousness: to widen oneself, become vast; to see the connectedness of everything with everything else; and to understand and feel that everything in the manifested universe is vibratory. His constant effort was to help us to break the rigid, fixed, fossilised structures of the mind, to stop the identification with the mind so that we could reach a higher truth. Once I had a dream, in the early 1970s, which aptly illustrates this. A group of Ashramites was moving in a queue through a clearing. One by one, we went up to the place where Medhananda stood, every one of us undergoing the same "ritual". When my turn came, I too knelt down,



putting my head on the wooden log in front of me, in total trust and without fear. Medhananda, standing behind me, lifted his heavy axe and, with a mighty swing, brought it down, cutting right through my neck. As my head flew up into the air, I had an ecstatic feeling of *ananda* and liberation. When I told him later about the dream, he said, "But that's

what I am doing all the time—cutting your head, with all those heavy mental structures!”

Yes, Medhananda worked a lot on our enclosed, prejudiced, small minds. He tried to bring us nearer to our inner truth, to a higher understanding of the fundamentals of existence, and to make us see and feel that things are in resonance with each other. And he had a most wonderful way of explaining Sri Aurobindo to us in easily understandable terms. But as much as I loved listening to his talks, the most significant help I felt coming from him happened in silence. Meditations became deeper in his presence; it was easier to focus within. Others felt the same way. It was our sacrosanct hour when in the afternoons we would quietly sit in the garden of the Library, trying to go within. Whether he was meditating with us or just reading a book, it made no difference. We often felt that, at some point, he entered into our consciousness and helped us quieten and centre it.

And that’s how I got my name. That afternoon in January 1976 there were only two of us—Medhananda apparently reading, I meditating. And then, quite suddenly, it happened—what I had never experienced before in such a compelling way. I found myself before the inner fire and mingled with it. Whether he consciously led me there or whether it just happened because of his luminous presence by my side, the impact was tremendous. The next day, after reading my letter describing the experience, he gave me my mantra and my name, Agnidhāna (receptacle of the fire). “It is your programme,” he said.

I recall how he used to emphasise that “We are not what we have become, but what we can become.” Medhananda, for many of us, was a bright star, illuminating the way.

— Agnidhan

Agnidhan settled in the Ashram in 1972 and teaches German language and literature at S.A.I.C.E.

Books by Medhananda

Published by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry

With Medhananda on the shores of infinity

144 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-08-1

Hard Cover Rs 175, Soft Cover Rs 125

This book contains a collection of reminiscences, meditations, letters, poems and transcriptions of interviews, chronologically arranged in order to recount the story of Medhananda’s life. The book can best be described as the autobiography of an inner life because the external events play only a subordinate role, and are used here only to situate or illustrate a subjective experience.

On the threshold of a new age with Medhananda

Fragments of conversations recorded in French by Yvonne Artaud

199 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-14-2

Hard Cover Rs 150, Soft Cover Rs 125

This volume, written in the very original and poetic style of Medhananda, contains fragments of conversations recorded by Yvonne Artaud. Medhananda plays the role of an invisible teacher or guide who unveils on the screen of our intelligence the different mantles that constitute the universe as well as ourselves. He links the wisdom of the East and West, showing an equal understanding of the ancient Egyptian and Chaldean cultures, of Buddha and Lao Tse, Pythagoras and Patanjali—and especially of the new consciousness and the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

The Garden of Man and other stories from ancient times

87 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-35-7, Soft Cover Rs 150

An avid student of ancient symbol-languages, Medhananda wrote this book of translations and interpretations on the meanings behind three symbol-texts: a 3500-year old hieroglyphic message from an Egyptian tomb, the iconic image of the tree as presented in several ancient cultures, and an old Egyptian fairy tale. He views and presents these as teaching images, symbols that lead the reader towards self-awareness.

Immortal Wisdom from ancient times in myths, tales and legends

177 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-32-6, Soft Cover Rs 190

Medhananda was also a researcher and interpreter of the symbols in ancient cultures. In this book he examines several myths, tales, and legends in the light of mystic experience. What he sees are not stories about nature gods or tribal histories of kings and warriors, but facts, events and powers of the inner life. For him Heracles is not the muscle-bound hunter and hero of Greek myth, but the seeker of ultimate Truth, a symbol of the awakening consciousness of man. Other interpretations concern tales from ancient Egypt, the Bible, and the Brothers Grimm.

Collected from the journal "Equals One", these two books of stories, humorous, provocative and symbolic, reveal and reflect the creative mind and inner life of the author.

Guardians of Oneness and other tales from Equals One
199 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-23-4, Soft Cover Rs 175

The Way out is Up and other stories from Equals One
155 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-24-1, Soft Cover Rs 150

Five books on Ancient Egypt presenting the thesis that Egyptian hieroglyphs and images contain the teachings of an advanced psychology of self-knowledge. Written by Medhananda in collaboration with Yvonne Artaud.

The Way of Horus

The Pictorial Way of Ancient Egypt

281 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-37-1, Soft Cover Rs 280

Interpretations of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and images as symbols of the multiplicity of soul powers representing inner movements of consciousness, aspects of ourselves, as well as universal principles.

Archetypes of Liberation

Psychodynamics of Ancient Egypt

243 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-38-8, Soft Cover Rs 260

A study of the psychological significance of ancient Egyptian figures and gods, with their strange animal heads and fantastic crowns, as archetypes and symbols for unknown parts of the inner being.

The Pyramids and the Sphinx

as seen by the Ancient Egyptians in Hieroglyphic Inscriptions

127 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-39-5, Soft Cover Rs 160

Proposes new answers regarding the purpose of the Egyptian pyramids and the secrets hidden by the riddle of the Sphinx as keys to understanding the psychological structure of the consciousness of the ancient Egyptians.

The Royal Cubit

Psychometrics of Ancient Egypt

249 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-40-1, Soft Cover Rs 260

Reveals the royal cubit, a measuring tool used in the building of the pyramids and temples, as also being a secret codex corresponding to a list of gods, or soul powers, and part of an ancient discipline of self-culture.

The Ancient Egyptian Senet Game

The Game of Archetypes

389 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-36-4, Soft Cover Rs 300

The thirty symbols on the game board of the Egyptian pharaohs are interpreted as corresponding to psychological force-fields and explored as ways to become more conscious of the multifaceted self.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

Compilations from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Pictures of Sri Aurobindo's Poems



— Paintings by Huta with verses from Sri Aurobindo's poems and relevant quotations from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo

Publisher: The Havyavahana Trust, Pondicherry

118 pp., ISBN: 978-81-87372-17-2, Rs 400

Size: 18x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

In March 1967 Huta began the work of expressing some of Sri Aurobindo's poems through paintings. Under the Mother's inspiration and guidance she selected certain passages from the poems and completed fifty-four paintings, which were all shown to the Mother in September of that year. This new book presents these paintings along with the lines which inspired them from some of Sri Aurobindo's most well-known poems, such as "Invitation", "Who", "Thought the Paraclete", and "A God's Labour". Appropriate quotations from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, some comments on the paintings by the Mother, and background information and photographs accompany the plates. The entire book is printed on art paper.

Reprints from All India Magazine

Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry

The Divine as the Master and Guide

48 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7060-268-2, Rs 15

The Divine Grace

39 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7060-265-1, Rs 15

Explanation of Significant Words

48 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7060-264-4, Rs 15

Maheshwari

Maheshwari Aspect of the Mother

39 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7060-269-9, Rs 15

Walking the Razor's Edge

48 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7060-263-7, Rs 15

What are we Seeking in Life and the Key for it

44 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7060-270-5, Rs 15

Other Authors



Basic Education of the Body

— Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Publication Department,
Pondicherry
81 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7058-867-2,
Rs 55
Size: 14x22 cm
Binding: Soft Cover

This book offers five different exercise programmes, each designed to give a complete workout to the entire body while using limited time, space, and equipment. Originally issued as five separate booklets, this new publication brings together these sets of exercises, designed by the Director of the Physical Education Department of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and notable for combining traditional Indian approaches, such as the use of *asanas*, with more modern methods. Included is a “minimum physical fitness test” adapted to age groups and gender. All the exercise programmes are accompanied by precise instructions and illustrations of each pose.

Towards New Age

— R. Y. Deshpande
Publisher: Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry
309 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86413-46-3, Rs 150
Size: 14x22 cm
Binding: Soft Cover

Presently we are passing through the Age of Reason and perhaps preparing ourselves, without being aware of it, for the Age of luminous Intuition. The urge of the spirit of man for God-Light-Freedom-Immortality is certainly there, but it is not sufficiently deep-rooted. There is the positive human potential and it has to get firmed up in the spiritual values and possibilities. The present work is an attempt to discover and promote these values and possibilities in the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the dynamics of the Mother’s executive Force. There has to be a conviction that the culmination of the social development into the Age of the ageless Spirit is the secret yearning and motivating force behind the evolutionary Nature’s long painstaking and patient working. Humanity’s conscious participation in it will assuredly hasten this triumph and this glory. To make us perceive some of these elements is the sincere effort of *Towards New Age*.

see review on page 16

Savitri, The Mother

Essays on Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri: The Book of Yoga

— Prof. M. V. Seetaraman
Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville
178 pp., ISBN: 978-81-903346-1-7, Rs 125
Size: 14x22 cm
Binding: Soft Cover

The thirteen articles collected in this book were originally published in the journal *The Advent* from 1962 to 1965. The premise of the series of essays is to demonstrate the correspondences between Sri Aurobindo’s description of the Yoga of Savitri, as seen in Cantos I, IV, V, VI and VII of Book VII, and the Mother’s record of her own experiences in her *Prayers and Meditations*. Combining a detailed explication of lines from these Cantos with an examination of his broader themes, the author gives his insights on such topics as the personality of Savitri as an *avatar*, her encounter with the three aspects of the World Mother, or the triple soul-forces, and her work to build the bridge for man to cross over into the highest realm of consciousness and realise the new Gnostic Soul.

see review on page 15

A New Education with a Soul

— Marguerite Smithwhite
Publisher: International Children’s Peace Council Trust,
Coimbatore
260 pp., Rs 495
Size: 21x28 cm
Binding: Soft Cover

The author believes that to achieve world peace, first all individuals must attain inner peace. The key to this is education, an education neither political nor religious, bringing an insight into the unseen realities of the inner being. Today science has moved rapidly into the areas of hitherto hidden things and is demonstrating facts which are spiritual in nature. Mysticism and science are converging to unveil the soul in all things animate and inanimate.

This book presents a curriculum for all ages, for a spiritual education towards a higher consciousness, fully illustrated to make it “a fascinating visual experience”. It is hoped that this material will help the world’s children to realise their potential and harness it to a powerful movement for human unity and peace.

see review on page 23

Theory & Practice of Integral Education
Educational Thoughts of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother

— Dr Sunil Behari Mohanty

Publisher: Manu Publications, Pondicherry

128 pp., ISBN: 978-81-904888-0-8, Rs 100

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

Beginning with an introductory chapter that uses paragraph summaries to present an overview of all the topics related to an integral education in the light of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's considerable writings on this subject, the author then outlines the aspects of a mental, vital, physical, psychic, and spiritual education. Additional chapters cover curriculum and methods of teaching as well as a sharp focus on the qualities and training of the teacher. Using his own experience as an educator, he concludes with some practical suggestions for an experimental institution of integral education. Aimed at reaching an audience of teachers and teacher educators, the book includes extensive references and a thirty-four-page bibliography on integral education.



India and the Future of South Asia

— Kosha Shah

Publisher: Auroville Arts, Auroville

84 pp., Rs 80

Size: 14x21 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

The author examines some of the fundamental issues which are of central importance to South Asian countries and in the context of efforts made so far in developing a regional identity. The aim is to find a new light with which to view the current conflicts and uncertainties, a light drawing inspiration from what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said on the future of the region. Using historical perspectives and illustrative passages from their works, she discusses how culture, civilisation, religion, spirituality, and secularism impact the development of national and regional identities. The final chapter offers an overview of both the problems and possibilities of a South Asian confederation, with the emphasis on India to lead the way towards a greater integration.

Reprints / Now available with SABDA

Epigrams from Savitri

— M. P. Pandit

Publisher: Dipti Publications, Pondicherry

56 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7509-100-9, Rs 30

Size: 12x18 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

A selection of single-line epigrams of various kinds from *Savitri*, with references. First published as part of *The Book of the Divine Mother* and then as an independent book, *Epigrams from Savitri* has been out of print for a long time.

Sri Aurobindo's Treatment of Hindu Myth

— J. Feys

Publisher: Firma KLM Private Limited, Kolkata

56 pp., Rs 30

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Hard Cover

Sri Aurobindo was a modern reinterpreter of the entire range of traditional Hindu culture. Not only did he propose his own original interpretation of the nation's heritage, but also wrote extensive commentaries on the vast mass of Sanskrit literature. An essential component of the culture he professed to revitalise was Hindu myth, which he salvaged in its entirety.

This book, published in 1983 and now available with SABDA, brings out a perhaps less-recognised facet of Sri Aurobindo's work manifest in all his literary genres—his creative reinterpretation of Hindu myth.

OTHER LANGUAGES

ITALIAN

Perseo il Liberatore : Dramma lirico in cinque atti; con testo originale a fronte — Sri Aurobindo Rs 1300
ISBN: 978-88-901049-3-0

I Visir di Bassora : Commedia romantica in cinque atti — Sri Aurobindo Rs 1300
ISBN: 978-88-901049-4-7

Introduzione alla poesia e alla simbologia di Savitri : Ispirazioni sull'Aurora Simbolica — Prof. Terrazzino Salvatore (Mahatreya) Rs 1400

ROMANIAN

Daruire si gratie; Transformarea — Compilation

ISBN: 978-973-88157-4-2

Rs 70

BENGALI

- Sri Aurobindo: Bangaparva : Kicchu Katha Kicchu Asha
— Trija Roy Rs 25
Dr. Syama Prasad Mukhopadhyaya : “ek nirmal o nirbhik
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GUJARATI

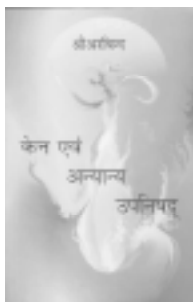


- Prarthanao ane Dhyan (Selected)
— Sri Mataji Rs 100
A bilingual collection of sixty-four prayers and meditations translated into English from the original French, six of them by Sri Aurobindo, along with their Gujarati translations.

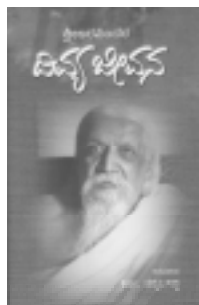
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- Kena evam Anyanya Upanishad
— Sri Aurobindo Rs 210
ISBN: 978-81-7058-858-0
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ISBN: 978-81-7058-852-8



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- Gitecha Divya Sandesh
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- Shikshya O' Manava Jeevanara Lakshya
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ISBN: 978-81-7058-809-2
Padmapurara Dahani — Daulat Panday Rs 45
Mankada Baida — Daulat Panday Rs 40
Sapta Chatushtaya — Sri Aurobindo Rs 20
ISBN: 978-81-7060-266-8

TAMIL

- Annaiyin Arul Vakkugal 1000 : Bagam Erandu
- 501 mudal 1000 varai Rs 50
— Compiled from the works of the Mother
Sri Aravindarin “Deiveega Vazhkai” yin Saram Rs 150
- Vol 2 (Part 1) — M. P. Pandit
ISBN: 978-81-7509-102-3

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- Sri Aravindula Sahityam-Pratheekalu
— Dr G. Aruna Kumari Rs 80

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BOOK REVIEWS

Our first review is by Dr Mangesh Nadkarni, who passed away on 23 September 2007 at the age of 74. He earned his doctorate in linguistics from UCLA, and was a Professor at the National University of Singapore and at the Central Institute of English in Hyderabad. A frequent contributor to various publications, he also lectured extensively in India and abroad on Sri Aurobindo's vision and the spiritual heritage of India, and recently wrote a book *India's Spiritual Destiny: Its Inevitability and Potentiality*. He was especially known for his series of seminars on *Savitri* and *Essays on the Gita*, which drew attendees to Pondicherry from around the world. His book review is on a subject about which he cared deeply, and was probably one of the last things he wrote for publication.



Savitri, The Mother ***Essays on Sri Aurobindo's Savitri:*** ***The Book of Yoga***

— Professor M. V. Seetaraman;
Published by Savitri Bhavan,
Auroville; 178 pp., Rs 125

I commend Savitri Bhavan most heartily for bringing out this singular book which tries to elucidate the spiritual content of Book VII of *Savitri*, one of the most difficult and therefore less studied sections of the epic. Most books on *Savitri*, while acknowledging that it is a spiritual epic, fight shy of talking directly about its spiritual content. They focus, rather, on other aspects of this epic—its literary excellence, the metaphysics of Integral Vedanta, its humanistic idealism, its criticism of contemporary life and our scientific and technological civilization, its arguments that only the supramental consciousness is the ultimate answer to all our problems, etc.

Professor Seetaraman's book is one of the earliest studies on *Savitri*; it was first published as a series of articles in the journal *The Advent* between 1962 and 1965, only twelve years after *Savitri* was issued as a book. When he wrote these essays, Seetaraman was in his early forties but he seems to have been equipped by his destiny for this task. He was a professor of English literature and at the same time also a spiritual aspirant; he was not an intellectual dilettante but a *sadhak*.

In this book Professor Seetaraman finds correspondences between Savitri's spiritual experiences as described in Book VII and the Mother's spiritual experiences as described in her diary *Prayers and Meditations*. In comparing them, he has enriched our understanding of Book VII and of many prayers in the Mother's diary. This comparison brings us another benefit—it makes Savitri

almost our contemporary and not just a figure belonging to ancient Indian mythology.

In the first three articles the author elucidates the three major themes found in Canto One of Book VII—the enigma of fate and free will, the union of Satyavan and Savitri which blends the qualities of Romantic, Platonic and Christian love and brings them to their culmination in Divine love, and the work of Savitri, the *Avatar*. In the fourth article the author discusses Savitri's meeting with the three Madonnas and with their perverted alter egos which still rule earth-nature. Nowhere else have I seen a more satisfying treatment of this canto than the one in this book.

Although it is generally agreed that Savitri is a manifesto of the Supermind, very few scholars have presented a clear idea about when the Supramental enters in Savitri's yoga.

In the remaining eight articles Professor Seetaraman presents a bold interpretation of the spiritual experiences of Savitri described in Cantos Five, Six and Seven of Book VII. He suggests that when Savitri meets with her soul (in Canto Five), she crosses the overmental border and enters the hemisphere of the Supramental consciousness; and there realizes her identity with the very source of the powers of the Supermind. The subsequent description of the descent of the *Kundalini* indicates that these Supramental powers descend into her own being. In Canto Six Savitri faces an unprecedented attack from the Inconscient. Confronted with its ominous power, she receives an inner command to hide the Supramental treasure in her heart until it gets established in the collective consciousness; in this way she can triumph over the siege

of the Inconscient. She then prepares herself to be God's void by discovering within herself the All-Negating Absolute. In Canto Seven Savitri discovers the means to become the conscious bridge between the Eternal and the temporal, the Infinite and the finite, the Superconscient and the Inconscient.

Although it is generally agreed that *Savitri* is a manifesto of the Supermind, very few scholars have presented a clear idea about when the Supramental enters in Savitri's yoga, and how she deals with it. Professor Seetaraman has put forward the view that it happens in Canto Five. Some scholars may feel that this hypothesis is too conjectural, but the author has made it seem fairly plausible; the onus of contradicting it and suggesting a better one lies on those who disagree with him.

Savitri, The Mother is an uncommon book; it is addressed to the *Savitri*-lover, not to the casual reader or to the English Lit. specialist. It is Professor Seetaraman's heart's adoration to *Savitri* and its author. I salute this South Indian scholar and *sadhak* for bequeathing to all *Savitri*-lovers such an invaluable gift.

— Dr Mangesh Nadkarni



Towards New Age

— R Y Deshpande; Published by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry; 309 pp., Rs 150

This book is a collection of twelve articles by R Y Deshpande based on Sri Aurobindo's perspective of life and his vision of the future.

The work consists of conference talks given by the author, literary praise for Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri*, and refutations of criticism "levelled against" the poem. Deshpande honors some of the works by Sri Aurobindo's closest disciples, gives an extensive critique of Kishor Gandhi's book, *Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the New Age*, and includes informative articles about India and the new millennium and the need for an Indian science.

The book begins with an excellent overview of Sri Aurobindo's life, emphasizing his childhood and keen ability to learn languages, his interest in literature, and his involvement in India's struggle for political freedom. Next we are introduced to Sri Aurobindo's spiritual experiences. Especially interesting is the explanation of the power that brought Sri Aurobindo and the Mother together as a team to perfect the Integral Yoga. Some of the Sanskrit terminology in this chapter would be difficult for a reader who is unfamiliar with Sri Aurobindo's poetry, psychology, and philosophy.

Deshpande's words and phrasing, however, are dynamic and joyful. One can actually feel the power of his aspiration to transcend our world of ignorance when he explains how the Mother discovered the means to awaken the body's cells to the divine reality and how, upon his passing from the physical body, Sri Aurobindo gave the Mind of Light to the Mother as a parting gift.

Deshpande gives an excellent explanation of the spiritual discipline practiced by the Mother and how Sri Aurobindo made the supramental descent possible. On April 29, 1956, the Mother announced that the manifestation of the supramental had taken place. "A new light breaks upon the earth, a new world is born."

The epic *Savitri*, says Deshpande, gives Sri Aurobindo's spiritual experiences in the nature of a poetic record. *Savitri* "characterizes the entire evolutionary march of the Soul of the Earth." The poem is the journey of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga and a symbol of the difficulties he and the Mother encounter in order to transform physical matter through the supramental consciousness. The story of Savitri

is the story of heaven and earth coming together, the story of love conquering death.

In Chapter Five Deshpande defends Sri Aurobindo's poems *Ilion* and especially *Savitri* against certain criticisms lodged by the English poet Kathleen Raine,

Especially interesting is the explanation of the power that brought Sri Aurobindo and the Mother together to perfect the Integral Yoga.

whom he feels has done Sri Aurobindo a great injustice. His critique is passionate and poetic, but towards the end, Deshpande makes a hasty generalization about all western poetry as “spiritless,” which unfortunately lands him in the same camp he puts Kathleen Raine in.

“The Imponderables” is a stimulating overview of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the function of the Avatar. In this chapter Deshpande compares the imponderables of Arjuna and Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* with the imponderables of Savitri, Narad, Satyavan, and Aswapati in Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*.

The next three chapters honor some of Sri Aurobindo’s close disciples. The first is a tribute to Nirodbaran’s poetry and his book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, which covers the period between 1938 and 1950 when he served Sri Aurobindo as a personal attendant. Included are interesting comments on India’s freedom (from British rule) and diversity (the partition of the country along communal lines) and the role of the British against Hitler in World War II. Deshpande quotes the Mother as saying, “Thanks to Nirod, we have a revelation of an altogether unknown side of what Sri Aurobindo was.”

In “The Parable of Two Birds” the author examines the sources of the two-bird metaphor found in the Mundaka Upanishad and explains the symbology and poetry of each. He argues that Amal Kiran’s poem “Two Birds” is more than just a profound and inspired interpretation of the Vedic-Upanishadic parable, exceeding Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Brahma” and Wordsworth’s “The Prelude” in spiritual quality, and ranking as a significant success in the direction of future poetry as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo.

Following “The Parable of Two Birds” is a chapter titled “Nolini Kanta Gupta’s Perceptions of Poetry.” The author gives the literary background of Nolini Kanta Gupta and his skill in learning French from Sri Aurobindo. Nolini-da’s poetry, says Deshpande, is the “Poetry of the Spirit” and his perceptions of poetry come from a spiritual empathy, such as his declaration that beauty is the very center of Rabindranath Tagore’s poetic creation because the “perfect perfection of beauty is inherent in the nature of his inner being.” Deshpande appreciates Rabindranath Tagore’s ability to create images of unique beauty, but he prefers Nolini Kanta Gupta’s genius, believing that he stood on the borderline between Overmind and Supermind from where “he saw true poetry as an utterance of the Spirit.”

In his essay “A Critique of Social Philosophy,” Deshpande begins with a critique of ancient Greek political philosophy. He then turns to a critique of Kishor Gandhi’s book *Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the New Age*. Part I of Gandhi’s book introduces the reader to Sri Aurobindo’s book *The Human Cycle*. Part II is devoted to Karl Marx’s theory of social development. Although Deshpande handles this essay skillfully, the reader needs a background in Marx’s dialectic materialism to better understand his point of view. Deshpande agrees with Gandhi that the answer to our social problems lies in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of the future evolution of humankind.

India’s soul is rich, says Deshpande, but the people have lost contact with their souls, their inner beings. “We are sleeping the sleep of the medieval ages.” In this chapter “India and the New Millennium,” he calls India to awake from the last thousand years and recover her national identity and nobility. He leads the reader through the Indian crises, from losing contact with the meaning of the Vedas to the frenzied adoption of western life’s “commercial buzz.” To rejuvenate India he turns to Sri Aurobindo, who said that to recover her soul India must move from the age of reason that plunged her into materialism to the age of intuition in which “the Spirit shall take up the human play.”

The book concludes with a question: “Can there be an Indian science?” The author discusses the history of science from the early Greeks to the atom bomb that ended World War II. Although atomic energy can be used for peaceful purposes and scientific advances have given us a new world, he asks if science can make it a better world. Deshpande discourages India from assimilating the scientific gains of the western world. She needs, he insists, to rebuild her own values.

Towards New Age is a sympathetic example of scholarship promoting the poetic and spiritual achievements of Sri Aurobindo. Although some of the subject matter is not easy to penetrate, the book is very well done. R Y Deshpande’s presentations are intelligent, well informed, and visionary.

— Joan Price, Ph.D.

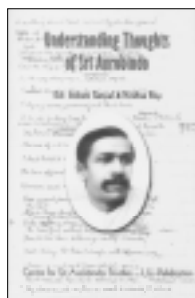
Dr Price has taught History of Philosophy, Philosophical Psychology, and World Religions in the USA for over three decades. She is the author of An Introduction to Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy.

Understanding Thoughts of Sri Aurobindo

— Edited by Indrani Sanyal and Krishna Roy; Published by D. K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi, in association with Jadavpur University, Kolkata; 317 pp., Hard Cover Rs 520

It is not often that a collection of advanced and original writings of such consistent quality on various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's teachings enters the mainstream of published texts and it is thus even more of a pity that the book should bear such a clumsy title as *Understanding Thoughts of Sri Aurobindo* or wear a jacket of such mediocre design merit. The term "thoughts" with respect to Sri Aurobindo's *oeuvre* is obviously a problematic one, given his explicit, repeated statements regarding the cessation of "thinking" in him, while at the same time affirming an impersonal "thought" function to a higher mental and even supramental consciousness. Moreover, a different characteristic of "thought" as an ascending occult mentality in the liberated human nature is also affirmed by him as in his poem "Thought the Paraclete." So, conceivably, the ideas, whether belonging to the human intellect or not, present in Sri Aurobindo's writings, could be called "thoughts"—"Those thoughts that wander through eternity" to draw on one of his own favored lines from Milton. There is also what could be called the discursive "author-function" that the postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault envisions as the legitimate impersonal designation of the author, a convenient spatial and historical marker in the ceaseless and unending flow of thought-text that maps out idea-space in human becoming. Here, the "thoughts of Sri Aurobindo" would not be considered entities originated and thus possessed as personal property by the author Sri Aurobindo, but rather a special configuration or constellation of ideas released into the dynamic flow of jostling mental-vital forces materially distributed as text, constantly reconfigured by time, and influencing or shaping human reality. From all these special and rather esoteric considerations, one may try to justify the title, but even at best it remains ungracious in its impression. Even "Understanding the Thought of Sri Aurobindo" may have been better in spite of the problematic nature of the term "thought"—more in keeping with the miraculous global unity and integrality of the ideas expressed in his writings.

But once past these surface infelicities, there is much of value and originality inside, and the serious reader interested in approaching the world-wide teaching of Sri Aurobindo will find much new ground laying out the limbs and proportions of his teachings and relating his ideas to



various contemporary thought-currents. We are told in the introduction that most of the essays featured in this text were contributed at two annual seminars held by the Jadavpur University Centre for Sri Aurobindo Studies in 2004–05. The main areas covered by the papers are philosophy, evolution, education, poetry and art, man and human relations, state and politics, yoga and psychology, and a concluding section "Sri Aurobindo – A Century in Perspective." The essays, however, do not fit comfortably into these categories and several are poorly matched to these headings. Vladimir's paper on "The Myth of Savitri and Satyavan" and Sarnath Basu's reflections on Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, for example, can hardly be classed under "On Poetry and Art," and Kittu Reddy's "Relevance of Sri Aurobindo in Modern India" is a fish out of water in the category "On Yoga and Psychology." Given the range of Sri Aurobindo's "thought," a category "On Indian Tradition" would have been helpful. But aside from these taxonomic concerns, the selections themselves, as mentioned before, are of a scarcely rivaled excellence in terms of their hermeneutic insight and their contemporary reach.

Of the essays in the section on evolution, Kireet Joshi's comparative review of the theories of evolution stands out by its comprehensiveness and clarity. The idea of evolution was introduced into the modern mainstream by Charles Darwin, and Kireet Joshi makes this the starting point of his consideration. He points to the two main characteristics of Darwinian evolutionary biology as: (1) gradualism; and (2) natural instead of supernatural selection—that is, mutations are statistically random and express equal probability, but the survival of consciousness in living things selects for the persistence of certain mutations as the building blocks of more complex and better adapted living organisms. To Joshi's choice of characteristics, one may add that Darwinism reduces evolution to a scale of physical forms and has no place in its logic for any change of consciousness. Joshi goes on to point to a number of problems with Darwinian evolutionism, some of which have been acknowledged by and responded to by biologists and some of which surpass the scope of biology as a physical science and can only be addressed by philosophers or experimental psychologists/yogis. He points, for example, to the lack of evidence for gradualism and the solutions offered by modern "saltationists," such as the theory of punctuated

equilibrium put forth by Stephen Jay Gould. He also points to the problems of explaining complex mutations as against accidents and variations in the emergence of significant functional properties and their similarities and repetitions across different genealogies. He then goes on to consider philosophical solutions to the question of evolution, which mostly add a teleological element to the reductive assumptions of chance held by biology, as also a consideration of an evolution of consciousness.

The philosophers he takes up in turn include Henri Bergson, Herbert Spencer, Samuel Alexander, Lloyd Morgan, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Whitehead, before arriving at Sri Aurobindo and explicating his evolutionary philosophy based on a prior involution of consciousness. An essay of this kind of incisive comprehensiveness leaves one with a sense of the total field of evolution and how completely Sri Aurobindo answers all its issues and problems. Comparative perspectives like this are sorely needed today in Sri Aurobindo studies. Arabinda Basu's succinct and concentrated essay "Sri Aurobindo's Doctrine of Evolution" and Dilip Kumar Roy's elaboration "Sri Aurobindo's Integral Approach to the Concept of Evolution" are both fit companions to Kireet Joshi's essay in this philosophic vein.

Another essay in the section on Evolution which stands out as a work of cross-cultural hermeneutics is Krishna Roy's article "Sri Aurobindo on Heraclitus." Though Roy's contention that Sri Aurobindo was influenced by Heraclitus in the fashioning of his own theory of evolution is debatable – Sri Aurobindo may have later sought comparative historical precedents – the attention bestowed on this pre-Socratic Greek philosopher and his mystic affinity to Upanishadic and Aurobindonian ideas is very helpful. Heraclitus' pronouncements on the co-existence of Unity and Multiplicity, of Being and Becoming in terms of the dynamic fiery principle and of the relation between evolution and involution do set a radiant pointer in the direction of Sri Aurobindo's *darshana*, though the transcendental and transformative power of Being beyond the boundaries of present Becoming and the possibility of union in consciousness of the human with this transformative power are not envisaged by Heraclitus. In considering Heraclitus, Sri Aurobindo also draws attention to Nietzsche as a modern philosopher with similarities in

his thinking, but with the lacuna of positing a Becoming without Being. Sri Aurobindo considers Nietzsche to be an initiator of modern philosophical thought and lauds him for the fertility and dynamic practicality of his

thinking. Indeed, a whole train of modern and contemporary western philosophers have traced their heritage to Nietzsche, and perhaps the most creative of these, Martin Heidegger, has also drawn attention to the pre-Socratic mode of intuitive and practical

philosophy practiced by thinkers like Heraclitus and the revival of this trend in Nietzsche.

A sibling to Roy's cross-cultural consideration bridging Sri Aurobindo to a genealogy of ancient and postmodern western philosophy is Sushmita Bhattacharya's "Towards a Theory of True Human Relation: Jean-Paul Sartre vis-à-vis Sri Aurobindo." Sartre, an existentialist, also follows in the shadow of Nietzsche. As is clear in his magnum opus *Being and Nothingness* (from which Bhattacharya quotes) the Nietzschean Becoming without Being also informs the ontology of Sartre. However, Bhattacharya peers into the cracks of Sartre's complexity when she tries to draw out from his later lectures and interviews a substantiality to human relationship—what she refers to as a "secret solidarity" of brotherhood founded in the primordially of the earth-mother. Bhattacharya's discussion of Sartre's "humanism" is also noteworthy in that postmodernism has found this term problematic due to its bounded connotations. Heidegger explicitly declared himself an anti-humanist and several postmodern philosophers (e.g. Michel Foucault) have followed in his wake. But with Sartre, we find a revisionary impulse reclaiming humanism into the urge for self-exceeding which for him characterizes human existence. Of course, one could split hairs with Sartre on the scope and extent of human subjectivity or the anticipation of rupture from beyond, Derrida's *l'avenir*, but in any case, with Bhattacharya's characterization, we find the hazy boundaries of the post-human beginning to loom from the writings of Sartre. In this it may be pointed out that Sri Aurobindo also undertakes his own revision of the "humanist" idea in the last chapter of *The Ideal of Human Unity*, which he titles "The Religion of Humanity." Here, one may say that he points to the essence of humanism as a dynamic progression aiming at the realization of human

Sri Aurobindo undertakes his own revision of the "humanist" idea when he points to the essence of humanism as a dynamic progression aiming at the realization of human unity in consciousness through what he has elsewhere called "the psychic being".

unity in consciousness through what he has elsewhere called “the psychic being.” According to the Vedas, it is not only the dark mother of material unconsciousness but the twin Mothers of Night and Day, of *pravritti* and *nivritti*, becoming and latency, who suckle the human child, and Sri Aurobindo’s vision of human “solidarity” bases itself on this. Bhattacharya brings out the need for the realization of these deeper sources of unity – psychic, cosmic, and transcendental – which found the substantial reality of human relationship in Sri Aurobindo, a much more securely developed foundation of theory and practice than the sincere gropings of Sartre. I may mention though, in passing, that Bhattacharya may have found more fruitful ground for comparison and a more richly developed theory of intersubjectivity in Sartre’s contemporary, Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Apart from these comparative considerations, there is much developed understanding and practical insight regarding Sri Aurobindo’s own writings in this book that can serve the function of introduction and/or application. Kireet Joshi’s and U.C. Dubey’s essays on the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, Supriyo Bhattacharya’s essay on Sri Aurobindo’s understanding of Indian art, Dasharathi Sengupta on statehood in Sri Aurobindo’s political thinking, and V.N. Seshagiri Rao’s short commentary on Sri Aurobindo’s conception of Integral Yoga are some outstanding examples of introductions to the varied facets of the omni-directional integrality of Sri Aurobindo’s “thought.” Essays such as Pabitrakumar Roy’s learned reflections on Sri Aurobindo’s poetics of the *mantra*, Vladimir’s interpolations of the Vedic dimensions of the traditional tale of Savitri, and Sarnath Basu’s assessment of Sri Aurobindo’s *Essays on the Gita* – all in the light of Indian spiritual tradition – are more interpretative in nature and represent original insights into the works they address. Of these, Basu’s article is particularly noteworthy for its lucidity and subtlety in casting light on some of Sri Aurobindo’s major gleanings from the Gita—for example, its synthesis of *sankhya* and *yoga*, its emphasis on the supreme and integral *Purusha*, *Purushottama*, as the source, goal, and leading of its yoga; or its affirmation of *jivanmukti* through its revision of otherwise world-negating terminology such as *sannyasa* (here, *karma-sannyasa*) or *nirvana* (here, *brahma-nirvana*).

Three essays on Sri Aurobindo’s educational philosophy bring out in summary form the lines along which he envisaged the future development of human consciousness through education and its practical implications in terms of contemporary implementation. Additionally, Soumitra Basu, Kittu Reddy, Kh. Gokulchandra, Sushmita Bhowmik, and Goutam Ghosal all contribute thought-provoking essays of excellence on various aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s works. The book concludes with an article “Sri Aurobindo – A Century in Perspective” by Aster Patel. Sri Aurobindo became the first principal of National College, Calcutta, now known as the Jadavpur College, about a hundred years ago. In the century which has elapsed since then, humankind has experienced its most intense period of collective growth and crisis throughout the world. Human consciousness is poised on a brink where it is faced either with the specter of oblivion, the horror of the abyss, or a leap into another modality of being, the integral consciousness of the

Human consciousness is poised on a brink where it is faced either with the specter of oblivion, the horror of the abyss, or a leap into another modality of being, the integral consciousness of the “overman”. Mediating this critical choice is the life and work of Sri Aurobindo.

“overman.” Mediating this critical choice is the life and work of Sri Aurobindo, throwing a powerful beacon into the next century. Aster Patel draws out some of the implications of this work ahead of us in following the light of Sri Aurobindo in the coming century. Can

we equal in consciousness the integral vision of reality which contemporary Science is indicating to our minds and our technological practice? Are we even ready to engage with the fullness of the term “integral?” How can we draw together our past and our present, our fractured personalities, our fragmented disciplines, our physical matter and our mental, vital, and spiritual substance into the Oneness of integral being which Sri Aurobindo lived and wrote about? His integral consciousness is still fully alive in his words, and each word is an invitation to experience the Being and Becoming in our own lives. This is the ever-living fire of Heraclitus, the living legacy of the “thoughts” of Sri Aurobindo.

— Debashish Banerji
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Introduction to Integral Education



An Inspirational Guide

— Sraddhalu Ranade; Published by Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research, Auroville; 288 pp., Rs 300

Introduction to Integral Education: An Inspirational Guide by Sraddhalu Ranade shows how the guiding principles of Integral Education can

be utilized in the classroom to make the education of both younger and older children interesting, enlivening, and effective. The author is a scientist, educationist, and scholar at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, as well as a highly regarded and well-known speaker on Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's spiritual teachings. He has conducted intensive teacher-training workshops in Integral Education and value-based education all over India and abroad. The book is based on the transcripts of a series of such workshops led by the author; although the first half of the book was revised for publication the latter chapters were retained in their original format to maintain their informal, interactive flavor. There also is available separately as a companion to the book a set of six audio CDs or a single MP3 CD. While the book is based on a series of workshops, it is a well-organized and integrated exposition, and the writing is clear and concise. Adding to the book's appeal and cohesiveness is the fact that it is beautifully illustrated with drawings that depict in clever and charming ways many of its key ideas.

Integral Education is an approach to education based on principles and guidelines laid out by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and which form the basis of the Ashram's school, the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, where the author was educated. It is based on an entirely different view of the human being and of the educational process than that held by traditional schools and educators, and as a result it involves an entire restructuring of assumptions, attitudes, approaches, and methods together with the creation and development of new ones. For example, there is a basic shift from the communication and inculcation of information to one of the training and development of faculties such as observation, comparison, formation of associations, abstract thought, creativity, concentration, memory,

emotional refinement, aesthetic sensitivity, enthusiasm, will-power, fine-motor skills, and others. It also is based on a view of the child as a soul that takes birth in this world in order to develop its innate capacities, in life after life, until it can freely and fully manifest the pure divine Bliss which is its origin. As such, the integral approach is much more one of awakening and bringing into perfect expression capacities which are seen as lying undeveloped or partially developed rather than one of imposing or transmitting new knowledge or skills. It also appreciates more fully than traditional approaches the differences in temperament, capacities, interests, and the natural speed and directions of development in individual learners, and aims to work in harmony with these natural variations. The book examines these fundamentals and explores their specific implications for classroom activities.

The author begins by contrasting the foundations of traditional education and Integral Education in a way that illuminates the revolutionary, paradigmatic shift that the latter represents, enabling the reader to identify and enter into the essential spirit of the new approach. Throughout

We see the author himself, learning and developing on the multiple levels of being from the physical to the spiritual while trying to foster a similar growth in others, teachers and students alike.

the book, the author continually keeps his eye on the basic principles of Integral Education as he shows in concrete and specific ways how they can guide and inspire learning activities and instructor-student

interactions. While introductory in nature, the book has a comprehensive feel to it because of this constant flow from basic principles to concrete methods in the classroom, its frequent contrasts between traditional and the Integral methods, and because of its treatment of the broad array of facets comprising Integral Education that deal with the many parts of the individual such as the physical, vital, emotional, logical, creative, motivational, psychic, and spiritual. It also examines the application of integral methods in a wide range of individual subjects. And it does not confine itself to examining even this rich and complex set of phenomena, but covers a variety of other important considerations such as the practical problems of integrating the new methods in an existing traditional structure, dealing with problems of discipline, developing methods of self-development for the teacher, and special considerations in the light of India's historical development and future possibilities. While the book illustrates how the spirit and approaches of Integral

Education can be expressed in the classroom in many concrete ways and methods, we realize that these are only selected examples and that the possibilities for the enrichment of the educational process through the creative application of integral principles are endless.

While there is a stress on the foundations of Integral Education and how they can be given form in the classroom, there is also a more personal and experience-based flavor to the book. We feel we are in the presence of someone who has thought deeply about the issues of Integral Education and who has seriously worked at trying to embody them in the classroom—and has learned and grown from this experience. To illustrate a principle or point, the author often uses an example from his own experience with one of his students, and sometimes from his own experience as a student with one of his teachers. He shares the wisdom he has gained and the experiences he has encountered interacting with various exceptional teachers and school principals in his visits to schools throughout the country. He also brings in analogies and vivid examples to help convey abstract ideas more tangibly. We see the author himself, learning and developing on the multiple levels of being from the physical to the spiritual while trying to foster a similar growth in others, teachers and students alike. We sense a wisdom that is based on a perceptive understanding and integration of many diverse strands of knowledge, experience, and growth in education and other fields.

Introduction to Integral Education: An Inspirational Guide is an important contribution to the growing body of literature on the subject, and will be appreciated by student and beginning teachers as well as by veterans. It would make an enriching adjunct for value-education teacher-training workshops. While primarily useful for classroom teachers of children, it should also be helpful to parents who would like to better understand their children and the possibilities of an integral approach to their development and education, and to others concerned with the subject of education. And for those who have a broader interest in the teachings and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, it illustrates an important application of their spiritual insights into human development relevant to the world at large and its future progress.

— Larry Seidlitz

Larry was formerly a research psychologist in the U.S.A.; he now works at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research in Pondicherry facilitating online courses on Sri Aurobindo's teachings.

Integral Education

A Foundation for the Future

— Partho; Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, in association with UBS Publishers' Distributors Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi; 306 pp., Hard Cover Rs 525

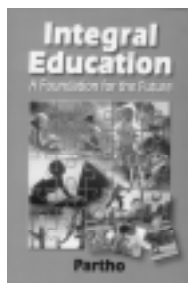
Today we stand at the threshold of a new era when all the standards and ideals of the past which have so far been the guiding principles of human existence seem no more to hold their ground, and man is groping for a new way of life that may rightly answer to his yet unformulated aspiration. Essentially, man seeks for permanent happiness in this transitory world; but he knows not how to achieve this aim for he is ignorant of the nature of this happiness. The utilitarian social order of today speaks to him incessantly of all the wonders that the power of Money can give him. So, undoubtedly, his sole preoccupation is "how to acquire this magical power". Therefore, from the earliest period of his life all his efforts are directed towards preparing himself and later his

The author has understood that the aim of education must move towards new standards, new domains that are yet to be discovered...to help man grow upwards in his evolutionary process and attain his highest ideal: the divinisation of life.

offspring to become forceful and tactful wielders of this extraordinary force. Thus education in our age has become totally utilitarian. But still man is not happy. Because money is not the answer to his perennial question: Where lies happiness? If economic well-being is not what he wants, what is he seeking for? What will give him that which he seeks? This is precisely the question that an "integral education" answers.

Partho, who is himself an educationist and also an educator, has hit the mark straight to the point. He has understood that the aim of an education that will prepare the child to find the answer to the question mentioned above must exceed the present norms by which academicians are in the habit of founding their institutions and move towards new standards, new domains, that are yet to be discovered, in order to help man grow upwards in his evolutionary process and attain his highest ideal: the divinisation of life. This system of new education the

author calls “consciousness education”. But at the same time he warns us that this education is for the future. For man is not yet ready for such a way of life. He says, “The education for the future will have to be a consciousness education in all its aspects and parts of being.” In this process of the divinisation of life, the self-awareness that leads to the discovery of one’s psychic being – the progressive divine element in man – and the psychicisation of all the parts of one’s being – the physical, the vital, and the mental – is the first step.



This is not a role unique to teachers. For, as the author points out, “learning is a lifelong, dynamic dialogue with life and the cosmos...it is omnidimensional, omnidirectional and integral.” It follows that all those with whom the child lives and interacts are responsible to give to the child the best possibilities for

acquiring this self-awareness. Again I quote Partho, “The teachers, the parents and the entire school and environment must work to provide to children the noble and the beautiful”; because nobility and beauty are the essential qualities of the psychic.

To bring about this “radical evolutionary shift in the human consciousness” is not easy. And Partho is very much aware of this fact. In the postscript he says, “But all this is not likely to happen at once or even in a few generations.” We must bear this in mind always. I point this out here, because at certain places in the book one could easily be led to feel that integral education could be undertaken now, and if one were sincere enough one could be successful in this endeavour without much effort. All that he advises us to do, in his genuine effort to communicate to the reader what he has earnestly understood – and rightly understood – to be the answer to the dire need of the actual pedagogic organisation, appears very easy and simple. For instance, the example he gives of the child who is capable of concentrating on her headache, who can “catch hold of the pain in the head like catching an insect, pull it out and throw it far away...and in no time cure her headache” is difficult to accept. For such an accomplishment can only be obtained through prolonged training in yoga that aims at, if not a complete, then at least a partial mastery of several parts of our being, physical as well as vital. In this case, one would say the child is either an exceptionally developed soul gifted with a highly developed occult power or may be deluding herself with things that she imagines.

The “integral education” he speaks of is certainly a “psychic education” which cannot happen as easily as one is likely to understand from reading the book. And of this Partho is very much aware also; for he admits that “An effective psychic education demands time, effort, patience, perseverance and sincerity.” But what he forgets is that it is not only a question of one lifetime but of many lifetimes. I strongly feel that we must be on our guard not to speak in such simple terms of truths that we ourselves have perhaps not yet attained, such as becoming aware of the psychic in us and making it the master of all the parts of our being.

To my mind, Partho could have been briefer, avoiding a tendency to repeat what he has already spoken of earlier. Although he may be consciously doing this for the sake of emphasis, still I would say that this sort of repetition makes the length of the book somewhat forbidding. His book might appeal to a wider circle of readers if it were condensed to a more succinct format. After all, we should not forget that its message is of paramount importance and should reach as many interested teachers, educators and parents as possible.

— Bithi Roy

Bithi-di is a former student of S.A.I.C.E. and teaches French and English at the Centre.

A New Education with a Soul

— Marguerite Smithwhite; Published by International Children’s Peace Council Trust, Coimbatore; 260 pp., Rs 495

The title page has two subtitles that explain the essence of this book. The first one is *Let there be Peace on earth and let it begin with me*. The second subtitle reads *Education for a higher consciousness based on the works of Sri Aurobindo*. Marguerite Smithwhite is the founder of the International Children’s Peace Council and has been an educator all her adult life. She developed the educational material in this book to help teachers, parents, and children to realize the inner peace that is present in each one of us. She also wants to make children aware of the existence of worlds higher than the mental so as to awaken their full potential, giving them the possibility to make that potential available for the evolution of humanity.

This book is filled with beautiful educational material meant to inspire people who are with children in an educational setting—a classroom, a club meeting, get-togethers of humanistic organizations, etc. It will also be a rich resource for parents looking for ideas on how to spend quality time with their children.

The book has eighteen units. Units 1 to 4 are about the wonder of matter. The first unit is called “Consciousness in stone: The light inside you”. The first sentence of this unit starts with a key issue of an education based on consciousness: “The first thing that a child needs to understand is that our eyes cannot see everything.” How does Smithwhite, in this chapter, introduce young children to these unseen worlds? Through microphotographs of pieces of granite the child gets to know the beautiful world and energy inside the so-called “dead matter” of granite. Similarly, through illustrations of Kirlian photography we are shown how our bodies always emit light, and how this emission of light changes with our emotions. The text



information about the wonderful forces of the spiritual world, their effect upon our lives, and the relationship between Man and God. Here the educational material is derived from the vision of Sri Aurobindo. This unit ends with many quotes from *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The reading is too difficult for children but it may inspire the

adult reader. As if to make up for this sudden change of level, Unit 11 is called “A message specially for children and youth”. The aim of Unit 12 is to “‘put in a nutshell’ the process of man’s urge towards true self-knowledge and self-perfection”. This chapter is devoted to the psychic being. It has a few interesting diagrams and suggestions for establishing a first contact with the psychic being. Unit 13 is called “The magic of flowers and plants” and it discusses how the consciousness radiated by flowers helps us to find the deeper layers of consciousness in ourselves. Units 14 and 15 are made up exclusively of texts from *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The topics are, respectively, “Philosophy of Rebirth” and “The Yoga and its Objects”. Unit 16 titled “Overmind” and Unit 17 titled “A Study of Consciousness and of Evolution” contain quotes from Sri Aurobindo interspersed with elucidations from Smithwhite. The last unit called “The magic of the earth: The consciousness of water” consists of educational material from various sources. In this unit spiritual as well as ecological aspects are described.

It is quite amazing how well Marguerite Smithwhite is able to explain difficult concepts in a simple way. At the same time she manages to kindle the flame of aspiration in educators and, through certain short phrases strategically placed within the text, shows how to introduce this material to children in an inspiring manner. The illustrations are beautiful and help to bring home the aim of this book: uplifting consciousness.

— Neeltje Huppes

Neeltje teaches History at S.A.I.C.E. She is the author of Psychic Education: A Workbook and has lectured extensively on integral education and integral psychology.

Through certain short phrases strategically placed within the text, the author shows how to introduce this material to children in an inspiring manner.

accentuates how the intensity of light increases when we are calm and peaceful. This chapter ends with a few quotations from Sri Aurobindo’s *The Life Divine*, emphasizing that Life is everywhere, all-pervading, whether secretly involved or openly manifest.

Units 5 and 6 study the human aura and the soul and their relation with the subtle physical world around our earth, the vital and the mental worlds, and the worlds beyond our human thinking, right up to the supramental world. This unit ends with a specially composed song about the unity of soul and body. Unit 7 is about positive inner values and human development and also deals with negative emotions and habits, like anger, smoking, and drugs. Unit 8 is titled “Our many lives and their significances”. The information in this chapter is derived from Tibetan mysticism. Units 9 and 10 give more