

Sabda Newsletter

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June 2002

UNKNOWN ASPECTS OF A SAGA OF ADVENTURE

Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga*, Volumes 1 & 2

Once Sri Aurobindo told an admirer who proposed to write his biography that there was nothing on the surface of his life for one to write about him. This despite the fact that volumes could be written even on the purely external events marking his tumultuous life till the first decade of the twentieth century — his brilliant academic career in England, his return to India and secretly but steadily working for a radical orientation of the freedom movement resulting in the historic split of the Indian National Congress at its Surat session (1907), his stewardship of the National College at Calcutta, his editing the *Bande Mataram*, the herald of freedom, his activities that made the historian of the Congress, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya write, "Aurobindo's genius shot up like a meteor. He was on the high sky only for a time. He flooded the land from Cape to Mount with effulgence of his light", his incarceration in connection with the Alipore Conspiracy Case and the famous statement of Deshbandhu C. R. Das describing him as the Poet of patriotism, Prophet of Nationalism and the Lover of Humanity, his disappearance from British India despite continuous surveillance on him, the consequent debate on the issue in the House of Commons, so on and so forth.

Till recently we understood — and we were not mistaken in doing so — that for Sri Aurobindo his real life was the inner life, his Yoga and his struggles and achievements in the occult world. From his works like *The Life Divine* or *Savitri* a sensitive reader could feel and be overwhelmed with the feeling of the unfathomable askesis he had gone through. Some glimpses of his experience could be had from his numerous letters to his disciples as well. But we realize how insufficient our idea of his inner life was when we read the two volumes under notice, *Record of Yoga*. If he had not been inspired to publish in the *Arya*, in which so many of his major works were serialized, the incredible experiments he had been making in the laboratory of his consciousness of which we now come to know from these hitherto unpublished records, the tremendous strides in the occult realm he had taken which, to the best of our

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knowledge, had never been taken in the history of mystic adventures, the reasons, as this author feels, could be two. First, his innate humility and second, probably he sensed that it was futile to describe matters that were simply beyond anybody's comprehension.

Nevertheless, he had scribbled on papers, obviously for his own personal need to refer to them at some point of time, his Yogic experiences between 1909 (months before coming to Pondicherry) and 1927. Published at last, these writings reveal to us an unknown dimension of Sri Aurobindo's Yogic life. As the Publisher's Note informs us, "Sri Aurobindo wrote the diary and the related materials by hand in various notebooks and on loose sheets of paper. He used a special terminology which included words from Sanskrit and other languages, as well as abbreviations, symbols and markings, some of which are difficult to represent in a printed book."

A glossary under preparation explaining the special terminology used by Sri Aurobindo should be of much help, yet much of the text will defy our understanding. Nevertheless, the mind-boggling images he puts down cannot but inspire in us a sense of awe; it would reveal how even way back in 1909, amid his political routine activities of the time, he could be in a state of consciousness that was as distant from his external actions as the nub of the earth was from its surface. Here are a few words from the diary of 18 June 1909 recording what he was experiencing on a steamer to Barisal: "Tratak of sun. Blue sukshma image of sun elliptical in shape. Pattern of bloodred curves of yellowish background. Violet sword. Bloodred sword. Voices rise from chitta to brain..." (Mark the free use of Sanskrit terms — probably partly because the English equivalents were difficult to find and partly because the records were for himself.)

Even though the significance of most of his experiments and experiences would elude us, we can form an idea as to how a Mahayogi can live at different planes simultaneously. But the diary is surely not without factual information. It tells us what Sri Aurobindo himself considered to be the starting point of his Yoga. He writes on the 1st of July 1912, "August, 1912, will complete the seventh year of my practice of Yoga."

Those who wonder about his uncanny mastery of the English prose (poetry apart), may find some clue to the mystery in this entry of 1st February 1912: "The sahitya begins to extend itself to all types of prose, with freedom of flow and perfection of type but not yet rapidity of flow or perfection in every detail. The silence of the divine element in vani & script was broken & the siddhi moves swiftly. Saundarya bodha has been made finally the natural view of the mind & indriyas, only faint relics of the asundaram remaining in the physical consciousness."

Besides the numerous hints of his voyage across the seas of consciousness, there are two items which are recorded at some length. One is *Sapta chatusthaya* or seven retrads of Sadhana — a programme he "was given". The other one is *Yogic Sadhan*, a work that resulted from the automatic writing Sri Aurobindo used to practise during his early phase of Yoga, originally published as a small book in 1911, under the pseudonym Uttara Yogi.

Going through even some of these pages — 1515 in all in two volumes — one remembers the experience of the Vedic Rishis when they speak of their fight with the Dasyus, and of numerous Siddhis and stages of Tapasya one reads about in the Yogic lores. Several of the enigmatic phrases of the mystic vocabulary get explained spontaneously and the horizon of our knowledge of the world of consciousness goes on expanding. One can appreciate better the words of the Mother inscribed on the Samadhi of the Master; indeed, one can have some idea of how much he had worked on his body, how much he had struggled, suffered, hoped, endured, willed, attempted, prepared and achieved for us.

— Manoj Das

Record of Yoga

Part I — 777 pp, soft cover Rs.250.00; hard cover Rs.300.00

Part II — 728 pp, soft cover Rs.230.00; hard cover Rs.280.00

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Works of Sri Aurobindo**Elements of Yoga**

— Sri Aurobindo

80 pp., Rs.30.00

ISBN 81-7058-660-7

This book is a compilation of Sri Aurobindo's replies to elementary questions about Yoga raised by a disciple during the years 1933 to 1936. It was first published in 1953 and reissued in 1956. In 1991 the text was reproduced as the first part of *Commentaries on "Elements of Yoga"* by the Mother. *Elements of Yoga* is now being issued independently again in a second edition.

Works of the Mother**The Mother**

— by Sri Aurobindo, with the Mother's Comments

213 pp., Rs.60.00

ISBN 81-7058-671-2

This book contains *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's spoken comments on passages from that book, made during her evening classes at the Ashram Playground. The first set of comments were given in 1951 and the second in 1954. From the publisher's note, "These comments do not form a systematic commentary on Sri Aurobindo's work, but are rather explanations of certain passages, phrases and words. The Mother usually began the class by reading out a passage from the book, then commented on it or invited questions from those gathered around her."

**Stories Told by the Mother —****Part 1**

131 pp., Rs.60.00

ISBN 81-7058-645-3

Stories Told by the Mother —**Part 2**

123 pp., Rs.60.00

ISBN 81-7058-646-1

Almost all of these stories have been culled from the Mother's "Questions and Answers", the English translation of her "Entretiens" in French. The anecdotes were published in French in 1994 under the title "La



Mère Raconte", and are now brought out in English, in two volumes. The compiler's note states "These stories are not just stories; they are revelations of living truths conveyed to us by the Mother." "If they bring the reader closer to the Mother, their purpose will be well served."

Compiled from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Reprint from All India Magazine:

Difference between Religion and Yoga

64 pp., Rs.15.00, ISBN 81-7060-177-0

Our Many SelvesPractical Yogic Psychology
Selections from the Works of Sri

Aurobindo and the Mother

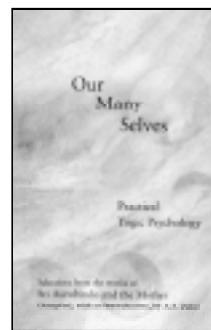
— Compiled, with an

Introduction, by A.S.Dalal

249 pp., Rs.75.00

ISBN 81-7058-664-X

From the blurb, "This book is meant to bear out Sri Aurobindo's oft-quoted statement, "Yoga is nothing but practical psychology". Generally, yoga is viewed as made up of certain set practices and certain rules and norms pertaining to one's outer life. In contrast to this view, *Our Many Selves* ... presents Yoga as consisting essentially in inner psychological work aimed at the transformation of consciousness.' This book presents in detail the various planes and parts of the being and how they are to be harmonised and unified around the soul.

**Other Authors****Beyond Good and Evil***(A Comparative Study of the Moral Philosophies of Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo)*

— Ranajit Sarkar

187 pp., Rs.80.00

The author states that "Both Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo are prophets of the future superman but the visions of these two great thinkers differ vastly." Also the works of both are of a very varied nature. In this comparative study the author has used those materials from their writings which seemed to him "to embody the principal trends of their thoughts on the subject". He has hardly used any secondary material and has not

discussed in detail the views of others on the subject. Instead in his words the intention has been "to read by myself ... the two poet-philosophers and bring out their resemblances and their differences".

The author does not approve of the tendency among modern philosophers, initiated by Bertrand Russell, to keep apart on one hand the theory of the nature of existence and on the other "an ethical doctrine as to the best way of living". He feels that this has alienated philosophy from life: "When knowledge is applied to life it becomes relevant to living rather than remain a sterile intellectual occupation divorced from life."

Champaklal Speaks

— Edited by M.P.Pandit,
Revised by Roshan
400 pp., Rs.175.00
ISBN 81-7058-668-2

From the preface:
"Champaklal Speaks inspires us to ponder over his extraordinary life and fills our hearts with reverence for his Lord and the Mother. We can see that his observations are the expressions of profound truths revealed to him through experiences in his daily life..."



These reminiscences recreate the atmosphere of the days when Sri Aurobindo and the Mother worked together on this earth to transfigure the consciousness of their disciples and all mankind, as well as to reveal a new future for the entire earth."

Champaklal first came to Pondicherry in 1921, and for good in 1923. He served both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as their personal attendant. He passed away in 1992. This book contains reminiscences, correspondence, notes and other material gathered during Champaklal's long period of intimate contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

This revised and enlarged edition includes many new episodes in the main section "Recollections and Diary Notes", as well as some material published in *Champaklal's Treasures*.

Consciousness and its Transformation

Papers presented at the Second International Conference on Integral Psychology.
— Edited by Matthijs Cornelissen
408 pp., Rs.150.00
ISBN 81-7058-657-7

The objective of this conference was to build bridges between Sri Aurobindo's work and psychology as an

academic science. The 24 papers collected here have been grouped in 6 sections. The first section, *integral psychology*, has an article on the reversal of consciousness in yoga (by Dr. A.S. Dalal), an overview of integral psychology, and an article on the psychocosmology of *Savitri*. The second section contains four different approaches to *integral psychotherapy*. The third deals with *integral yoga and the Indian tradition*, the fourth with *modern psychology and spirituality*, the fifth with *epistemology and methodology* (incl. an article by Max Velmans). The last section contains the transcripts of two experiential workshops.



A Greater Psychology

An Introduction to the Psychological Thought of Sri Aurobindo
— Edited by A.S.Dalal
426 pp., Rs.225.00
ISBN 81-7058-659-3

An overview of Sri Aurobindo's psychological thought. The first part, comprising three-fourths of the book, is an anthology of Sri Aurobindo's writings on topics such as "The nature of consciousness", "The make-up of the human being", "Self and ego", "The subliminal and the subconscious", "The psychic being", "Sleep and dreams", "The psychology of faith", "Cosmic consciousness", "The psychology of collective development" and "Growth towards a greater psychology". The second part consists of essays by the editor "that further illuminate various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision". A glossary of terms is included.

THIS EDITION IS FOR SALE ONLY IN INDIA.
OVERSEAS BUYERS MAY PURCHASE THE INTERNATIONAL EDITION FROM PENGUIN PUTNAM, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

See review on page 8

Great Sir and the Heaven Lady

— Maggi Lidchi-Grassi
241 pp., Rs.350.00 (hard cover)

This is the true story of how a young American soldier, John Kelly, was spiritually and practically guided through World War II by Sri Aurobindo "whom he had never heard or seen". John had visions during the War of two beings of Light whom he called 'Great Sir' and 'Heaven Lady', and whom he identified much later as

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. To the voices of these Guiding Lights "He listens and obeys and is many times saved from death." After the War John found a copy of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* in a library, and later worked at a Sri Aurobindo Centre in New York. He visited Pondicherry in 1966 and met the Mother. From the introduction, "In this age of despair and defect (this book) reveals the Light behind the darkness and the promise of what awaits us when we have, like John, passed through."

Health Exercises for Women and Girls

— Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya
17 pp., Rs.20.00

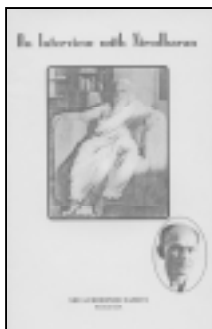
In the new age of freedom, equality and progress it is being recognised "in an increasing measure that women too must equip themselves for their changing role; that they should be physically fit, strong and healthy through regular physical exercise, proper and adequate food, sufficient rest and sleep, hygienic habits, a regular life and a happy, cheerful disposition." This booklet presents two sets of exercises especially planned for women, supported by numerous photographs showing the various positions. Some answers from the Mother on the subject of women's health are also included.



An Interview with Nirodbaran

— Compiled and edited by
Supriyo Bhattacharya
23 pp., Rs.10.00

This interview was conducted by Prof. Supriyo Bhattacharya in 1987. Nirodbaran spoke mostly in Bengali, occasionally in English. The interview has been translated into English by Prof. Bhattacharya. In this booklet we are acquainted with "Nirodbaran's intimacy with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in a fascinating manner." Nirodbaran relates "the delicious story of his flowering into a poet in the hands of the Master; the ever-fascinating tale of his role as a scribe; iridescent memories of his intimate link with the Master in connection with the composition of the poetic marvel, *Savitri*" and "his beautiful experiences providing beyond any shade of doubt the living presence of the spirit of Sri Aurobindo; some pregnant hints on the present difficulties and the

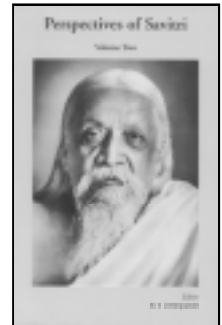


prerequisites of Sadhana, giving us an inside-view of Yoga...".

Perspectives of Savitri — Volume 2

Essays by various authors
— Edited by R.Y. Deshpande
605 pp., Rs.300.00

The 2nd part of an anthology of articles on *Savitri*. The aspects covered include the spiritual, occult, mystical, religious, philosophical, literary and aesthetic. The Mother says that *Savitri* is a book of revelation. This means, in the words of the editor, "that our approach should be supple-intuitive rather than mental-discursive" and so we should guard against "excessive rational thinking". "Thought has to be there, but thought that has its birth in the silence of the mind. The purpose of this anthology in two volumes is hence specifically to provide a certain mental support leaping into intuition while approaching *Savitri*". The editor goes on to say that these volumes could "form a foundation to launch on specialised themes in future" and that "we are perhaps moving from general to specific and distinguishing aspects in our approach towards the Masterwork that *Savitri* is".



Selected Essays and Talks of Nirodbaran

— Compiled and Edited by
Supriyo Bhattacharya
271 pp., Rs.100.00

A collection of essays and talks published over a long period of time in the journal "Mother India". Many of these relate to Nirodbaran's recollections of his fellow-sadhakas during the early days of the Ashram, providing "an intimate picture of the unpretentious dedication of their life to the Master and the Mother". There are also other articles on miscellaneous subjects.

The editor remarks that upon going through these writings when they appeared in "Mother India", he was "thrilled by the sheer beauty of his prose, the coruscating wit, the rich allusions, the iridescent poetry and the hidden depth of yearning; vision of a world within world, a sweetness that beckoned; and above all, his overabounding vitality, his sure eye for a significant detail, common sense and intuitive flashes;



and a fine distillation in prose of the sweetness and light, of the eternal wonder that is Sri Aurobindo and the Mother."

The Spirit of Auroville

— Huta

287 pp., Rs.280.00

The International Township called Auroville (The City of Dawn) was founded on 28 February 1968. The Mother said regarding this township "Auroville wants to be the first realisation of human unity based on the teaching of Sri Aurobindo. Where men of all countries would be at home."

This book contains Huta's conversations with the Mother on Auroville and Matrimandir, seen and corrected by the Mother. There are also letters and messages of the Mother on Auroville, as well as correspondence Huta had with other seekers on the subject.

The first edition of this book was brought out in 1974 under the title "Matrimandir — The Mother's Truth and Love".

Sri Aurobindo Mandir (Annual) 2001

139 pp., Rs.50.00

Sing My Soul

— Selected Poems and Other Writings

— Georgette Coty

175 pp., Rs.150.00

Poems, in the words of K.D.Sethna "well-conceived and well-created", comprise the bulk of this book. Other miscellaneous writings are also included.

The Virgin Birth and the Earliest Christian Tradition

— K.D.Sethna

92 pp., Rs.85.00

In this study on the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, the author stresses that the focus must be not on the "manner in which orthodox Christians understand Mary's child to have emerged from her womb" but on "the nature of the conception by which that child is said to have been born virginally". He states, "the more correct term, therefore, would be



the Virginal Conception of Jesus." The study is not from a rationalist angle but "to find if the basic Christian tradition itself affords ground for belief in such a beginning of life". The subject is considered through the eyes of the scholar and ordained minister of the Roman Catholic Church, Father Raymond E. Brown, because he has given "an admirably many-sided treatment to the problem".

Other languages

French

Paroles de la Mère - 3 The Mother 240.00
ISBN 81-7058-667-4

German

Die Mutter — Eine Kurzbiographie 75.00
ISBN 81-7060-016-2 Wilfried

Italian

La Luce Che Trafisse l'Oscuro Abisso 400.00
ISBN 88-7183-120-9 Maggi Lidchi-Grassi

Spanish

Las Fuerzas Ocultas de la Vida
ISBN 81-7058-655-0 Compilation 90.00
El Espiritu Y El Alma Compilation 120.00

Turkish

Sohbetler The Mother 100.00

Bengali

Agnijuger Agnikatha 1906-1908
(Jugantar theke sankalita) Compilation hc 400.00
Chintakana O Sutramala Sri Aurobindo 55.00
ISBN 81-7058-658-5
Ganer Tori Songs by Nirodbaran
ISBN 81-86413-21-9 50.00

Gujarati

Sri Aravindana Sanskrit Tatha Sanskrit
Vishayak Lakhano Dr.Rmanalal Pathak 56.00

Hindi

Bhavi Samaj Sukhvira Arya 30.00
Veda-Chakshu Sukhvira Arya 15.00
Vichar Sangraha Sukhvira Arya 30.00
Shiksha Par Compilation 25.00
Divya Jeevan Ke Path-Sanket 100.00
Chhote Narayan Sharma
Savitri — Ek Sankshipt Parichaya 22.00
Mangesh Nadkarni

Sundar Jeevan ISBN 81-7509-073-1	Madhav Pandit	60.00	Tamil Annai — Oru Kannottam (set of 2 books) Compilation	15.00
Kannada			Annaiyin Kuzhandaiyaga Compilation	15.00
Namma Tayi Nimma Tayi	Trembakrao Ghantoji	15.00	Annaiyin Arulmalargal Compilation	30.00
Srimata (Vyakhana Mattu Tatparya Sahita)	KO.Chennabasappa	40.00	Annaiyin Parvaiyil Japan (Bagam 1) Compilation	15.00
Oriya			Annaiyin Parvaiyil Japan (Bagam 2) Compilation	15.00
Aloka Rashmi	The Mother	50.00	Auroville — Oru Kanavu Vadivam Perugiradhu	50.00
Sri Aurobindo Asharamara	Lakshya O Adarsha	30.00	Alain G. Madhamum Yogamum	15.00
Yoga Pradeep	Sri Aurobindo	20.00	Rigvedam — Agni Sookthangal ISBN 81-900979-4-6	40.00
Sanskrit			Sollin Shakthi Compilation	15.00
Bhavasumam	Asha Agrawal	70.00	Thiruppu Munai Compilation	15.00
ISBN 81-7058-672-0			Telugu	
Surabharati (Part 3)	Ed. Narendra	22.00	Bharatiya Sanskruti Punadulu (Part 1)	25.00
ISBN 81-7058-662-3			Sri Aurobindo	
			Bhuvipai Atimanasa Avirbhavamu	40.00
			Sri Aurobindo	

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ORDERING INFORMATION FOR BOOKS

All payments should be sent through bank draft or money order to : SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002.

Readers in India may add on 5% of the total value of books as well as Rs.30.00 towards postage and packing. For example, for books worth Rs.240.00, the amount to be remitted is Rs.240.00 + Rs.12.00 + Rs.30.00 = Rs.282.00.

Books are sent by registered post immediately on receipt of the order.

PARTICIPATION IN BOOK FAIRS

In January-February 2002 SABDA participated in the World Book Fair at New Delhi. The response from visitors at the Fair was encouraging and confirmed that awareness of and interest in the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother is increasing. A large number of trade orders were also booked.

SABDA also participated in various other book fairs in different parts of the country, either directly or through affiliated centres. The venues of participation include Calcutta, Allahabad, Ranchi, Nainital, Coimbatore, Salem, Neyveli, Mavelikara (Kerala), among others.

*There are unique moments in life that pass like a dream. One must catch them on the wing,
for they never return.*

— The Mother

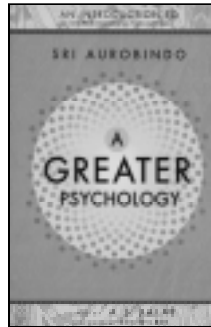
REVIEWS

TOWARDS A GREATER PSYCHOLOGY

A Greater Psychology

(An Introduction to the Psychological Thought of Sri Aurobindo)

(Edited by A.S.Dalal; Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education; Price: Rs.225.00, pp.426)



“Yoga is nothing but practical psychology”, said Sri Aurobindo who captured the profundity of India’s extraordinary spiritual heritage. Talking about Sri Aurobindo’s genius, Ken Wilber (“the most comprehensive philosophical thinker of our times”) in his Foreword to this book under review says: “He was the first great philosopher-sage to deeply grasp the nature and meaning of the modern idea of evolution...nobody combined both philosophical brilliance and a profoundly enlightened consciousness the way Aurobindo did. His enlightenment informed his philosophy; his philosophy gave substance to his enlightenment; and that combination has been rarely equalled, in this or any time.”

Having said what is special about Sri Aurobindo, Wilber proceeds to pass on the central message of Sri Aurobindo’s writings: “...the modern world has irreversibly discovered the fact that the world evolves — Matter evolves, life evolves, mind evolves. And Spirit evolves — or, we might say, Spirit is the entire evolutionary process of its own unfolding, from matter to life to mind to the higher and superconscious realms of Spirit’s own being. This evolutionary unfolding of Spirit — as it plays out in psychology, anthropology, religion, politics, the arts, and the spiritual practice itself — is the central message of Aurobindo’s voluminous writings.”

Sri Aurobindo believed that the human being is one with and inseparable from the Being of the Universe. Therefore in his thought, psychology is part of and intermingled with cosmology. The nature and development of the human being find an explanation in the light of the nature and evolution of the universe. No wonder that this idea is termed as ‘greater psychology’ — “one which includes body, mind, soul, and spirit, in both ascending/evolutionary and descending/involuntary currents.”

Dr.A.S.Dalal, a one time clinical psychologist in the

West and now an authority on Sri Aurobindo’s works in this very valuable volume has gathered together all the salient aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought.

The aim of this book is threefold: 1. To present Sri Aurobindo as a mystic, for whom the ultimate Reality — popularly called God or Spirit — is not an abstract or philosophical concept but a concrete experience, 2. To present Sri Aurobindo as an enlightened one whose view of the human being is based not on speculative theory nor on statistical inference but on self-realization, and 3. To present Sri Aurobindo as a seer whose delineation of the future of the human being and of human society is not an ideative dream of what ought to be, but a spiritual pre-vision of what is already in the process of becoming.

With the greater intention of highlighting Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought, Dr.A.S.Dalal has tried to bring out its experiential basis and its integral nature.

The first of this two-part book occupies 300 pages and contains Sri Aurobindo’s writings pertaining to a greater psychology. The various minds, the different modes of Nature, Self, ego and individuality, gradations of the Higher Consciousness, states of Consciousness, sleep and dream, evolution of mankind are some of the many topics that Sri Aurobindo’s writings deal with.

Readers quite conversant with the writings of Sri Aurobindo too will stand to gain from this anthology, for, thanks to Dr.A.S.Dalal, it follows a sequential development of thought.

Part Two of this book is a collection of essays by Dr.A.S.Dalal, written as independent articles on various occasions. Since these essays, seven in all, running to a hundred pages are studies on Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought, they are meant to serve chiefly as an aid in understanding Sri Aurobindo’s own writings contained in the anthology, and aim at bringing out explicitly the system underlying his thought. They are to a great extent in Sri Aurobindo’s own words, for which the author has a valid reason to give. In his ‘Preface’ he writes: “Sri Aurobindo’s writings, based on spiritual experience rather than on intellectual theory can convey not only their thought content but also some-

thing of the higher state of consciousness underlying the thought when read in a meditatively receptive way. This is but one reason why I have often chosen to quote Sri Aurobindo instead of paraphrasing him.” Dalal’s comments are meant to provide elucidations and to bring out the integral nature of the thought presented. Their contents pertain to different levels of understanding for both the student and the scholar were kept in view while writing these essays.

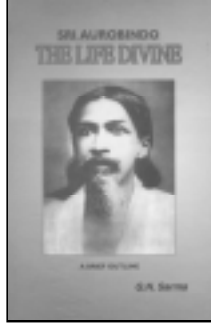
The glossary appended to this book includes Sanskrit terms, certain proper names and special terms found in Sri Aurobindo’s writings. And they are all explained in Sri Aurobindo’s own words. The Index serves as an easy reference.

“This book is timely”, avers Arabinda Basu in his introduction, “particularly because during recent years there has been an explosion of interest in the study of consciousness as evidenced by numerous journal articles and books on the subject by writers from several different disciplines.” This invaluable and handy companion that deals only with the theoretical aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought, is certainly the best introduction to the practical psychology underlying his yoga, and a welcome addition to Aurobindoniana.

— P. Raja

Sri Aurobindo — The Life Divine: A Brief Outline

(By G.N. Sarma; Published by Ultra Publications, Bangalore; Price: Rs.200.00 (hard cover), pp.163)



The Life Divine is undoubtedly one of the most powerful expressions of consciousness in any language (possibly exceeded only by *Savitri*). It has been considered Sri Aurobindo’s *magnum opus* and there are many for whom it is the one work by Sri Aurobindo they have heard of. Perhaps for this reason it tends often to be the book singled out by many unfamiliar with the rest of Sri Aurobindo’s oeuvre and promptly dropped after a first and rarely a reluctant second attempt at reading. Apart from the forbidding size of the book (at 1000+ pages, Sri Aurobindo himself jocularly called it a “fat elephant”) its prose demands some openness to philosophical thinking. Even this is not sufficient, since there are many who have happily plodded through the desert landscapes of Kant or Hegel, but find *The Life Divine* inaccessible. The overmental density of expression in the book stretches language to its extreme as a vehicular medium of spiritual realities. The speculative logic of the conventional philosopher needs the enhancement of a considerably subtler or inner mentality and a stable truth-intuition to follow and bear witness to the unfolding of the structured revelatory sequences of Sri Aurobindo’s writing here. If *The Future Poetry* is Sri Aurobindo’s theoretical pointer to the poetics of the mantra and *Savitri* is

his practical demonstration of the same, *The Life Divine* may justifiably be called Future Philosophy. The faculties demanded in the reader for an adequate appreciation of the same are likewise, future faculties, not developed sufficiently in the present mass of humanity. In this regard, the Mother’s advice on how to read Sri Aurobindo is very instructive: “Read a little at a time, keeping the mind as tranquil as one can, without making an effort to understand, but keeping the head as silent as possible, and letting the force contained in what one reads enter deep within. This force will do its work of light and create if needed the necessary brain cells for the understanding. Subsequent readings will become more clear and familiar and understood. Read regularly, each day at a fixed time if possible, this facilitates the brain receptivity.”

This much admitted, the question remains if any mundane device(s) could be of aid to those who have an interest in understanding the basics of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy, or what may more correctly, following the Vedantic lineage, be called his darshana. The reduction of *The Life Divine* to its basic philosophical ideas has been attempted, and two short treatises which have helped many in the past, are S.K. Maitra’s *The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo* and Joan Price’s *An Introduction to Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy*. However, in spite of these and similar expositions, *The Life Divine* has remained opaque to many, due, as discussed above, to its futuristic use of language and principle of development. G.N. Sarma’s attempt at providing a chapter by chapter summary of the philosophical logic of *The Life Divine*, is, in this regard, a laudatory, if ambitious undertaking.

A summary of some original work, is a representation in the form of miniaturization. It involves a process of creative selection, of inclusions, exclusions and interpretations. In pictorial art, one may think of four types of miniature representation. In the first instance, there may be a photographic reduction, whose perfection lies in a technology so exact that the smallest details are retained in the scaled down form and may be recovered through the reverse technological process of enlargement. In the second case, there may be an impressionistic reduction, where emphatic highlights are rendered with precision while remaining forms and areas are retained only as a graded background of suggestions. A third method would be an expressionistic one, where interpretative choices might exaggerate, distort or color aspects of the original and include or exclude features under the stress of personal affect. Finally, a minimalist miniaturization would take the form of a severe reduction of details down to a simplicity of essential features, relations and proportions. Sarma's summary is quintessentially of the fourth kind. He manages to represent the 1070 pages of *The Life Divine* in a slim 163 pages, each of its 56 dense chapters pared down to an average two pages. A strong, firm and clear line of development is traced in each chapter, surprisingly capturing the philosophical backbone of Sri Aurobindo's text. Of course, the overmental power of a simultaneous infinite spaciousness and a packed density of content, the presence of the whole in each sentence which is the wonderful and amazing hallmark of *The Life Divine*, making it not merely the explication of Sri Aurobindo's darshana but the darshana of Sri Aurobindo, is not to be expected here. Nevertheless, Sarma's chapters are not the narrow, hard and dry staple of conventional philosophy; they are eminently readable, with the presence of a clear and compact quality of light.

In terms of the accuracy of content, the work is largely impeccable, though not without its questionable deviations. To give an example, in Sri Aurobindo's text, the chapter on the Triple Status of Supermind (LD, Ch. XVI) links to the next chapter on The Divine Soul by positing the third poise of the Supermind to be its projected individuation, a necessity if the relational play of the One as the Many is to be achieved. This third poise is therefore central to the premise of a Divine Life - it is the supramental poise of the Divine Soul, which Sri Aurobindo distinguishes from the ignorant human condition resulting from the lapse into Avidya, "which takes the Many for the real fact of existence and views the One only as a cosmic sum of the Many." Instead, "... the individual Divine would still

be conscious of itself as a result of the One and of its power of conscious self-creation, that is to say, of its multiple self-centration conceived so as to govern and enjoy manifoldly its manifold existence in the extension of Time and Space..." (LD, 148). But in Sarma's summary, this crucial distinction is completely overlooked: "... in the third poise the One is along with the many, he as well as all others playing their respective parts exclusively, separately and egoistically. This is the stage of Avidya." (Sarma, 32) Again, the early chapter "The Methods of Vedantic Knowledge" (LD, Ch. VIII) is a very important strategic chapter in Sri Aurobindo's text. In talking of Vedantic knowledge, a crucial subtext which emerges is the distinction between the speculative metaphysics governed by rationality which passes for Philosophy in the West, and the power of a knowledge by identity working as Intuition, which is accepted as a primary method in Vedantic philosophy. He thus exposes the method of his own approach in *The Life Divine*, drawing its kinship to the Vedantic approach. He also discusses the inevitable historical slippage from Intuition to Reason and the Indian philosophers' erection of the dual standards of the Sruti and the Reason to arrive at their metaphysical structures in a later more rationalistic phase of Indian Philosophy. In Prof. Sarma's summary of this chapter, this appears to be the desideratum followed by *The Life Divine* and required by us in our study of the same: "The revelations of intuition and the authority of Sruti are therefore accepted as beyond question." (Sarma, 16) However, this is not the reality for Sri Aurobindo's text; it is only the statement of a historical reality. Sri Aurobindo's own method in *The Life Divine*, allowing a knowledge by identity to express itself directly, is only hinted at in this chapter as a possibility requiring a special yogic cultivation reserved for the future: "...Intuition is unable to give us the truth in that ordered and articulated form which our nature demands. Before it could effect any such completeness of direct knowledge in us, it would have to organise itself in our surface being and take possession there of the leading part." (LD, 68)

Occasional inaccuracies of this nature give to Sarma's summary a somewhat spotty appearance. Still, if one does not treat the summary as a substitute for *The Life Divine* and uses it instead as a precursory companion text to aid in a focus on the central argument of a chapter, it may be found to serve a very helpful function.

— Debashish Banerjee

DIVINE PATH-FINDER

On the threshold of a new age with Medhananda

(Fragments of conversations recorded in French by Yvonne Artaud; Published by Sri Mira Trust;

Price: Rs.250.00 (soft cover); Rs.295.00 (hard cover), pp.199)



This is a sequel to the earlier volume entitled *With MEDHANANDA on the shores of infinity*. While the earlier one was autobiographical, in the present one, according to the publisher's note, Medhananda "remains out of sight, except in the interviews and his letters to the children of his children."

A polyglot who learned many languages early in life such as French, Latin and Greek, Medhananda was a gifted child with an extraordinary access to the world of nature and totems. With the rise of Nazi persecution in Germany, Medhananda left his position as a Junior Judge in Frankfurt. With his wife he went to the Pacific islands of Tahiti and Moorea. In that island paradise he cultivated vanilla and coffee in 200 acres of forest land and brought up their three children.

Medhananda began a correspondence with Sri Aurobindo and in 1949, he was formally accepted as His disciple. He joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram formally in February 1952 and became the librarian. After a life of dedicated service, he passed away in 1994. In the Ashram, Medhananda led a quiet and withdrawn life, concentrating on work and contemplation.

Divided into eleven chapters, this unusual book, posthumously published, is a tribute to the memory of this extraordinary soul. It takes us through a realm of consciousness and phenomena normally not within our access and ken. While some chapters such as "Integral Yoga", "The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo in brief", "The avatar of Supermind" are relatively easy to grasp, others such as "The new happenings" and "Our vibratory world" take us into more esoteric domains. However, regardless of the subject of deliberation, we witness in all the writings, a certain straightforwardness and inner transparency characteristic of a mind in direct communion with higher domains. The language and style here are at a heightened plane and essentially poetic.

As Medhananda takes us through earlier experiments

in mysticism and spirituality and links up with the achievements of Sri Aurobindo, one can see an eclectic mind that has grasped the wisdom of the East and the West. He shows an equal understanding of Pythagoras and Osiris, the Egyptian and the Chaldean civilizations, Buddha and Lao Tse, Socrates and Patanjali, Vishwamitra and Sri Aurobindo.

Above all, Medhananda's approach to understanding the mysteries and miracle of the human evolution are manifest in many parts of the book.

The chapter, "In the age of Sri Aurobindo" could serve as a quintessential example. As he sees it, it is always the Presence of the Spiritual Being, the Avatar who makes a difference to human destiny. As he explains insightfully:

Sri Aurobindo once gave a beautiful example. There was a French Revolution, in 1789. All the people there were shouting "Equality! Fraternity! Liberty!" But the reason they were shouting these words was because a yogi sitting in the Himalayas was bringing these new concepts down into the consciousness of mankind. That is how you have to see a planet and the new things which come in. They infiltrate from somewhere...(p.61)

There are other pieces, essentially vignettes written in an aphoristic style. They act as useful signposts in the path of inner quest. Topics like "How to read Sri Aurobindo", "Non-attachment and effort" and "Integral yoga in the face of wickedness", may not contain many original ideas. Nevertheless, even here, a great care is shown by the author in developing arguments with the help of telling examples from multiple sources.

Medhananda is particularly effective when he talks about our approach to the Supermind. He alludes, in this connection, to a symposium organized in the Ashram Library around the visit of Ernst Benz, a Protestant theologian. As the Mother asked Medhananda pointedly after the meet:

"What did they talk about?" There was a smile in her eyes. I replied, trying to stifle the wild laughter that was overcoming me. "They talked about Supermind, Sweet Mother." Mother simply remarked, "What do they know about it?"

Medhananda cautions us that while devotion and loyalty to Sri Aurobindo are important, there is always a danger in relapsing into the earlier modes of thought and action. For instance stray passages from Sri Aurobindo could be taken out and used in a partisan manner. The result would be a falsification of His ideals. As he says aptly, “you can just take a few key words of Sri Aurobindo and there you have a new religion starting.” A timely warning this.

On the threshold of a new age is a volume full of insights and illuminations and should interest all seekers of the inner life.

— Prof. Sachidananda Mohanty

Psychic Education — A Workbook

(Based on the Writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)
(By Neeltje Huppés; Published by Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi;
Price: Rs.100.00, pp. 284 + xii)



“Formerly, education was merely a mechanical forcing of the child’s nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge in which his individual subjectivity was the last thing considered, and his family upbringing was a constant repression and compulsory shaping of his habits, his thoughts, his character into the mould fixed for them by the conventional ideas or individual interests and ideals of the teachers and parents. The discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child’s own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system; but it still fell short because it still regarded him as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated. But at least there was a glimmering of the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as “the leader of the march set in our front”, will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of

which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception.”

These are the words of Sri Aurobindo on modern education in his major work on Social Philosophy, *The Human Cycle*. Here he hints at the possibility of the soul in man taking up the ‘business of education out of our hands’. The Mother in Sri Aurobindo Ashram developed this possibility. The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education was started on The Mother’s initiative with a view to promote the free progress system. The teachers took up their work in the spirit of *Sadhana* with The Mother herself as their guide.

The dominant world-view however continues to be mechanical. Under the circumstances it is very difficult for a man to go beyond the mainstream and mould his life under the influence of the soul. The child-soul too is shackled by the abnormal stress on career and money. The way out for man and society is *Psychic Education*. This is the title of the book under review. The purpose of this book is to develop the concept of psychic education on the lines suggested by The Mother and Sri Aurobindo in their writings. The book is meant primarily for teachers and educationists but is bound to have an influence beyond its intended audience.

In the Ashram, Yoga is the way of life. But this does not hold good for the world at large. The author attempts to suggest a methodized approach to rescue the spiritual component of the being of man and child and prevent it from being buried under the weight of the vicissitudes of modern life. The book is a workbook. Interspersed with the text are several worksheets, which help to focus on detailed implementation of the numerous creative ideas suggested.

The first part of the book titled *Self-Preparation* has eleven chapters and aims to introduce the aspiring teacher to a psychology other than the conventional. A

prior familiarity with the teachings of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo will be found helpful for making the best use of this part. The author is a *Sadhika* and brings to her writings her insights on the spiritual path. The level of discourse varies from elementary to intermediate. The Intermediate Zone through which most aspirants have to pass before reaching the psychic being has not been touched upon.

The author commences by introducing the psychic being in a simple way. No attempt is made to be philosophically rigorous yet a sensitive reader will find in the concept of the psychic being an epitome of that towards which his deepest instincts have always pointed. She proceeds to talk about the great discovery, suggests methods like self-observation to heal the divisions in one's being and brings the participant-reader to the threshold where he can commence his journey. A word of caution is thrown in; the complete discovery of the psychic may take years. The next two chapters deal with self-purification. A distinction is sought to be drawn between purification from without and from within. The author does not introduce the idea of reversal of consciousness at this stage, which one feels is necessary for greater clarity.

So long as we are not surrendered to the inner Divine the need for effort must remain. This is the next thing to be discussed. A major form of this effort is rejection of all that impedes our progress. The author distinguishes between true rejection which leads to spiritual purification and suppression which is often done out of fear.

Human beings are different from animal creation in that they have a measure of freewill in their actions. When this free choice is used to put us deliberately on the side of the Divine, change in consciousness occurs which finally culminates in our will being aligned with the Divine will. These and allied movements of consciousness are explored in the chapter *Choice and Change*.

Surrender is the master movement of the progressive psychic change by which we transform personal effort into 'a movement of the Divine force'. The author uses quotations from The Mother and Sri Aurobindo to drive the point home. The psychic change draws to its culmination when being organized around the psyche unifies all the divergent parts of our nature. This is discussed in the chapter *Unification* that brings us to the close of the first part.

The second half of the book deals with the education of children. It bears the rather unsuggestive title, *The Integral Classroom*. The contents however are full of a wealth of pedagogic detail which are based no doubt on the author's considerable experience in this field.

'India is a country where the psychic law can and must rule and the time has come for that here.' Basing herself on this message of The Mother, the author seeks to introduce Integral Education in the classroom. The three principles of true teaching enunciated by Sri Aurobindo form the kernel of the idea of psychic education in the classroom. They are:

- 1) The first principle of true education is that nothing can be taught...(The teachers') business is to help and suggest...
- 2) The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth...
- 3) The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is, to that which shall be.

The practical consequences of these three cardinal principles are explored in the next chapter, *The Learning Process*. The important issue of deciding the contents of the children's education follows this. Several criteria are suggested for this purpose — variety, range and assortment of material, diversity of learning processes, perfection of the faculties and skills, uplifting material and lastly material that caters specifically to the psychic needs and that which explores psychic concepts. The last three chapters deal with evaluation and assessment, the learning environment and attitude (of the teacher).

Practically all the essential ideas, which are necessary to implement the concept of integral education, have been dealt with in this book. The style is simple but not unsustained. The one conspicuous absence is lack of stress on moral education, which has been dealt with by Sri Aurobindo in his writings.

The book is a happy compromise between the Divine ideal and the present conditions of progress. It is indispensable reading for teachers and educationists with a sense of higher values and a willingness to go beyond the narrow utilitarian aims of present day education. The book is very well produced and moderately priced. The significance of the flower on the cover as given by The Mother, Supramental Invocation, sums up the author's idealism and commitment.

— H. Kapoor

THE WORLD OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Teilhard de Chardin and our Time

(By Amal Kiran (K.D.Sethna);
Published by Clear Ray Trust;
Price: Rs.150.00, pp.343)



“...it is not only apostles of a new type that we require: but indeed (for the use of these apostles) a Gospel of a type that is ‘new’. – It is inexact, I am increasingly more sure, to repeat that society is de-christianising itself...it is solely and desperately awaiting to be super-christianised. The Christianity, presented to us does not satisfy us any more, because its Christ is not great enough.” That was Teilhard de Chardin in his letter dated 22 March 1955 to André Ravier, a fellow Jesuit, expressing his disillusionment with the company of Jesus to which he belonged. Teilhard died on 25 March 1955. Two days before his death he confessed to André: “I owe a lot to the company: but I would hesitate a lot before inviting anybody to enter it. – Let the counsellors beware!”

What Teilhard de Chardin (the French Jesuit theologian, palaeontologist and philosopher best known for his creative synthesis of nature and religion based on his field work and fossil studies) wrote at his life’s end, was only a final echo to a downright disillusioned statement he made twenty-three years before his death. In his letter to Valensin, dated 20 October 1932, he said: “*In reality*, I don’t dare and have never dared to push anyone to make himself Christian. The weight is becoming too heavy to carry.” No wonder that Teilhard’s unorthodox ideas led to a church ban on his teaching and publishing. Yet the world he saw and experienced didn’t give him the least opportunity to revise his opinion. These frank remarks of his delayed the publication of his major work, *Phenomenon of Man*, written 1938-40 until after his death by the embargo of his superiors.

What then was Teilhard de Chardin’s idea of Christianity? To answer this question one has to plunge into the depths of Teilhard’s writings. To do so it needs the scholarship and calibre of an eminent man of letters – K.D.Sethna who has nearly fifty books to his credit. His earlier work, *Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo* (1973 - now out of print) showed how both the writers saw humanity as being in a constant process of evolution, moving towards a perfect spiritual state.

His next book *The Spirituality of the Future* (1981 - now out of print) made a search apropos of R.C.Zaehner’s study in Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin. And now the volume under review is an interpretative study of that rebellious Jesuit or his own multi-aspected writings or else both at the same time.

The first of this two-part volume deals with the real religion of Teilhard de Chardin – his version of Christianity and Sri Aurobindo’s exposé of the ancient Vedanta. In the beginning of this part, K.D.Sethna raises a question “Was Teilhard a pantheist?” and goes ahead to fish for points from Teilhard’s writings only to press them into service of his contention that “...he subscribes to panpsychism not only in the sense that life is present in all matters even where it is not apparent, but also in the sense that one single life, an identical vital presence, is active in various degrees throughout the universe – a sense which would be a natural and logical step towards pantheism.” Sethna makes a study of Roman Catholicism and Pantheism, Christian Pantheism, panpsychism, Christ’s parousia, Vedantic Christianity, Vedantic vision, the Historical Christ and soul-evolution and concludes this section thus: “Whether we agree with Teilhard’s arguments or no, his panpsychism in the one-life sense for the ‘telluric’ (terrestrial) scene is undeniable. And, granted this range, a cosmic panpsychism in the same sense is a legitimate imputation in the light of his assertion that matter is intrinsically animate everywhere.”

The second part that occupies three-fourths of the book, discusses in detail the basic Teilhard de Chardin and the modern religious intuition. About the heretic Jesuit, K.D.Sethna writes: “He is not only complex but also puzzling – and he is a puzzle to his own being no less than to others. Just as he is basically an unorthodox Roman Catholic and cannot be fitted into mere Christianity, as his co-religionist admirers want, so too is he a strange heretic and cannot be fitted into mere pantheism, as his co-religionist critics contend. But he has himself given a handle to either party. Continually he sways between his openly confessed inborn pantheist temperament and the equally sincere Christian responses evoked in his heart and mind by early training and later discipline. He never quite finds the correct poise to which, beyond both mere Christianity and mere pantheism, his deepest attempts at self-clarification point. This poise may broadly be termed the modern religious intuition. And that intuition in its turn may be defined in general as an evolutionist version of

what is in essence the original many-sided as distinguished from the later single-tracked Vedanta.”

And the whole part is an explication of what has gone before. Apart from explaining the fundamentals of Teilhard's faith and the true nature of his Christianity, he discusses in detail the basic Teilhardism and the place of his Christianity in it.

Both the parts of this very scholarly and hence heavy book aim to consider Teilhardism from all possible sides and converge upon a number of primary insights into its authentic heart of vision. And the result is the heretic Jesuit emerges with a “sea-change”. By plumbing the deepest, K.D.Sethna brings to light the most hidden stretches of Teilhard's wide-visioned genius.

— P. Raja

Sri Aurobindo — Thinker and Yogi of the Future

(By M.G.Umar; Published by Sri Mira Trust; Price: Rs.100.00, pp.286)



This elegantly brought out book of a little less than 300 pages is a good introduction to the teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. In the words of the author himself, this book is a collection of essays based on the works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It has no pretension of being an exhaustive study. There are ten chapters in this book; the first and third chapters deal with the biographies of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Though he has not dealt exhaustively with all the details of their lives, he has succeeded in bringing out their essence and true meaning in simple language; and he has done this by quoting exhaustively from their own writings. The other eight chapters summarize the different aspects of their teachings. In the second chapter, the author explains the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo as spelt out in *The Life Divine*. This is an intellectual presentation and is an attempt to convince the modern mind of the validity of the philosophy. The fourth chapter deals with the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. The chief references are taken from *The Synthesis of Yoga*, while at the same time quoting profusely from the writings of the Mother. Here the concentration is on the practical aspects; the stress here is on converting the philosophy into action. The next two chapters deal with the Political and Social thought of Sri Aurobindo. Unlike most other Yogis, Sri Aurobindo has written extensively on these topics. The author deals with the main ideas presented in these two books. Although not a summary in the real sense, they acquaint the reader with the key ideas of Sri Aurobindo on these two topics. One gets an insight

into the radically different approach of Sri Aurobindo and this will be of help when the reader goes to the originals. The next chapter deals with Education; here he has touched on the salient features of their vision on education and has referred quite extensively to the Mother's views on education. This has great practical relevance today in India.

The next chapter deals with the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. The author discusses Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future directions that poetry is likely to take; in this he has quoted chiefly from *The Future Poetry*. This chapter also gives a good introduction to the epic *Savitri*. After describing the tale briefly, he has selected beautiful quotations from the poem to illustrate the vision of the poet. This is very well done and I am sure that this will induce the reader to go to the original.

In the ninth chapter, the author has taken some practical problems that every seeker of the Integral Yoga faces. He has given useful hints based on the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to overcome these problems.

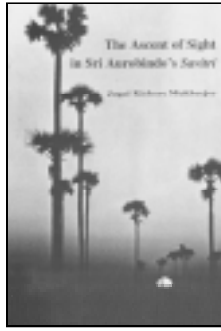
In the tenth and last chapter, the author writes about Auroville or the City of Dawn. He quotes the Mother's dream in full, which was the starting point of the project; he then quotes the Auroville charter. In this chapter he explains how the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville are working for the same collective ideal.

This book on the whole can serve as a good introduction to the works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It can be a springboard for a deeper study of their original works.

— Kittu Reddy

The Ascent of Sight in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*

(By Jugal Kishore Mukherjee; Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education; Price: Rs.70.00, pp.92)



Re-reading *Savitri* is ever a new experience. One may keep reading the epic for half a century like Jugald, and each reading brings a fresh insight into the inexhaustible springs of the narrative. The process of ascent from an ordinary seeing to the spiritual vision in the higher ranges of thought and beyond as stated in *Savitri* is a fascinating phenomenon. Especially so, when Jugald is our Paraclete.

As always, Jugald does not tease us with an impossible mystic diction. He is the ideal acharya who swoops down like the eagle in the classroom and then rises slowly and majestically past the green crests of life holding the hands of the reader-student. In the course of his precise teaching, he jots down points for us to memorise and meditate upon as we go about our chores. There are the innumerable references to "sight" (also allied terms like gaze, eye) with or without adjectives in the epic. The physical eye's co-extensive association with the inner eye of consciousness is a marvel that defies explanation. Eight elements are at play in this act and no object or thought can be seen in clinical isolation, for necessarily we have the riches of all our yesterdays and the possibilities of all our tomorrows converging in the present moment of time. The same object can be seen from many stances and thus it may acquire different contours as well. What we see in the physical is not the same as what we perceive in the subtle-physical. Such a twy-fold vision (the surface and the inscape) is familiar enough for many aspirants in their spiritual journey. The physical sight is, of course, woefully limited to the "here": on the other hand, visions bring the aspirant into "a first contact with the Divine in his forms and powers".

It was because Sri Aurobindo plunged his spiritual gaze "into the siege of mist" that the lines of *Savitri* appeared before him. As he wrote in a 1947 letter: "*Savitri* is the record of a seeing"; hence the Mother's

advice that reading *Savitri* is yoga. The reading repeatedly turns our gaze inward and helps us rise in consciousness; the rise being in proportion to the aspirations of the reader.

Pointing out significant passages from the epic where every rift is loaded with spiritual ore, Jugald also speaks of the pitfalls in taking up the yoga of consciousness-probe without a proper guide. By keeping oneself safe from the allure of false visions and tempting sights, it should be possible to stand at the threshold of sight in the Superconscious, since "there is a range of being and consciousness far transcending all these elements of our constitution, which is **super-conscious** to all the other provinces of our existence."

The supramental sight, of course has the capacity to see "the Eternal's many-sided-oneness". It does not miss any attention to detail, nor does it ignore the Whole. In the supramental seeing, time also gets annihilated, since there is no artificial barrier imposed on what needs be understood as an eternal present in an "unpartitioned time-vision". **The Ascent of Sight** concludes with an enormously challenging question: Does the Divine have a supraphysical form for being envisioned? Or is the Supreme formless? Jugald, rising from the milky ocean of Aurobindoneana with droplets of Aurobindonian phrases dripping, gives the answer with gentle understanding. Form and Formlessness are not mutually exclusive after all. We are dealing with "Absolute Existence as a reality" and its mystery is illimitable. Well, the Flute Player of Brindaban could not have appeared from a positive zero!

There is then the possibility that the supramental transformation might change our sense of sight (physical, spiritual) also and give us a natural sense of unity which is the need of today's fractured world. One may conclude reading **The Ascent of Sight**; but the conclusion also begins our own personal endeavour to tune our physical sight with the psychic and the spiritual. For such is the magic of the teacher in Jugald who can transform a student of today into an achiever of tomorrow.

— Prema Nandakumar

Let not thy virtues be such as men praise or reward, but such as make for thy perfection and God in thy nature demands of thee.

— Sri Aurobindo