

Recent Publications

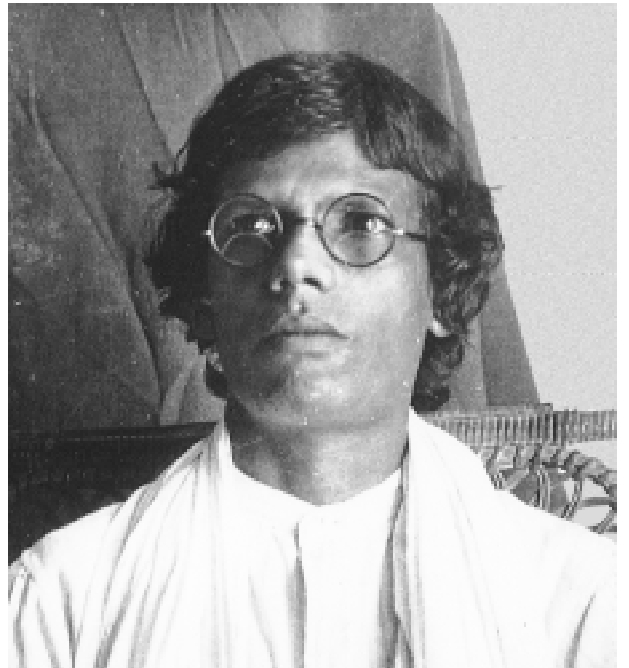
Sabda

The whole body must be made up of the 'heart' and become the heart itself, then alone She can fill the body with Her Presence constantly; every atom, every cell of the body is intended to become Her Abode.

T. V. Kapali Sastri on the Mother's presence
in *Flame of White Light*

“He was conscious, every minute, of the rare fortune of living at this moment the like of which comes hardly once in a thousand years in the history of the earth.” These words of M. P. Pandit bring alive the earnest intensity with which Kapali Sastri pursued the path of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Kapali Sastri wrote extensively and penetratingly, often with intuitive originality, on the ancient Indian spiritual heritage. His expositions, surveyed in the following pages, are inspired by and resonate in the harmonies of Sri Aurobindo's unique vision of the truth behind these spiritual systems.



T. V. Kapali Sastri

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Sastriji: The Scholar Who Recovered India's Soul

by *Rick Lipschutz*

“To keep the fire burning is our part. The work and process are Hers.” So lived and wrote Integral Yogi T. V. Kapali Sastri, for 24 years a Sri Aurobindo Ashramite. An “ardor of creative energy,” Tapas burned in him as vision-will and robbed him of fatigue. He lived to realize a youthful intimation that he would write a Vedic commentary beyond the ritualist lines of Sayana. Perhaps the greatest Sanskrit scholar of the twentieth century, he extended the pioneer inspiration of Sri Aurobindo in restoring the inner being of India: her ancient spiritual heritage. Sastriji fulfilled his own and our human aspiration, uncovering the naked self of the original Veda and all that flowed from it spontaneously. From distorting religious formations, dull, smoky accretions, he freed the golden fountain. He traces out broadly and details how the seeds, links, and the standing challenges of the past are grown, connected and taken up transformed in Sri Aurobindo. He came a Vibhuti, his mission nothing less than full recovery of the Indian soul.

It is a fact that when he invoked the gods they came—to this the Mother attested. With his own subtle eyes he saw her “Flame of White Light.” One has the living experience, reading Sastriji, that one is literally walking through the vivid world of Veda and Tantra and Upanishad, in his firm and tender hands no abstractions but living beings, forests of higher intelligence, mountain streams of wisdom. The foundation of ancient Indian spiritual knowledge is the Veda; the many paths to sublime Brahman-knowledge have descended as Upanishads; and perhaps parallel syntheses of Vedanta are sung in the Gita, vigorously pursued in the Tantra. On these he cast the “Lights” that comprise in particular Volume I (as well as II and III) of his twelve-volume Collected Works. Out of the light of past dawns we enter “the noons of the future.” In these radiances we will see and realize one day the saying of Prema Nandakumar: “Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* is...a direct child of the Vedas.”

A Tamil native of Mylapore, Madras, in 1886, born as his name suggests to a learned family “Tantric through and through,” Sastriji imbibed knowledge laden with devotion and sacrifice from his mother’s milk. Adept in several aspects of Sanskrit, he read the Ramayana a dozen times by the time he was twelve, and was inculcated in Sri Vidya and its worship of Sri Lalita Tripurasundari, an exalted manifestation of the Supreme Shakti. Thus engaged in a temple, he met in 1907 his first guru, the many-sided seer-poet Vasishta Ganapati Muni,

who would four years later take him to his second, Ramana Maharshi. Sastriji once said, “I could not have come to Sri Aurobindo if I had not got the faith awakened in me in the spiritual life which I got from seeing Sri Maharshi.” But the bridge he was looking for he found not at Mount Arunachala but Pondicherry.

The secret of his sinewy, lucid and fluid, attractive English style can be found in his happy discovery of the Arya in 1914.

For the problem of matter, recovering and reestablishing permanently its divine origin, had always occupied Sastriji, and when a grocer gave him a copy of the *Arya* in 1914, he pored over that and all succeeding issues, ceaselessly, every month for six and a half years. Here was his own line of thought, no longer vague, but clarified, expanded! In fact, Sri Aurobindo was reading him, and he was being revised. The secret of his sinewy, lucid and fluid, surprisingly attractive English style can be found in this happy discovery of the *Arya*. In 1917 he came face to face with the one whom Prema Nandakumar calls “this blazing spiritual Agni.” “Well, as soon as I saw him, even from a distance, there was set in motion, all of a sudden, a rapid vibratory movement in my body from head to foot. There was a continuous thrill and throb. I seemed to stand on the top of a dynamo working at top speed and it was as powerful as it was new. It lasted for nearly four to five minutes. It did not really stop at all.” Standing before the living body of the Fire blazing in the cave, Sastriji gave greeting in the language of the gods, expressing his good fortune. Sri Aurobindo, for his part, is reported to have turned to an attendant and to have asked, in a low voice, whether the young man spoke any language besides Sanskrit. When, in 1923 they met again and the Tantric could not help but notice Sri Aurobindo’s skin transformed to golden, “That trip decided my future.” Precious notes of the private instructions given him by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother can be found in Volume III of the Collected Works. In 1929 he gave up his job teaching Sanskrit in a high school and resided in the Ashram till his passing on Sri Aurobindo’s birthday in 1953. He wrote sparingly, only what he intuited and knew from inner inspiration and realization. According to his pupil, M. P. Pandit, who wrote with lucid force, as wise as love, world-traveler with a world-uniting light, and edited the Collected Works: “The

first draft was also the last.” Any time he had he used for very intense sadhana.

“Who is the Mother?” he wrote to Sri Aurobindo not long after the founding of the Ashram. The Madras *Sunday Times* quoted Sastriji: “Way back in 1927, when I had known and met Sri Aurobindo but had not known much about the Mother and when I had occasion to write to him about her, he had a manuscript copy of the *Four Powers of the Mother* sent to me which was later on incorporated in the book, *The Mother*, and provided me with a glimpse into the powers and personality of the Mother. I had an instant and spontaneous faith in his words and that faith was increasingly verified by experience.” Here his sadhana found its major harmony; burning aspiration met Supreme Grace. Who the Mother is, in all her guises—this was and further became the central fact of his life. She widened, deepened, transformed his own line of development so that later he would write (in “Flame of White Light,” in volume II of the Collected Works or available as a separate book with photographs): “I was proceeding along the path of knowledge; but here I find it is a feeble light of a still higher and all-encompassing way of the Mother. Of course it is the path of Love.... It is quite the reverse of the traditional conception of Bhakti Marga.... It is an independent universal power of the Divine Mother which seeks and seeks for embodiment on Earth.”

In Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo surprised the Secret and with the luminous key of intuition he revealed the Veda. Prometheus of the spirit restored to us, even as he embodied, the Divine Flame of the Rishis. But he himself protested, “I am not a scholar.” So it fell and blazed on Sastriji, with the requisite preeminence in Sanskrit scholarship, to fulfill Sri Aurobindo’s fervent wish to see his Vedic studies presented in more complete form, worked out with necessary references and comparisons. Through him the Master’s thesis was firmly established. This is done in the *Siddhanjana*, interpretation and commentary of the first Ashtaka (the first of eight divisions) of the Rig Veda. It is the book he was destined to write, gold standard of Vedic truth. Throughout its composition at the end of the 1940s

he received help from Sri Aurobindo, who took “keen interest in the work.” To aid the reader, Sastriji then wrote a Rig-Bhashya Bhumika (an indispensable introduction, found in English in Volume IV) to summarize and surpass pre-Aurobindonian commentators and unveil the Veda’s inner import as the Master directly experienced it. The prose is sparkling, quick; a live force of Tapas moves through it. The dark ship of the forest sails in through the storm, bringing home the ten thousand emeralds of the dawn.

A simplified English version of the Bhumika is found in Volume I in “Lights on the Veda” and partly in “Further Lights on the Veda.” In his commentary on the Apri Hymns, he describes the process by which the divine powers “come



down and fill” us and equip us for “the utter self-giving,” providing clear indications of the “Vedic Yoga” marked by “ordered steps with definite purpose at each stage.” Of the gods he has this to say: “[M]ore intimately they are active in the inner Existence as psychological and spiritual powers with which the awakened soul enters into relation even as did the Vedic seers of yore.” One gains inspired understanding of the “multiple Divine Personality of Agni” and the gods; the process of inner sacrifice; the steps on the path from peak to new plateau and further summit to summit; and the goal, which is the Sun of Truth, Supermind, “quite manifest for ever.” This was rediscovered by Sri Aurobindo and brought down to earth by the Mother and himself. “And yet this Agni who is so close to us and accessible to devout hearts is not different from the Sun of Truth. For in the last resort, the Rishi realises him as the force of the Sun of Truth.”

Like Sri Aurobindo, Sastriji found the Upanishads to be “manuals of sadhana.” His exquisite “Lights on the Upanishads” with packed expressive economy unveils six Upanishadic Vidyas, paths to Brahman-knowledge. These Lights are classics of spiritual literature, destined to enlighten the future and are a personal favorite. Here we find how to know what we need to know. For instance, in the Vaisvanara Vidya all our food, which includes whatever is taken in experience, is consecrated, assimilated in that central Universal Fire which extracts the divine element. When the surface consciousness gives up, collaborates willingly ceasing its betrayal of our soul, a work of lifetimes can be compressed in a few sunlit years. Because the fire is universal, the soul-progress of all is concretely accelerated. The Sandilya, Prana and Madhu Vidyas and the well-known story of Nachiketas are similarly enlarged. Among all the ancient scriptures, it is worth noting that it was the Upanishads that first “roused in” Sri Aurobindo “a strong enthusiasm.”

Sastriji's twelve-volume Collected Works rank among the most inspired literature yet produced by sadhaks.

Sastriji was born Tantric, and what he called his “Side-lights on the Tantra” are in fact “Searchlights,” Prabhakar Nulkar observes. Since Mantra-Sadhana is among the chief surviving contributions of Tantra (“continuous action...on all levels”), Sastriji’s elucidation of its workings is of great help to many in the Integral Yoga who increasingly use mantra in our own sadhana. We may also come away with a more lively appreciation of how Sri Aurobindo has uplifted the central core of Tantra into his own approach. For instance, when *The Mother* tells us, “You must keep the temple clean if you wish to instal there the living Presence,” two key Tantric principles fuse in one living action. Kapali Sastri’s illumination of Shakta Tantra is coming from its inmost insider.

Sastriji’s essays “The Initiate and the Mystic Fire” (from which the earlier quote relating Agni to the Sun of Truth is taken), “Sadhana of the Supermind,” and “The Mystic Quartette and the Human Synthesis” (Volume II), and his booklet “Sadhana” (in Volume VIII) are only a few that continue to light and give heart to my own sadhana. How do the Aurobindonian sun-tracks dovetail with, where exactly do they diverge from the earlier Rishis and realizers of the Brahman? “Spiritual Achievements: Ancients and Ourselves” and “Jivanmukta and the Superman” plant fresh gems of a clarity that does not dim. Beautifully written and not to be missed, “New Lights” is possibly the most

inspired and insightful single essay on Sri Aurobindo’s teachings by a sadhak. What is new about this yoga and how does it stand in relation to all past yogas? What does the much-used phrase “from above” really mean? The Supramental Light, the Yoga-Force, the central processes of the “art of the spirit,” the careful divine separation and cosmic reconstruction of our borrowed universal parts and out-of-tune instruments, as well as the divine end to be achieved, human, social, earthly—all this you will find in Volume II near the end of “Lights on the Teachings.” Significant contributions by others include Prema Nandakumar’s *T. V. Kapali Sastri*; the birth centennial collection of essays on Sastriji, *Versatile Genius*; and the heroic work of R. L. Kashyap. Sastriji’s twelve-volume Collected Works, available from SABDA, rank with Nolini Kanta Gupta’s Collected Works among the most inspired literature yet produced by sadhaks. They are sound and light-filled expositions of the ancient Indian knowledge and the Integral Yoga.

The Vedic Rishis lived in communion with the Gods; not figuratively but actually. The Mantras are records of their life with the Gods.

T. V. Kapali Sastri

After the mahasamadhi of Sri Aurobindo, that “universal sunset,” Sastriji spoke to the press in an interview published in the Madras *Sunday Times* entitled “The Mother will carry on the Master’s Work.” He told Kumar, “The Mother is a part of Sri Aurobindo’s being. She is the manifested, dynamic part of his soul.... I have known and seen and felt the many-faceted personality of the Mother in action. It is impossible to know Sri Aurobindo without knowing the Mother. It is impossible to get the grace and guidance of the Master without a fervid devotion to the Mother.... He is more intensely and concretely present in the Mother.” Read “The Divine Mother and the Human Personality” (Volume II) for a more intimate understanding of the full place of the Divine Mother in this yoga and in our own long-term development. Sastriji was among the first to realize the Master and the Mother as one. The salient secret of Integral Yoga, precisely why it is so fulfilling, so new, is the very active participation of the Divine Mother (Mother of the gods, the dolphins, humans and all the rest), as intimate as She is infinite, in all Her aspects. Sastriji once observed, “I see it every day. Unfailingly She responds, to the very detail, to what you take with you.” The Mystic Fire meets the Mother’s Force.

V. Madhusudan Reddy relates that his friend Nolini Kanta Gupta in his later years was a little sad about the lack among sadhaks of ancient Indian spiritual knowledge—the soul of the soul of the world. This is needed,

*He inspires as much as informs and is a joy to read.
Profundity has seldom come so clear or so succinct.*

Nolinida saw, to fully appreciate Sri Aurobindo. One of the most pleasant ways to obtain this background is from Sastriji. Pleasant, because as those fortunate to read him find, he inspires as much as informs and is a joy to read. What better way to recover what is in truth a portion of the soul of one's humanity, these ancient treasures? Profundity has seldom come so clear or so succinct. To have no false idols is salutary but carried to extremes may prevent the large of soul from greating our spirit. As we in the Integral Yoga community rediscover him, Sastriji's works will spread throughout the world to scholars and seekers alike; it is merely a matter of time. The reclamation of our

sacred core will result in a newfound sapience that will justify the name some great mysterious hope has attached to our species.

Sastriji was a unique experiment in human synthesis, in whom the Divine transformed the workings of a penetrating intellect into a more intuitive consciousness. He came and continues to work to ready the intellectual mind of earth for the power and light of the Divine Mother: She who is the human synthesizer; She who brought with her hammer that day leaping into eternity the all-transforming manifestation. And her Sastriji continues to grow; he was not what he had been, is not now what he was. He is a scholar through whom scholarship itself is being transformed. Beyond and behind the four established personalities of the Mother are others, more difficult to bring down here. A force is working through his writings and his work to suspend a bridge between us and an all-powerful love that presses to be born.

— Rick Lipschutz, a member of the Cultural Integral Fellowship, discovered the Integral Yoga after exploring other paths. He lives in San Francisco, USA.

WORKS OF T. V. KAPALI SASTRI

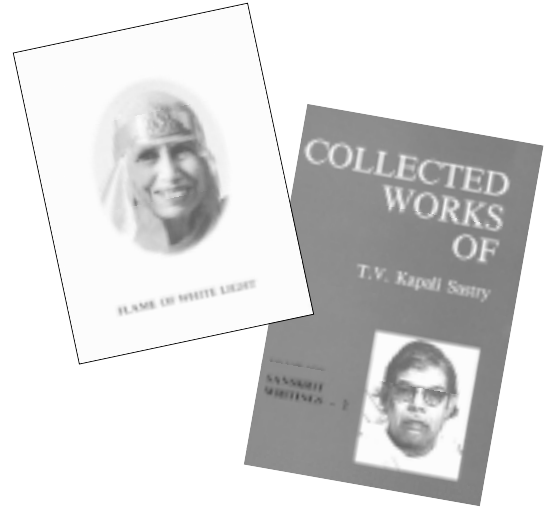
COLLECTED WORKS (12 bound volumes) Rs. 1200.00

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Vennira Chudaroli (Tamil)	160.00



It was always possible to give intellectual explanations for anything but, unless they satisfied his inner being, unless he felt from within with an unshakable certitude that this is what the Rishis meant he could not put it down.

M. P. Pandit on Kapali Sastri

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

Sri Aurobindo

Kalidasa

Essays and Translations

329 pp., Rs. 130.00

ISBN 81-7058-746-8

“Kalidasa”, writes Sri Aurobindo, “is the great, the supreme poet of the senses, of aesthetic beauty, of sensuous emotion. His main achievement is to have taken every poetic element, all great poetical forms, and subdued them to a harmony of artistic perfection set in the key of sensuous beauty. In continuous gift of seizing an object and creating it to the eye he has no rival in literature.” During the first decade of the twentieth century, Sri Aurobindo wrote a number of essays that were meant to be chapters of a comprehensive work on Kalidasa. He also translated one of the poet’s plays, *Vikramorvasie or the Hero and the Nymph*, along with parts of his other works. *Kalidasa: Essays and Translations* contains, for the first time in a single volume, all of Sri Aurobindo’s writings on and translations from “the great representative poet” of classical Sanskrit literature.



Compiled from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

125 Cautions from Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

46 pp., Rs. 15.00

The Mother often highlighted the importance of vigilance in the Integral Yoga to help avoid the many pitfalls encountered on the way. The 125 selections presented here are related to this theme.

Sri Aurobindo on a New Social Order

63 pp., Rs. 50.00

This book contains passages from Sri Aurobindo on a range of subjects of social relevance: democracy and the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity; capitalism, socialism, totalitarianism, anarchism; and the creation of a spiritual society.



Reprint from All India Magazine:

The Way to Spiritual Life

56 pp., Rs. 15.00

ISBN 81-7060-210-6

Other Authors

The Auroville Handbook

138 pp., Rs. 125.00

A guide to the many varied activities that take place in Auroville, the international township. It provides information on the following aspects of Auroville: spiritual basis; internal organisation; services and working groups; commercial units; guest houses and visitor facilities; afforestation and renewable energy activities; village development activities; International Centres abroad; immediate neighbourhood (the villages and Pondicherry). Also contains a map of the Auroville area.

Initiation

Spiritual Insights on Life, Art, and Psychology

Michael Miovic

296 pp., Rs. 250.00

ISBN 81-7060-215-7

A compilation of essays, travel-ogues, short stories, art criticism, and poems that revolve around the theme of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s vision. The author gives personal reflections on his spiritual quest, impressions of travels in India and Greece, and critical reviews of the emerging field of spiritual/transpersonal psychology and consciousness studies. He also applies Sri Aurobindo’s model of social evolution to the study of various topics in cultural history. Although broad in scope and varied in focus, the seemingly diverse writings in this book are woven together by an underlying critical perspective and deep synthesis of Eastern and Western worldviews.



I am with you

Kailas Jhaveri

80 pp., Rs. 60.00

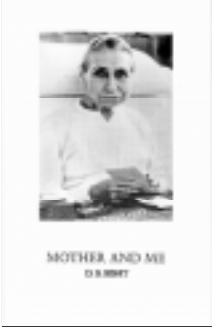
Kailas Jhaveri was brought up and educated in Bombay. She first visited Pondicherry on 9th December 1950 when Sri Aurobindo’s material envelope was interred in the Samadhi. In 1954 she went to the USA for further studies. There she worked at the United Nations. After it was revealed to her that human unity could be realised only on the spiritual foundation, she left the UN. In 1964 she came to Pondicherry and has lived at the Ashram ever since.

This book is a chronicle of the events and the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s active help in her life. The title of this book of reminiscences is taken from a letter of the Mother to Kailasben.

Jai Ma: On the Mother's Service

Pashupati Bhattacharya
19 pp., Rs. 5.00

This booklet reproduces a chapter from *On the Mother Divine* by Pashupati Bhattacharya, published in 1968. It describes how work is made a means of sadhana when done in the spirit of service to the Divine, and how to unify one's will with the Divine's by doing the Mother's work.

**Mother and Me**

D. B. Bisht
48 pp., Rs. 40.00
ISBN 81-7060-218-1

Dr. Bisht has had a distinguished career in the medical profession. He was the Director-General of Health Services, Govt. of India, and upon retirement joined the World Health Organisation.

While Dr. Bisht was at JIPMER, Pondicherry, he served the Mother as her doctor. This was a period of close personal contact with her. In this book Dr. Bisht narrates his experiences with the Mother.

Nirodbaran: Divinity's Comrade

Ed. Hemant Kapoor
639 pp., Rs. 200.00, ISBN 81-86413-27-8

A "great binding force for the Ashram community and Aurobindonians of all hues", Nirodbaran has completed one hundred years on 17 November 2003. This volume felicitates him on this occasion. It is divided into four sections: 1) "The Indomitable Spirit" — selections from Nirodbaran's writings; 2) "Doctor — Poet — Sadhak" — articles by others dwelling on his many aspects; 3) "Nirod-da: To Know Him" — accounts of memorable contacts with him, and 4) "Dedicated to Nirodbaran".

See review on page 11

On the Mother

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar
924 pp., Rs. 375.00
ISBN 81-7058-036-6

An extensive biography tracing significant events in the life of the Mother, as well as the evolution of her spiritual thought, with numerous extracts from her writings.

(Reprint)

**Remembering The Mother with Gratitude**

A Collection of Reminiscences
120 pp., Rs. 100.00, ISBN 81-901891-2-3

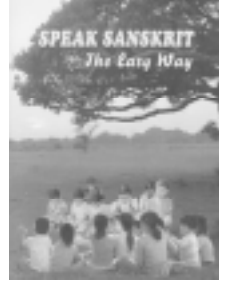
From the blurb, "This book reveals many of the unforgettable moments of some eminent personalities of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville who have shared some golden moments with the Mother. This is no doubt a unique collection of those unfading treasures. You cannot but feel Her concrete Presence on reading these fond remembrances." *See review on page 18*

Speak Sanskrit: The Easy Way

Ed. Narendra
64 pp., Rs. 25.00
ISBN 81-7058-740-9

(This book assumes familiarity with the Devanagari script)

The method introduced here for learning Sanskrit is natural, easy and effective. Extensive use of tables helps to simplify the grammatical complexities in a structured and scientific way. For all words, meanings are provided in English.

**Sri Aurobindo Mandir (Annual) 2003**

121 pp., Rs. 50.00

Cassettes / CDs**The Mother**

(Read by the Mother)

Volume 1 (Chapters 1 to 5 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo)
Audio Cassette: Rs. 40.00; Audio CD: Rs. 200.00
Volumes 2 & 3 (Chapter 6 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo)
Audio Cassette: Rs. 80.00; Audio CD: Rs. 250.00

The above three CDs / cassettes contain the complete reading by the Mother of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

Produced by Hindustan Record.
Duration: Volume 1 - 49:27

Volumes 2 & 3 - 81:16

**Sri Aurobindo's Savitri (MP3 CD)**

Read by Nirodbaran
Rs. 200.00 (set of 2 MP3 CDs), ISBN 81-86413-30-8

These readings of *Savitri* were recorded in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They have now been put into digital MP3 form. This complete reading of *Savitri* is about 40 hours in length.

OTHER LANGUAGES

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REVIEWS

The Practice of the Integral Yoga

Jugal Kishore Mukherjee; Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education; Price Rs. 150.00, 348 pp.



Often, after the first flush of discovering Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the question arises – how does one practice their yoga? If we are accustomed to any traditional understanding of yoga, it is some formula which we seek, a method and schedule of asanas and pranayama, meditation and/or mantras. A bewildering profusion of such routines has been developed over the centuries in India (and now abroad) and tagged with different names – each promising the shortcut to “realization.” To some it is almost a shock to realize that no such esoteric formula, given in secret to initiates has been provided by Sri Aurobindo or the Mother and many are likely to look askance at this absence as a sign of the impracticality of this yoga. Indeed, the Integral Yoga has deliberately avoided the formulae of routine methods and shortcuts. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, while writing about the processes of the traditional yogas, Sri Aurobindo says: “[T]he methods of the integral Yoga must be mainly spiritual, and dependence on physical methods or fixed psychic or psycho-physical processes on a large scale would be the substitution of a lower for a higher action.” What then are these “spiritual methods” and their “higher action” that Sri Aurobindo is referring to?

In the opening sentence of his mantric text *The Mother*, Sri Aurobindo introduces the twin sources for all methods in the Integral Yoga: “There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unflinching aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.” The aspiration that calls from below comes from our inmost being, also known as the psychic being. The Grace from above that answers is the action of the Divine Mother. Instead of trying to control or transform prakriti by the methods of prakriti, the aim of the Integral Yoga is more one of invoking the action of the psychic purusha, at first through its influence on the mental-vital-physical

complex and then directly through its emergence and control of the entire nature. Simultaneously, it is one of openness and trust in the force of the Divine Mother entering into and working on the different parts of the being and spiritualizing them in collaboration with the psychic action. The “methods” of this yoga then are better seen as those arising spontaneously and dynamically from the dual action of the psychic being and the Mother.

Another reason for avoiding the formulaic methods and routines of traditional yogic practice is the fact that the Integral Yoga is a customized process of Self-discovery and expression and such a process unfolds itself uniquely given the specific proclivities of the individual. This is what makes Sri Aurobindo describe his yoga through the varied windows of Knowledge, Works, Love and Self-Perfection in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, acknowledging that our approach can be through any one or a combination of these depending on our soul-type, but that whatever the approach, it must widen eventually to take in the fruits of realization of all other approaches.

But granted the undesirability of stereotypical practices, are there not any guidelines or starting points to follow before one can become aware of the hidden action of the psychic being and the Mother’s force? How even can one open to these sources of the yoga and how can one be sure of their action? Such questions are natural and both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have given us ample leads in this direction. The Mother’s talks have innumerable incisive pointers on the practice of the Integral Yoga, but for the overall theory of its practice we have to turn to Sri Aurobindo. Answering a disciple’s question once on how he could be led to the realization of the Mahashakti, the Mother replied simply: “I do not know of any guru better than Sri Aurobindo to lead one to the Mahashakti.”

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The three major texts by Sri Aurobindo which open for us the how-to of the yoga are *The Synthesis of Yoga*, the *Letters on Yoga* and *The Mother*.

These three texts can give us all we need in the way of guideposts of practice. But it has been said that many find Sri Aurobindo’s writings difficult of approach and need pre-digested servings before they can get to his works. Thus many have found the talks and writings of M. P. Pandit particularly helpful. Another approach has been compilations of the Master’s and Mother’s writings, letters and

talks. A. S. Dalal's continuing series has served this purpose, as have the compilations specifically made to explain the practice of the yoga. Three works of this kind making substantial use of Sri Aurobindo's letters are *Bases of Yoga*, *A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga* and *The Integral Yoga: Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Method of Practice*.

Now into this pool of literature meant to make the practice of the Integral Yoga more accessible, has come Jugal Kishore Mukherjee's *The Practice of the Integral Yoga*. This work is not a compilation of Sri Aurobindo's letters on yoga or of the Mother's talks; nor is it a primer of yoga practice in the style of M. P. Pandit. Yet, in a way, it

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is all these and more. Springing from the author's many years as a teacher at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, its prose is marked by the friendly enthusiasm of sharing though hardly lacking in the analytical rigor for

which Jugal Kishore has become well known. At 350 odd pages, the paperback is not verbose, is easy to read, perceptive and practical. Best of all, it brings together some of the most helpful quotes from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, weaving them into its text in contextual ways which make them much more potent than in their isolated placement in compilations.

In its organization of materials, the book displays the working of an incisive selecting intuition which picks out the most relevant aspects from all the major yogic works of Sri Aurobindo to form its chapters. Thus, though the contents of the chapters derive their effectiveness largely from quotes taken from Sri Aurobindo's letters and the Mother's talks, the focus and logic of the chapters seem to be drawn from *The Mother* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*. In this, it appears the author gives primacy of position to *The Mother* as the principal practical text of the Integral Yoga – a refreshing and penetratingly direct approach seldom seen before in books of this kind.

After spending the first two chapters developing, from the Mother's practical hints, some basic daily attitudes and habits of sadhana (corresponding to the *yamas* and *niyamas* of other schools, though much more subtle and psychological in this case), the author launches into eight

chapters based on the approaches developed by Sri Aurobindo in *The Mother*. The first five of these chapters elaborate on the famous triple formula of "aspiration, rejection and surrender." In the process the author clarifies context and specialized sense pertaining to these terms and repeatedly invokes the key inner movements of the yoga. For example, before embarking on a discussion of surrender (Ch. VII, "On Self-surrender to the Divine"), the author prepares the ground by interposing a chapter "On Opening and Receptivity." In this chapter, the primacy of these two terms "opening" and "receptivity," which Sri Aurobindo evokes as central in *The Mother* is discussed so as to awaken the reader to their meaning, importance and inner intuition. Quotations such as the following abound, which leave one in no doubt that (1) this yoga is done not by one's unaided effort but by reliance on the Mother's Force; and (2) becoming aware of the working of the Mother's Force as soon and as completely as possible is among the most important necessities of this yoga: "By remaining psychically open to the Mother, all that is necessary for work or Sadhana develops progressively, that is one of the chief secrets, the central secret of the Sadhana."

After these chapters on aspiration, rejection and surrender, the author returns to the first line of *The Mother* (which I have quoted earlier in this review). The two powers "that alone can effect ... the aim of our endeavour," the "call" and the Grace, are here taken up in separate chapters. In chapter VIII, the author engages in a most interesting and illuminating discussion relating to the "call" vis-à-vis prayer. The forms of and differences between aspiration and prayer are here brought out in bold relief. Grace is dealt with in two succeeding chapters – "How to Invoke the Divine's Grace?" and "Personal Effort and the Divine Grace." This focus on Integral Yoga as seen through *The Mother* is then followed by chapters which elaborate the sadhana as dealt with in *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

Here, the discussion revolves at first around the Yoga of Works, then the Yoga of Love and then the Yoga of Knowledge. Important elements of these aspects of sadhana are brought together in these chapters, such as the problem of right action in the Yoga of Works, the place of human relationships in the Yoga of Love and practical and legitimate aspects and methods for meditation in the Yoga of Knowledge. The development and transformation of the will, the premier importance of equality and its constant practice and the meaning and methods of psychic awakening are succeeding concerns considered in following chapters before approaching the perfection of the mental-vital-physical-subconscient instrumentality of the sadhaka.

The perfection of the human instrumentality is a specific concern of the Integral Yoga not usually addressed by other spiritual paths. The necessity for perfecting the instruments arises in this yoga because it envisages a divine life on earth. For this a divine consciousness is not enough, a divine expression through divine instruments is also necessary. Sri Aurobindo deals with this aspect of the yoga in the section on the Yoga of Self-Perfection in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Jugal Kishore addresses these instruments of experience and expression in the concluding chapters of his book. These are divided unambiguously into “Sadhana of the Mind”, “Sadhana of the Vital”, “Sadhana of the Body” and “Sadhana During our Body’s Sleep”. Each of these forms of consciousness is given a clear exposition, using an analytical intelligence and perceptive quotes. Particularly the sadhana of the body

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brings out the place of physical transformation in the Integral Yoga – its difficulties and its glorious future. Considering the earlier masterful full-length study *The*

Destiny of the Body by the author, the chapter on the sadhana of the body here receives a clear and concise treatment.

The book finishes with a chapter on the hostile forces and how to overcome them and a last one on the right attitude to take towards the circumstances of life (framed as the question – “Is All that Happens in Life Always for the Best?”). All in all, I have no hesitation in saying that this is one of the best books written by anyone other than Sri Aurobindo or the Mother addressing the practice of the Integral Yoga. The themes it marshalls, its organization of chapters, the profusion of its carefully selected quotes and the easy and clear flow of its logic makes it perhaps the most comprehensive, approachable and useful study to the serious person interested in practicing the Integral Yoga. It is difficult to fault, with the minor exception of its sometimes over-analytical temper – an occasional idiosyncrasy of its author – which asserts its mental interference, though rarely, in the otherwise luminous clarity of unfoldment.

— Debashish Banerji

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Nirodbaran: *Divinity’s Comrade*

Ed. Hemant Kapoor; Published by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry; Price Rs. 200.00, 639 pp.



This book, brought out to felicitate Nirodbaran on the occasion of his birth centenary, has four most felicitous things about it. These are i) the glowing photograph on the cover page which seems to have captured the spirit of Nirod-da dear to countless Aurobindonians, ii) the happy title of the volume, iii) the very first section consisting of nearly 240 pages of vintage Nirodbaran, and iv) some really fine articles in the rest of the book.

We are told by the editor that the volume is divided into the following four sections: a) a selection from Nirodbaran’s writings, b) articles dwelling on many aspects of his achievements, c) accounts of memorable contacts with him, and d) general articles dedicated to him.

The first section of the book, as I said earlier, is indeed vintage Nirodbaran. It begins with a facsimile of a *Bonne Fête* message from the Mother to Nirodbaran on his birthday in 1969. The two poems of Nirodbaran that follow are indeed two of the best written by him and I commend the editor for his excellent taste in selecting them for this volume. Those who would like to savour the special quality of Nirodbaran’s correspondence with Sri Aurobindo should read Sri Aurobindo’s letter to him, found on pages 12 to 15 of this volume. Once again, take this brief letter from Nirodbaran to his Guru: “I tried to meditate but I had to simply give it up, and sleep came in and with it what confused dreams!” Or, see Sri Aurobindo’s reply on page 61 to Nirod-da’s complaint that he who was a cheerful fellow at school and college became the Man of Sorrows, an epithet used by Sri Aurobindo to refer to him, only after he took up Sri Aurobindo’s yoga!

The subsection entitled “Talks with Sri Aurobindo Apropos of India” is a very welcome part of this volume. This has been taken from Nirodbaran’s *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*. These are talks which Sri Aurobindo had with a few of his disciples while he was recovering from a thigh fracture sustained in 1938. This was the period when Sri Aurobindo was writing the first three Books of *Savitri*, which describe Aswapati’s mighty spiritual experiences which were Sri Aurobindo’s own. Even while maintaining at one level a oneness with such a high consciousness he was able to deal dynamically with the world outside, and

analyse its problems and discuss men and matters as if he belonged to this world. The excerpts presented here deal with India and its problems and have a great contemporary relevance. Similar observations made by Sri Aurobindo on India and its problems can also be found in various places in the two volumes of Nirodbaran's correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, which belongs to a slightly earlier period. An independent monograph on Sri Aurobindo on India as revealed through these volumes of Nirodbaran would have been a valuable and timely publication on the occasion of Nirod-da's birth centenary.

Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo is represented here by a chapter entitled "The House of the Lord" from the book. For those who read this piece for the first time, a reference to its source would have been very helpful. "Sri Aurobindo as Guru" is another exquisite piece that has the characteristic Nirodbaran mark on it, disarmingly simple, and candid. It is my personal feeling that it would have made excellent sense if this entire first section were published independently as an anthology. There is a real need for a Nirodbaran anthology. Besides, that would have helped by making this book less massive.

The second section begins with a very urbane and well-crafted article reviewing Nirodbaran's life and achievements by the editor of the volume. Iyengar's "The Importance of Being Nirod" is a warm tribute to the multifaceted personality of Nirodbaran, and has the virtue of having the right size for an article of that nature. It has also two articles on Nirodbaran as a poet, the kinds of articles I would have liked to see more of. K. D. Sethna's "Inner Sight and Inner Song" is one of the best things I have ever read on Nirodbaran as a poet. His classification of Nirodbaran's poetic performance into classical, romantic and a union of the two is a superb critical insight. Sethna gives us a framework which helps us to appreciate the rare quality of Nirodbaran's poetry. I think with this article Sethna pays the highest tribute to his poet-friend, of taking him seriously as a poet. Gautam Ghosal's "Nirodbaran: Poet" is a brief essay which focuses on the poetic style of Nirodbaran.

Richard Hartz's "Nirodbaran, the Scribe" describes in some detail with the help of a few examples the truly stupendous work that was done by Nirodbaran as Sri Aurobindo's scribe in the final six years of the composition of *Savitri*. He succeeds in showing in what sense Nirodbaran has indeed performed "a labour to the gods impossible". Nirodbaran's service as a scribe of

Sri Aurobindo is a splendid example of egoless offering of one's capacities and faculties in the service of the Divine, and all genuine lovers of *Savitri* are ever so grateful to him for this act.

Deshpande's article is a leisurely appreciation of the classic that Nirodbaran's *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* is and it succeeds in conveying to us its beauty and appeal which has made it somewhat of a Bhagavat Purana for the devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He brings out clearly the unique position of the book in the growing body of the Aurobindonian literature.

Manoj Das Gupta's "Nirod-da" is a witty and loving tribute to Nirodbaran and it brings out the nature of the special relationship which Nirodbaran had with Sri Aurobindo. Das Gupta shows that if God is "an eternal child playing an eternal game" Nirodbaran was indeed a companion to such a God. Sudha's "Nirod-da" is one of the few articles which give us a peep into the early life of Nirodbaran. When Dilip Kumar Roy arranged for Nirodbaran to have a meeting with the Mother during his first visit to Pondicherry in early 1930, while on his way back from London, he prepares himself for the meeting with great earnestness. He writes, "That day I didn't eat fish or meat in the hotel!" When he met her, he did pranam at her feet and she blessed him. He continues, "Then, by

There is plenty here for the admirer and fan of Nirodbaran ... a veritable feast of Nirodbaraniana.

Jove! She started looking at me and looking at me and looking at me, smiling and smiling and smiling... I didn't know what to do.

She poured smiles as if she had found a lost soul. ... She remarked to her attendants, 'He is very shy! He is very shy!'" Through details like this Sudha succeeds in creating a living portrait of Nirod-da. Bishakha Ray (translated from the original Bengali) and Dimitry Melgunov pay their loving tributes to Nirodbaran in verse.

Section three of this volume, according to the editor, contains articles from writers about their memorable contacts with Nirodbaran. There are some good articles in this section, such as Prema Nandakumar's "Valmiki's Bharadwaja" and Shraddhavan's "My Personal Contacts with Nirod-da" and Satyajit Ghosh's "Nirod-da — 'An Outstretched Hand' upon my Life". In a few of these articles, Nirodbaran has been used as a mirror in which the writers preen themselves. This, I guess, is to some extent unavoidable because when one begins to talk about one's contact with a great man, one doesn't realise when one shifts the focus on to oneself from the great man. Ananda Reddy's "Glimpses of His Inner Quest" takes us to giddy

heights of philosophy in his conversation with Nirodbaran. "An Interview with Nirodbaran" by Supriyo Bhattacharya gives us interesting glimpses of many early Aurobindonians and also some valuable guidance from Nirodbaran about the sadhana of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. Then there is the sincere tribute paid to Nirodbaran in "Among the Rishis" by Daiva Tamosaityte. Arun Vaidya's "Nirod-da: Happy Birthday Centenarian Child" is a loving tribute of an admirer who is full of appreciation for Nirodbaran's humour, poetry, and sadhana. It is a scholarly presentation complete with bibliographical references. Franz's article on "Nirod-da and Auroville" describes some of Nirodbaran's visits to Auroville and how some Aurovillians felt encouraged and blessed by them. Priti Ghosh, Jhumur and Bani bring us sweet vignettes of Nirodbaran as a teacher and an elder in the family. Debashish Banerji in his brief article reveals a rich vein in the quarries of Nirodbaran's humour. Ameeta Mehra, Anuradha and Payal Adhikari reveal in their tributes facets of Nirodbaran as a teacher and guide in yoga. Aster's "A 'Presence' in Time..." is a tribute that has the muffled intensity of a prose poem. They are all worth reading because they are all written from the heart.

Finally, there is a section consisting of articles inspired by Nirodbaran's achievements as a poet, as a biographer, etc. In fact, in the academic world such articles normally constitute the bulk of a felicitation volume, although in this volume they seem to have found a place through the editor's special grace. One doesn't have always to praise somebody to his face to show how much he is admired. There are more sophisticated ways of showing one's admiration and gratitude. And this is what this section tries to do. Ranajit Sarkar's fine article "Poetry: A Union of Sound and Sense" is an exploration of the relationship between sound and sense in poetry. "Remembering Mrinalini Devi" is an appreciation of Nirod-da's biography of the extraordinary woman who was Sri Aurobindo's wife. Rameshwar Shaw's article on "Aesthetic and Literary Theory of Sri Aurobindo" makes one wish that the article were longer. Alok Pande in his article speaks of medical practice as sadhana. Karan Singh has contributed an ebullient essay on Sri Aurobindo's message complete with Sri Aurobindo's poem "Who", which the author has recited to several audiences with magical effect.

On the whole, there is plenty here for the admirer and fan of Nirodbaran, – 640 pages of writing, most of it of a good quality. The editor has done an excellent job, although he has been probably a little too liberal in his choice of material. A slimmer volume with the first section brought out separately as an anthology and fewer

articles in each of the remaining sections would have made this an outstanding felicitation volume. But what we now have is a veritable feast of Nirodbaraniana and for Rs. 200 only, this book of 640 pages is a very good buy. My suggestion to admirers of the great man is, "Grab your copy before the book is all sold out." Felicitation volumes do not normally have second editions!

Before I conclude, I would like to leave with you one thought. Has anybody thought of bringing out "The Complete Works of Nirodbaran"? As it is, Nirodbaran has become obligatory secondary reading for all serious students of Sri Aurobindo, and I dare say that as time goes by, this will be all the more so.

— Mangesh Nadkarni

Mangesh Nadkarni is a retired professor of Linguistics, who loves to read Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and to speak and write about them. He has authored three books currently available with SABDA: Hindu Muslim Unity, Problems of Human Unity in Sri Aurobindo's Light and Savitri: A Brief Introduction.



Guardians of Oneness and other tales from Equals One

Medhananda; Published by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry; Price Rs. 225.00, 199 pp.

The Way out is Up and other stories from Equals One

Medhananda; Published by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry; Price Rs. 225.00, 155 pp.

The books under review *The Way out is Up and other stories from Equals One* and *Guardians of Oneness and other tales from Equals One* by Medhananda contain collections of stories published in '= $\bar{1}$ ', an unusual journal with intriguing title and a novel get-up. I was a regular reader of this journal way back in the 1970s because I admired the original and innovative way Medhananda unravelled the mysteries of the philosophical and metaphysical subtleties and niceties of Aurobindonian thought in the form of 'stories'. To call these collections 'stories' may stretch the definition of 'story' a little beyond its connotation. Sometimes they are allegories, sometimes anecdotes, philosophical essays, humorous skits or playlets, dialogues, science fiction and what not. But whatever they are, they are full of 'illuminating humour,

provocative new viewpoints and symbols that both veil and unveil deep spiritual realities'. Perhaps the 'veiling' is the result of the scientific jargon Medhananda employs quite often in these collections which are puzzling because their meanings are known only to the educated readers, that too those who are familiar with the frontiers of science. The style that he adopts, however eminently suitable to the subject with which he deals, suffers from lack of familiarity and this very novelty is Medhananda's forte and his obsession. The myriad forms and modes of narration he employs mirroring his scholarship and depth of understanding, though commendable, suffer from a certain lack of unity and the abruptness with which he begins and ends his 'stories' sometimes robs the reader of the full enjoyment he would have otherwise had. This is not to detract from the merit of what he writes for we should be indebted to him for his excellent efforts to introduce Aurobindonian thought to the western public as well as others.

My first impression of Medhananda after reading his stories was that he was a philosopher, a visionary, a futurist, an ecologist, a psychologist and a scientist all rolled into one. He wore a big 'rudraksha mala' around his neck which seemed somewhat incongruous with his western looks. He gave enough evidence of his penchant for symbols when he and Yvonne Artaud took a few of us to a Vishnu Temple (preserved by the Archeological Survey of India) near Pondicherry, and explained the symbolism of the sculptures on the outer wall of the sanctum sanctorum. He must have taken to his heart what Sri Aurobindo meant when He said that the whole manifestation was the symbol of God. It would be an understatement to say that his stories are permeated with symbols and symbolism.



Let us now take a closer look at these stories. The book *Guardians of Oneness* contains some of the longer pieces while the other *The Way out is Up* offers the most striking shorter ones. The recurrent theme of the stories in the first book is Oneness and unity of Consciousness. The title story 'Guardians of Oneness' is a curious story, almost an incredible story where there is a

perfect symbiosis between man and animals and Medhananda goes even one step further when he says man learnt many things from the mammoths and mastodons and later on from horses. He invokes the legend of Ganessa,

the elephant God, God of Wisdom and Prosperity, who is supposed to have written the Mahabharata as a scribe to Maharishi Vyasa who dictated it to him. Medhananda dreams of the future life of mankind which extends to the galaxies and beyond, of the life of man when his evolution is complete when he is totally identified in consciousness with the whole of manifested and unmanifested universes. The Mother talked of replacing the organs of man by Centres of Power or the Chakras and it is interesting to note that Medhananda has incorporated this vision of the Mother in his story 'One Million A. D.' He introduces the future man thus, 'He seemed like a golden alabaster statue come to life, almost transparent and with seven separate and distinguishable sources of light shimmering through the skin.'

The illuminating theme of the first book becomes the warp and woof of the fabric that Medhananda weaves in the second book. The title story 'The Way out is Up' is a humorous playlet whose characters are God, Man, Mother Earth, Telephone Exchange and Galactic Cybernetics. Man is hanging dangerously on a precipice, psychological and physical; psychological because his mental evolution has come to a dead end, physical because he faces extinction because of overpopulation. Mother Earth after offering some bizarre solutions advises him to contact Galactic Cybernetics who offers the only solution, evolving out of man and becoming a Superman. There are many other stories, playlets etc. all exemplifying the theme 'evolution of consciousness'.

In conclusion Medhananda's stories make us think about man's evolutionary crisis and the solution offered by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to come out of it. These stories may not be understood by children but humanity at large is still beset with juvenile incomprehension about its own destiny. The panacea that Medhananda offers is 'evolve and become God'. Then will the earth see the advent of the Sons of God and 'the Wilderness is Paradise now' as Omar Khayyam says in his *Rubaiyat*.

While the printing and other associated things are excellent I feel the price is a little on the higher side.

— K. Balasubramaniam
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Medhananda's stories make us think about man's evolutionary crisis and the solution offered by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to come out of it.



Among The Not So Great

Prabhakar (Batti); Published by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry; Price Rs. 80.00, 276 pp.

*“Don’t speak. Act.
Don’t announce. Realise.”*

The Mother

“Every one has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it and use it.”

Sri Aurobindo

Let the title not put you off, – you are in for a most pleasant surprise; for here are innumerable stories about a few of the many fortunate souls who heard the Call and responded immediately (or instantly) to leave all and give themselves joyfully to serve the Mother and the Master and do their work.

The unquestionable Summon and unquestioning response is illustrated by Dara’s story:

Dara: Sir, I am leaving for England for my studies. If in mid-ocean the “Call” comes, I will jump over and swim back.

Sri Aurobindo: Now you are ready. You can come over to pursue your Sadhana.

There are so many such amusing yet deeply instructive pointers and lessons to be learnt by reading the colourful lives of these simple persons, all of them sincere in their own way, and shining with an inner beauty – not always physically so – but truly doing the work given to them whether it suited them or not, without questioning. This is what may be called an unconditional surrender to the Mother’s Will.

And what comes through, when we look at the way each one of these disciples lived, is the way the Mother and Sri Aurobindo worked on their natures, lifting them up, leading them forward from where they were in their own stage of spiritual evolution.

In observing the obvious disparity between the actual and outward activities visible on the surface and the inner beauty of which the Mother and the Master were fully aware, the author constantly asks what was the truth of the being, the *raison d’être* of the individual’s life here on earth, the inner growth not visible to our eyes but perhaps felt with an inner vision: “What was the real person? Can we ever know it?”

This book appeals to us by the very naturalness with which it is written (we will dwell on style later). Batti does his work as a chronicler with great diligence, respect and above all with good humour. Does not Sri Aurobindo tell us: “Sense of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have got utterly out of balance – it is unbalanced enough already – and rushed to blazes long ago.”

So our writer focuses his full attention on the living out, the embodiment of the attitudes basic to life, work and action – he carefully avoids any intellectual ‘achievements’.

Take for instance the way Bhola-da reprimands our Nolini-da, Secretary of the Ashram: “‘Eto poda, lekha lekhi kore, ki tikit lagate janen na?’ (‘After all the reading and writing you have done, you don’t know what stamp to stick?’)”

Well, he (the author) dwells persistently on the simple, the spontaneous, the true and misses no occasion to point out the opposite trends that have caught up with us and smothered us almost entirely: the complicated, the pretentious, the false. I make haste to explain that this finger of reproach is pointed at the general atmosphere of the Ashram, reflecting the forces – giant and dark and ugly enough – with which our poor world is struggling.

We do not deny the intrinsic values of happy trust, child-like abandon, selfless giving through work and service, the deep inner communion for which our Ashram stands.

There shines through in all these stories the golden seal of the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s direct action.

So Batti is as if constantly telling us too through these pages packed with suggestive sharing: “You had better do your best (like these shining examples of past glory) at all moments, in achieving and realising, to be just yourself! The result is not in your hands nor do you need to care about it – if your sincerity is perfect!”

For in a deep sense there shines through in all these stories the golden seal of the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s direct action, as we vividly feel it, for instance, when the Mother presses her foot on Nishikanto’s (Kobi-da’s) chest at his behest as he lay, almost helpless, in the Meditation Hall. And there are countless other subtle actions that show the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s direct intervention. The pages are replete and literally overflow with, on one side, this utter unquestioning physical and even vital surrender and, on the other, the absolute faith of the sadhaka or the sadhika.

To quote Sri Aurobindo, “Faith is the soul’s witness to something not yet manifested, achieved or realised, but which the Knower within us, even in the absence of all indications, feels to be true or supremely worth following or achieving. This thing within us can last even when there is no fixed belief in the mind, even when the vital struggles and revolts and refuses.”

Nearly all these special souls, in apparently ordinary activities and simple work, show their real mettle living out in body and mind and heart that mantra: “Let us work as we pray for indeed work is the body’s best prayer to the Divine.”

Work is the key-note through nearly all these stories, for the author is himself a self-effacing worker. Yes, the joy of work and the unswerving love for the Mother are amply shown in the following extracts. Let us look at the aspect of love:

“Bula-da took his work as his sadhana, his lifetime offering to his Gurus. His devotion to it, through it to his Gurus, knew no bounds of time, weather or mood. He could not tolerate anything, be it a person, an event or a personal feeling, to come between him and its accomplishment. ...

“Once the Mother was slightly indisposed. She had to go frequently to the WC. Sometime in the evening Amrita-da (or Pavitra-da?) informed Bula-da about the Mother’s condition and added that the flush was stuck and water was constantly gushing out. It had to be repaired. Bula-da was in a fix. At that time of the evening, none could enter Her room, leave alone repairing a flush. Bula-da thought – and acted. The night passed uneventfully. Next morning the flush was repaired.... But how did it all go so well the night through? No one probably gave it serious thought. The fact (found out much later) was that while others slept, Bula-da was awake on duty. He had gone up, onto the terrace of the Mother’s room. He sat near the overhead tank and kept watching the bathroom window. He closed the control valve on the pipe leading to the WC. When the Mother switched on the light he would open the valve. When the Mother put off the light, he would again close the valve. Thus he passed the night, hand on the valve and eye on the window for the tell-tale light. Who knows, some other Light may have shone on Bula-da, for She surely Knew.”

The second is of a different nature but equally intense in bringing out the importance of even seemingly unimportant objects. Poornananda was like the many others who “poured not only their sweat but also their heart-felt love into the job”:

“Yogananda took his friend [and assistant Poornananda] to a godown full of old iron items – rods, hinges, nettings, etc. They were mostly used items salvaged to be re-used. Those days, and for a few years after, nothing was thrown away, even nails were extracted, straightened out and put in barrels according to size for ‘re-use’. The ‘throw-away’ mode of life was not yet the craze. Yogananda put a wire brush into Poornananda’s hands and asked him to clean all the rust off the old steel items. He hoped the work would take a month or a month and a half, and he would have peace. He was hopelessly off the mark – in half the estimated time Poornananda was again after Yogananda for work. Yogananda, a little surprised, a little more suspicious, went to inspect. He was in for another kind of surprise. All the old iron was shining like stainless steel.”

But all are not yet ready for such an attitude at the beginning and even though the youth of today may find some details childish or take this harping on the past as a ‘cry in the wilderness’, still there is no hiding of the hard facts that work, discipline, consecration, simple living, gentle (or sharply expressed) mental sympathy and a friendly untrammelled attitude towards others are some of the values on which the world was forged and by which it is now a more liveable place.

The sweetest and yet most poignant notes struck in these sagas of the soul in its climb upwards are to be found in the description of the passing on.

That is why the Mother insists so much on the example, the atmosphere we create. All this takes time and requires persistent unflagging efforts. To begin she advises, “... impose upon yourself, by constant self-control, a deliberate attitude of all-comprehending kindness.”

Another development that has come to stay in our life and general consciousness is the plethora of technical appliances both at home and at work. These physical labour-saving devices have indeed given us more time for other activities and new realms of progress. But do these enterprises or these fields of development contribute to our total growth – outer and inner? Indeed this too is a knotty issue that is brought up by the author. Since we pass through spiralling curves in evolution, often apparently descending before we may rise again to a newer and wider height, there is no ready answer or easy unravelling of these complex knots.

The sweetest and yet most poignant notes struck in these sagas of the soul in its climb upwards are to be found in the description of the passing on. One feels the great

delicacy in treatment, the sensitivity and the awe of one who, as a mighty helper, has watched the arrival of this Gold God. For an ordinary man's mind Death is a mystery or simply something one cannot come to terms with. But rather than dwell on the evident absence or loss, our author encourages us to face the problem and continue the great work already started and often well on its way: For "...the Legend once lost – found – must live on – in us, through us."

Does not this remind us of Sri Aurobindo's poem? –

"Life, death, – death, life; the words have led
for ages
Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed
Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages
Are opened, liberating truths undreamed,
Life only is, or death is life disguised –
Life a short death until by life we are surprised."

Apart from the mood created and the rich substance of experience shared, this book makes delightful reading. Our storyteller is truly in his element as he describes "a child at his serious play", or observes, "the man was more than just his physical self". Take too the feelings Batti has for his closest senior relatives: "Pantulu walked through life unafraid. His sword was forthrightness, kept sharp by his temper [he was called the Thunderer!], and sincerity was his shield." (comment within brackets reviewer's)

"What tributes to pay to such as these? Enough to remember them in our quiet moments, uncovering their footprints on the dust of forgetfulness. It could help to measure our own footsteps with theirs. They are our path-finders, part of the way. Oblivion cannot be their resting place."

There is often too a fine play on words like this indication on attitude: "Means were less but meanings were more" or, "Work was for them life and life was to do the Mother's will – their sadhana."

There is some mystic touch which awakens us to truth or evokes a deeper beauty: "It would almost seem the Gods await some excuse to bless us only if we would keep still and maybe lower our heads and raise our eyes." Images such as these, which gambol or gallop through most of the pages, sweep a reader quite off his or her feet!

A word must be mentioned about the leader-quotes chosen for each of the old Ashramites. They are varied and from different sources, both known and little known. All these pithy or caustic, witty or just amusing lines make subtly thought-provoking reading. Take the one for Mridu-di presumably made up by Batti:

"Be to her virtues very kind –
Be to her faults a little blind."

To read this book is to enter into the mind and feelings of the writer who is also not just a chronicler but an artist – painting a picture of the Ashram or 'Garden' as Batti calls it – 'we' being some of its weeds, or countryside flowers as I prefer to call them.

To sum up, these sadhakas and sadhikas were truly great and, though the music of Sunil expresses the depth and height of his visions, we will end with an extract from Bihari-da's diary of unpublished reflections:

"Because of the Mother I could grow in my quest for Truth. Her general protection and Her taking of me into Her family of many children was solely responsible for my spiritual progress. Otherwise it would have been impossible.

"She has passed away but She has given us a world where we can stand freely, spiritually and psychically. Although India is not ready as yet, it is a certainty that spiritual India is emerging and true personalities are coming forward with Divine Truth. None will be able to hinder the work that is destined."

— Richard Pearson

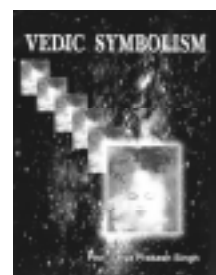
Richard arrived in India from England to join his father in 1946 at the age of eleven. He studied at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education where he teaches Natural History and is a captain of gymnastics. He is the editor of the book Flowers and Their Messages.

Vedic Symbolism

Prof. S. P. Singh; Published by Maharshi Sandipani Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan, New Delhi; Price Rs. 795.00, 614 pp.

Professor Satya Prakash Singh is an outstanding scholar devoted to the study of the Rik Mantras. He is already well-known to the world of scholars as the author of a brilliant book entitled *The Philosophy of Dirghatamas*. The book under review is a fruitful study of the Rik Mantras under several important heads. It is as authentic and scholarly as the other book.

The book opens with a survey of previous attempts at understanding the Mantras — Nirukta, Upanishads, and *The Secret of the Veda* by Sri Aurobindo. It draws our attention to the theory of threefold interpretation of the Mantras put forward and illustrated by the Nirukta. It finds



an excellent corroboration of this theory in the significant parables and other relevant texts of the Upanishads like the Brihadaranyaka, Aitareya and Kena. It briefly discusses Sri Aurobindo's approach to the Vedas and the value of his theory of *adhyatmika* interpretation. The survey is both succinct and masterly. Through this the book successfully makes out a case for a symbolical interpretation of the Rik Mantras.

It is worthwhile to note how Professor Singh has accomplished his task, through a few instances culled from his book. First of all, there is a hymn called the Frog Hymn (7-103). It is a hymn seen by Vasistha. If we read it, we may understand how the poet looks upon common creatures and expresses his thoughts through them. He uses them as symbols of things belonging to a completely different order of existence. Professor Singh has taken note of all important clues provided by the poet and unfolds to us the underlying significance of the hymn. One notable insight he has given is this: "the ... frog after getting itself bathed in and filled with the heavenly water and producing the bellowing voice of cow stands for the full-fledged seer having realised the thousand-syllabled *Vak* and thus being in a position to make available the same to other human beings also." (p. 478) In this connection he refers to Max Müller's comment on this hymn. His comment is that the hymn is a satire on priests. Evidently, his conclusion is due to a comparison drawn between the croaking of frogs and the recitation of the mantras by priests. Professor Singh rejects this by saying that the comparison is not intended to put the priests in a bad light. He thinks that even Yaska's interpretation of the hymn as a mere prayer to frogs does not go deep and bring out its *adhyatmika* aspect.

To go to the second example from the book, let us refer to the interpretation of another important concept, namely, the Horse Sacrifice. After a detailed study the author comes to the conclusion that the most appropriate and authentic explanation of this sacrifice is to be found in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad where the horse is shown "to symbolise *Prajapati* on the divine plane, the sun on the physical and the *Atman* on the spiritual." (p. 470) Given the relevant facts the author has collected and the order in which he has arranged them we realise how his conclusion is both natural and inevitable.

Now we come to the third and last example. This is related to a mantra (1-164-20) seen by Dirghatamas. It speaks about two birds (*dvasuparna*) perched on a tree.

They stand for the two realities of Brahman and Jivatman. This mantra appears in the Mundaka Upanishad (3-1-1) as a quotation. It has been elaborated by both the Veda and the Upanishad. By studying the two elaborations, one in the light of the other, Professor Singh rightly concludes that the history of Indian philosophy would have followed a different course of development and produced a non-escapist view of the world, if the elaboration given by the Veda had not been neglected by the leaders of ancient India. There is a profound truth in this statement. Therefore it deserves to be investigated by all scholars of Vedanta.

Professor Singh's book is both insightful and instructive. No serious student of Indian philosophy, particularly of the Veda, can afford to neglect this work. It will surely be a source of unfailing help to all who are generally interested in the teachings of this scripture.

— N. Jayashanmugam

Prof. Jayashanmugam is a retired professor of Philosophy, Annamalai University.

Remembering The Mother with Gratitude

A Collection of Reminiscences; Published by Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry; Price Rs. 100.00, 120 pp.



The book is about the Mother's interaction with the children and disciples of the Ashram from the 1940s to the 1970s. As the Ashram went through different phases, the Mother's physical proximity to her disciples either diminished or increased. In the '30s, she was not as much accessible to the first generation of sadhaks as she was to the children of the Playground in the '40s and '50s. Chitra Sen, Aster Patel, Richard Pearson, Gauri Pinto, Shobha Mitra and Krishna Chakravarty were among those lucky children, now grey-haired venerable disciples sharing with us their golden moments with the Mother. This period is particularly interesting because we generally don't associate the Mother with athletic or gymnastic competitions or dramatic programmes or guiding the children in their day-to-day activities. She told them to dress up neatly, cut their nails short and recommended "Horlick's malted milk" for the one-year-old Gauri Pinto. At the same time, she infused in them her consciousness almost without their knowledge, so that she was a complete Mother to them. A whole new generation grew up under the Mother's care

during this period and what we get in this book is a sample of the gold which is still available in plenty. I hope more attempts are made to glean the memories of this generation before it is too late.

The second set of recollections is by Prema Nandakumar, Georges Van Vrekhem and Varadharajan, one of the first Tamilians to settle in Auroville. Here, the Mother is physically distant but psychologically near. She is the Mother who inspires us from within. The three had only a few meetings with her but these became the turning-points of their lives. The story of how Prema Nandakumar (Srinivasa Iyengar's daughter) wrote her Ph. D. thesis, the first of its kind, on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is interesting. When the Mother came to know about it, she said, "I want to see the girl," and immediately gave the manuscript to Amal Kiran for publication. The description of the interview that followed with the Mother is profoundly moving. Vrekhem, the well-known biographer of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, keeps us equally spell-bound by the story of his "initiation" through two silent interviews with the Mother in 1970. Varadharajan acquaints us with the beginnings of Auroville; he was among the group of Aurovillians that met the Mother every week in 1970. This is a facet of the Mother which many in the Ashram don't even know about. The City of Dawn is not just a good advertisement but a reality which was seriously discussed by the Mother with the first Aurovillians. It is another gold mine where more work should be done before the last Aurovillians who met the Mother are no more.

A whole new generation grew up under the Mother's care and what we get in this book is a sample of the gold which is still available in plenty. I hope more attempts are made to glean the memories of this generation before it is too late.

The only drawback of this book is that it is limited to the talks given by the above mentioned persons in a seminar held at SACAR (Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry) on the occasion of the 125th Birth Anniversary of the Mother. Giving a talk and listening to it is obviously different from writing an article for a book and reading it. For, after reading the book, one is left with the impression that many of the speakers have not said enough, or having awakened our interest, don't want to say more. Or they have generalised and even intellectualised, perhaps to keep personal details in the background. I wish they had not, for it is precisely these that the reader is interested in. Which is perhaps why they should have been persuaded to say more than what they actually said during the seminar, when a book was going to be published.

Nonetheless, the book is a commendable achievement and, I hope, many more books of this kind are produced.

Let me now write a few words in support of such reminiscences of the Mother, because of certain objections that have been raised against them. The first objection against them is that these memories are too personal and beautiful to be expressed. Then, the external events are so intricately woven with the inner that it is difficult to convey them. So many in the Ashram have thus preferred to remain publicly silent than spoil the experience with poor expression. Meanwhile, some have over-expressed them, which has perhaps given a bad reputation to such literature. But bad literature is no argument against the attempt to produce good literature of the same genre. Moreover, the difficulty of expression can sometimes be overcome by simply being sincere within the existing limitations of language and not trying to be too perfect, because you can never be perfect in these matters! What counts more is sincerity and that carries the language, as it were, and makes the expression adequate. The second objection is that what the Mother told them is personal and doesn't apply to others. To this my answer is, "The more personal, the better it is and the more interesting. And then what is personal? Are we not made up of the same basic universal elements?" Another reason for not sharing one's experience is that it might contradict another person's version of the same event. Now, this is good social behaviour but bad history in the making, because many, many personal points of view are what constitute objective history. Contradictions are bound to appear in dealing with the personalities of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother because we are basically looking at things from the wrong end – from the ignorant mind, whereas they operated from above it. This does not mean that we don't rationalise or only emotionalise but that we realise our limitations and not be too squeamish about accepting only one side of the Truth. Finally, we are not looking for intellectual statements in a book of reminiscences. It is the difference between reading *The Life Divine* and Nirodbaran's *Twelve Years* or *Champaklal Speaks*. The former will keep us intellectually busy for the next few centuries while in the latter we enter the sacred precincts, zoom in, and feel the living presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through the eyes of those who have been fortunate to be with them.

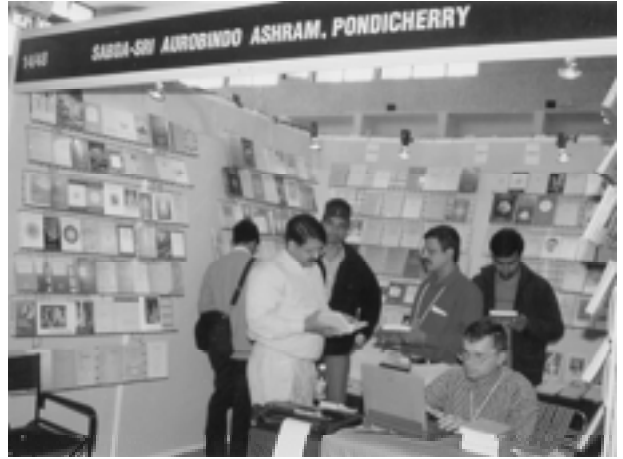
— Raman Reddy
Raman completed his studies at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in 1975. A member of the Ashram, he works at the Archives and Research Library. His interests include writing, and he has authored a book of short stories, *A New Panorama*, available with SABDA.

SABDA at the World Book Fair, New Delhi

Once again SABDA participated in India's premier event in the publishing sphere—the biennial World Book Fair held from 14 to 22 February 2004 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

Considering the size of the World Book Fair (almost 2,000 stalls spread across eight separate buildings), the publishers of spiritual and religious books were privileged to be accommodated in the hall closest to the main gate of the Book Fair. As a result large and diverse groups of visitors descended on this section and the wide range of material in numerous languages at SABDA's stall elicited vivid interest from all sorts of readers.

Some visitors, long-term customers of SABDA, came with our invitations in their hands and headed straight for the new releases. Others, drawn to spirituality but not yet very familiar with the Integral Yoga, spent their time browsing through A. S. Dalal's compilations, the All India Magazine booklets and



feels the need to remodel the present educational system. All in all, compared to the last World Book Fair, there has been a significant growth in interest. Books were sold not only in English and Hindi, but also in French, Spanish, Italian, Sanskrit, Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali.

Our publications were highlighted in an article "Spiritual Presence at the Fair" in *Fair Talk*, the Book Fair's official bulletin. Sri Aurobindo was introduced as "one of modern India's greatest thinkers ... [who] wrote penetratingly on the Gita, profusely on Yoga and Upanishads, extensively on education and spirituality." Special attention was drawn to the comprehensive book on flowers printed on art paper with over 600 colour photographs: "A scintillating shaft from SABDA's quiver is the book entitled *The Spiritual Significance of Flowers* Published in two parts the book is an exquisite presentation unfurling the beauty of 898 flowers in a subtle and fragrant language. Authored by The Mother who first met the Indian mystic Sri Aurobindo in 1914, ... the book is an exclusive publication available in English, German and French."

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SABDA also participated in the Vijayawada Book Festival held from 1 to 11 January 2004, in collaboration with Ashok Book Centre.



the Yoga in Everyday Life series. Teachers represented yet another unceasing stream of visitors. Mostly attracted to *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education*, the Integral Education series and to stories for children, their keen interest testifies to the palpable presence of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch and its teacher-training activities in the city. It also demonstrates how deeply the teaching community