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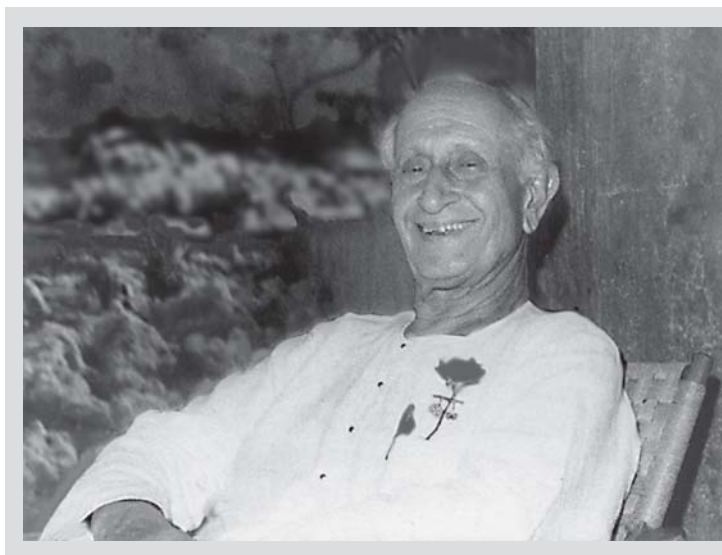
## Recent Publications

# Sabta

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Udar was one of the pillars of the Ashram—a man of immense enthusiasm and versatile abilities whose commitment to the Mother’s work is revealed in the book recently brought out to commemorate his birth centenary. Filled with more than 400 photographs and numerous remembrances, *Udar, one of Mother’s children* tells a remarkable story.



In this issue we present special features on Udar and Champaklal, a look at manuscript preservation in the Archives Library, and an article on integral psychology.

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## **Preserving the Manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo: Paper Conservation at the Archives Library**

*One of the essential tasks of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library is the preservation of the original manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This work had its beginnings when Kiran Kakad and another student, both still in the higher course, were approached by the Archives and asked to learn the required skills. After completing their higher course, they went to see the Mother at the end of November 1972. She gave them her blessings, and the next day they left for Delhi, where they learned microfilming and some basic techniques of paper conservation at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and at the National Archives. At that time they were taught a technique for laminating documents by hand.*

*Back in Pondicherry, they took up the work of microfilming all of the archived documents, an activity which was completed in the late 1980s. Meanwhile, they perceived that lamination might not be the best direction to pursue, and Kiran wrote to the British Library about the work they were undertaking. He was advised that the best method for conservation of the original documents was to store them in a climate-controlled room that was kept very clean and free of dust.*

*In 1975 Martha Orton, an American paper conservator living in the Ashram, initiated a detailed survey report on the Archives collection of Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts. Along with minor repairs on the manuscripts and some books, she fumigated the collection of books owned by Sri Aurobindo, which the Archives received some time between 1975 and 1980. During this time she also collaborated with the Handmade Paper Factory to make 100% cotton rag acid-free paper and board for folders and storage boxes for the Archives collection.*

*In the following article Barbie Dailey tells how she became involved in this work of manuscript conservation, sketches out some of the basic principles and techniques involved, and presents a case study involving the preservation of some sonnets written by Sri Aurobindo in 1939.*

**W**hen I first started work at the Archives and Research Library in the late 1970s, Martha Orton was working on manuscript preservation. It was she who designed our archival boxes; like her work, her design was simple and elegant. I was helping to catalog the Archives book collections and did not have the opportunity to work directly with Martha but was aware of what she was doing in the way of manuscript preservation.

A wonderful old man named Albert, who had once worked at the Ashram Press, was mending and binding books for the Archives and the Ashram Library. His techniques were what one often finds in commercial binderies here in India—abbreviated and unsophisticated. Though Albert had graduated to using a brush, one can still see local binders using their hands like brushes: dipping them into the paste, slapping it on and spreading it like jam.

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It was evident that a different sort of binding was needed. Albert and I had many duels, both verbally and with the brush, in trying to sustain a better standard. Had he not been the good-natured and patient man he was I might have had more scars, but Albert exemplified the traditional Tamil Christian who brought into his work the values he sought for in his life. In working with him I learned how not to bind a book; I also learned the efficacy of a quiet humility.

After some initial training with Albert and Biren-da, a long-haired elder *sadhak* who worked at the Ashram Press, I sought to take a course in book binding while on a visit to the USA. My sister ran her finger down a section in the Yellow Pages, stopping at random on a local binder. Bill Streeter is responsible for showing me a brand new world between the covers of a book. He brought into his teaching his own love of this craft. The training continued over the years through correspondence and subsequent visits. With time I began to learn conservation binding, wherein emphasis is placed on non-adhesive binding, using high-quality material with reversible techniques. I shall never forget the first book I bound and showed to Jayantilal Parekh, who was in charge of the Archives and Research Library. He looked at it, shook my hand heartily and said, "Congratulations!" Had I known how rare this praise was, coming from that exceptional man, I would surely have held on to his hand longer.

It was also Jayantilal-da who nudged me gently into paper conservation by giving me opportunities to learn. Sometime in the early 1990s, an experienced conservator from INTACH, Delhi, was invited to the Archives to introduce basic methods of deacidification. The Archives had no lab then. My colleague Susan and I began by deacidifying a page from the *Bande Mataram* using slaked lime and running water under an outdoor spigot in the garden at the Research Library. The work required a definite flexibility at the elbows and the knees.

As training progressed in sophistication, so too more opportunities became available to me in India and abroad; through internships, workshops, courses and conferences. One of the most memorable was with Don Etherington at Information Conservation Inc., North Carolina. Don is reputed to be one of the best fine bookbinders in the world; in 1965 he led the British and American teams to help preserve damaged books during the Florence floods. In 1966 I had the chance to visit Florence and witnessed the vivid marks of destruction; the dank smell of mold, high water marks on buildings and the ugly stains on works of art. Unknowingly, I had stepped into a new era when the attitude towards conservation would be redefined; when restoration would no longer be a question of hiding but of revealing, seeking to preserve the historic integrity of an item rather than compromising it. When I met Don at a workshop at the Indian Conservation Institute in Lucknow, twenty-eight years later, I was quick to ask if I could apply for an internship with him in paper conservation. After training with him I found his finest tool to be an accumulated knowledge sharply beveled into good practical advice. Further training in the USA at the Library of Congress, Yale University, Northeast Document Conservation Center, Blue Ridge Book Conservation and the Smithsonian Institute have helped to broaden my knowledge and given me much respect for professionalism.

The consensus among professional conservators is still the same when dealing with valuable collections: the less done the better. While updating one's knowledge and experience is of utmost importance, the

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guidelines keep changing. The boundaries between the various conservation disciplines – book, paper, photograph, art, etc. – become wider now; as conservation becomes a science, conservators become technicians. The general bylaw is simplicity, focusing more on non-invasive procedures, less on involved treatments.

Preventive conservation introduces methods that are less invasive while focusing on the quality of the environment for the good of the collection. It initiates high-quality storage materials for longevity, good housekeeping and climate-controlled storage areas, emphasizing optimal conditions in air quality, temperature and relative humidity. The Archives seeks to keep future deterioration to a minimum by focusing on these approaches for its collections. It has a strict hands-off policy which is possible because the documents have been microfilmed and are in the process of being scanned. The primary documents, which include the original manuscripts of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, are kept in a cold storage room with limited access. Each member of the Archives adds to the general well-being of the collection as he or she carries out the work of preservation, be it scanning, repairing, creating databases, re-housing or making boxes.

In a happy exchange over the years, we have invited professional conservators to help carry out surveys of the collections and offer further training in an effort to update our knowledge. For them, hands-on experience in this climate is a challenging opportunity to learn more. Though most professionals are well informed, there is scant research about document preservation in tropical climates and its attendant problems such as high saline content in the air, termites, high temperatures and humidity, and mold—and the effects they have on paper.

An interesting case that reflects this issue is a collection of sonnets written by Sri Aurobindo in 1939 and stored for many years in albums in an *almirah* near his room. In the early 1970s, they were carefully removed from their plastic enclosures and kept in cool storage. At the time of removal it was discovered that the plastic had melted around the manuscripts, resulting in a soft, sticky block of paper.

A sample of the paper from among these manuscripts was tested in September 2001 at the Smithsonian Institute, USA. A clear, uneven deposit of cellulose nitrate accretions was found on the surface of the manuscripts, the result of having been stored in the plastic enclosures in Pondicherry's hot and humid climate. All of the documents from this particular collection have acid burn, where acids from cellulose pentinitrate and camphor, both ingredients in the plasticizer (an additive that gives plastics durability and flexibility), have burned into the paper. This condition was further aggravated by the migration of acid from the iron gall ink with which the manuscripts were written.

From the collection of sonnets four pages were chosen, for which the only treatment carried out was a minimum amount of repair so that the manuscripts could be scanned safely without further fragmentation. The poems were written on machine-made wove paper. Over the years, because of poor environmental and storage conditions, the paper had become severely embrittled, especially in areas of staining, ink haloing and iron gall ink degradation. The original ink color is not easy to define because of the chemical damage to the ink and paper. The sonnets were most likely written in black ink consistent with iron gall, but later the colour of the ink turned to black-blue or gray-blue.

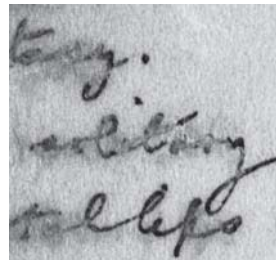
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The Archives has chosen to concentrate on strict climate control, as opposed to extensive treatment, for the preservation of these manuscripts. A safe micro-environment has been created by re-housing the manuscripts between imported, acid-free buffered interleafs, storing them in archival folders and boxes and keeping them in permanent cold storage. For editorial needs, scanned copies are used and not the originals.

All four pages exhibit large stained areas as a result of the acid burn. There is a pronounced formation of UV fluorescent halos (where areas fluoresce under ultraviolet light) around many of the inked areas (*see photo below, left*).



Haloing around the ink



Plastic coating over writing

With the use of raking light, a technique which places the light source to one side of the manuscript at a low angle in order to reveal surface distortions, a whitish sheen can be seen over the entire surface of the manuscript. This is especially noticeable within the borders of the letters (*see photo above, right*). This gives the manuscript an overall impression of being laminated (*see photo below, left*).



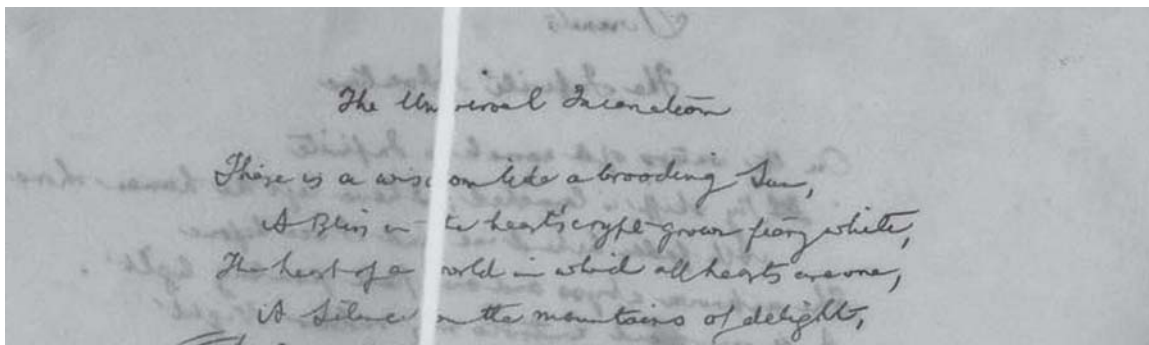
Sheen on surface of page



Cellulose nitrate crystals

In raking light, the cellulose nitrate crystallization can easily be seen on the surface of the paper (*see photo above, right*).

Before repair, each manuscript was scanned, along with its fragments. The photos at the top of the following page show only a portion of one scanned manuscript page and one fragment.



Before repair



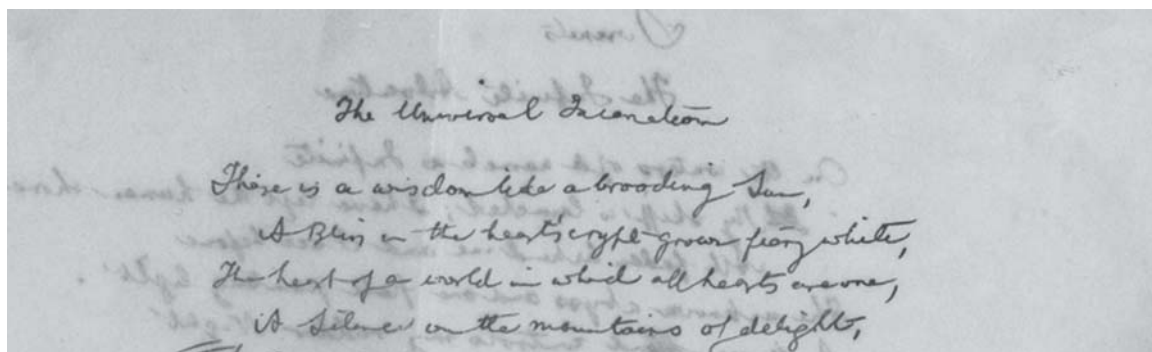
Fragment

In taking a “hands-off” approach, the fragments were scanned separately on both sides and the images inserted into their original positions on the scanned version of the manuscripts. This method facilitates the conservator’s task of finding the correct placement for the fragments without too much handling of the manuscripts. The scanned copy was then used as a template from which to work.

The repairs were carried out over a light table, a device which illuminates art work from below through a translucent cover mounted over fluorescent lights. Using tweezers, each fragment was placed in position and adhered with small strips or “band-aids” of Japanese paper and methyl cellulose. The strips were placed horizontally so as not to obstruct the text. Both sides of each page were repaired. The strips are barely visible, except in raking light.

The manuscripts are badly cockled in some areas as a result of their adverse storage conditions. It was not possible to align perfectly all the fragments on both sides of the documents. Some areas could not be repaired because of extreme undulations of the paper.

Despite these disadvantages, the original text is very legible on all four pages. Here is the same portion of the manuscript after being repaired.



After repair

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Although these damaged documents are extremely fragile, most of the text is intact, partly because of very limited access to them. Scanned copies of the manuscripts are kept with the treatment report in a separate folder and stored with the originals; another copy is kept for editorial use. Since further treatment might aggravate the documents, strict climate control and an acid-free environment are considered the best and least invasive practices for this collection.

The conservator, as conscious care-taker, is always aware of his or her part in the preservation of a collection. The high standards elicited from each decision, every treatment, one step at a time, make for a wonderful privilege and opportunity. To be able to help extend the life of the original writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, by however small a gesture, is a rare grace indeed.

### ***The Universal Incarnation***

*There is a wisdom like a brooding Sun,  
A Bliss in the heart's crypt grown fiery white,  
The heart of a world in which all hearts are one,  
A Silence on the mountains of delight,*

*A Calm that cradles Fate upon its knees;  
A wide Compassion leans to embrace earth's pain;  
A Witness dwells within our secrecies,  
The incarnate Godhead in the body of man.*

*Our mind is a glimmering curtain of that Ray,  
Our strength a parody of the Immortal's power,  
Our joy a dreamer on the Eternal's way  
Hunting the fugitive beauty of an hour.*

*Only on the heart's veiled door the word of flame  
Is written, the secret and tremendous Name.*

13.9.39

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Since May 2008 three books on psychology in the light of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's thought have appeared in the pages of *Recent Publications: Sri Aurobindo and the Future Psychology, Becoming One: The Psychology of Integral Yoga, and The Quest for Knowledge and Mastery: A Comparative Study of Motivation in the Light of Sri Aurobindo*. Larry Seidlitz was formerly a research psychologist in the USA and now works at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research in Pondicherry facilitating online courses on Sri Aurobindo's teachings. His article suggests that certain areas of concern in Western psychology would benefit from the insights integral psychology can provide.

## Integrating Integral Psychology with Western Psychology

— Larry Seidlitz, Ph.D.

An important area of contemporary knowledge and academic research in which India is destined to play an important role is psychology. The importance of the field of psychology in shaping the views of humanity towards its own nature and possibilities as well as in assisting it in realizing those possibilities is obvious. To some degree, people are or tend to become what they think they are or think they can become. If we believe we are composed of a teeming mass of unconscious, instinctual needs and drives, kept partly in check by social pressures and an overtaxed ego, it sets the stage for a certain type of human existence. But if we have faith that in essence we are one with the Infinite and Eternal Being, that our capacity for growth in consciousness and delight is unlimited, a different set of possibilities opens up before us. These differing views of the human being – the psychoanalytic view influential in the West and the Indian view exemplified in Integral Psychology – carry with them a tremendous difference in their potential impact on the future of human existence, and signify the potential contribution that Integral Psychology can make to the contemporary world.

*The first business of the integral psychologist is to go deep within and find his or her innermost soul and to realize the higher consciousness, the true Self above the play of mind, life, and body. It is from a greater consciousness that an Integral Psychology must be built.*

The psychoanalytic perspective as I have characterized it is an influential paradigm in the West, but is only one of a range of theories of human psychology. Western psychology is actually more complex, but

its various perspectives are still generally based on the philosophy of materialism, and are similar to the psychoanalytic theory in having limited views of the potential for human psychological growth. Still, psychological inquiry in the West tends to be pragmatic and problem-focused rather than ideologically materialistic. It has achieved much and there is much that is valuable in its approach. Each

year academic psychology puts out an enormous flood of intellectual activity focused on developing a better understanding of human behavior, development, thinking, memory, emotion, motivation, and social interaction. Although it is true that its knowledge in these areas is limited and faulty,

it is also true that it has illuminated and discerned many of their processes, and has developed many effective and useful applications in the areas of mental health, business, and education. There even has grown up in the West a relatively small subdiscipline called transpersonal psychology that has opened itself to the spiritual thought of India and is actively researching the higher possibilities of human existence.

A principal limitation of Western psychology is that it provides a fragmented and partial view of human psychology. Its heavy reliance on the observable behaviors of groups of people has limited its



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exploration of the deeper levels of consciousness and of their exceptional possibilities. It tends to focus on details of outer behavior rather than on fundamental issues of human purpose and meaning. By focusing on the outer, it misses the crucial importance of the inner consciousness in determining and influencing the surface nature. By missing the significance of the inner, it misses the largest and greatest part of our being and our highest possibilities. By focusing on outer details, it has become highly specialized and fragmented without any clear integration, the source of which is to be found within.

*Integral Psychology should help to progressively lead others towards the truth of their being, according to their capacity and inner law and the rhythm of their nature. It is to a perfected life in the world that Integral Psychology aspires, not simply an inner illumination.*

Let me turn now to consider some of the fundamental principles of Integral Psychology, both of its approach and its areas of study. These have been nicely brought together and presented in A. S. Dalal's book, *A Greater Psychology*, in the chapter "The Nature and Methodology of Yoga Psychology." For the sake of brevity, I am simply going to list these principles in a paraphrased form:

1. Integral Psychology is based on experience, not thought or reasoning.
2. Integral Psychology extends beyond ordinary states of awareness and includes non-ordinary states.
3. Integral Psychology looks at its subject from a deeper or higher consciousness.

After elaborating on these principles, Dalal quotes Sri Aurobindo to further delineate a definition of Integral Psychology:

Psychology is the science of consciousness and its status and operations in Nature and, if that can be glimpsed or experienced, its status and operations beyond what we know as Nature.

This quotation later goes on to say that the "surface nature cannot be understood nor its true law discovered until we know all that is below or behind and supplies it—and know too all that is around it

and above." (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human*, pp. 333–334; quoted in A. S. Dalal, (Ed.), *A Greater Psychology*, p. 306)

It is clear that such an Integral Psychology must be an outgrowth of a yogic and spiritual consciousness, and that an exploration of the higher realms of consciousness must be a central focus. But there is nothing in these principles to suggest that Integral Psychology should not include in its scope the operations of the outer consciousness and

the outer life. The first business of the integral psychologist is to go deep within and find his or her innermost soul, called in Sri Aurobindo's yoga the *psychic being*, and to realize the higher consciousness, the true Self above the play of mind, life, and body. It is from a greater consciousness that an Integral Psychology must be built. This is a progressive discipline and realization that develops gradually over time. The integral psychologist must explore and progressively enter into and realize these deeper and higher levels of consciousness, and simultaneously bring out the greater vision and power of these domains into the outer life of humanity. Part of the work is to traverse and illuminate the inner and higher consciousness, but another part is to illuminate the outer nature and to build a bridge for others to follow.

To build such a bridge it is important to turn the inner illumination on the outer nature in which humanity dwells, to reveal its workings and hidden springs, to discover its secret links and levers. Integral Psychology should help to progressively lead others towards the truth of their being, according to their capacity and inner law and the rhythm of their nature. It is to a perfected life in the world that Integral Psychology aspires, not simply an inner illumination. The perfection of the outer instruments of mind, life, and body are part of the intended realization, and thus it is necessary to understand

and progressively reveal the truth of these great forms of the spirit. To help others, we must reach to the level at which they stand; we must show a way forward that they can take. We must understand their situation, their viewpoint, their limitations, their unique natures and difficulties, and we must reveal a more effective way forward.

To achieve this, Integral Psychology should include in its scope such concerns as human development from infancy to old age; human emotion, attitude, reason, and judgment; psychological distress and disorder and effective methods to relieve it; human interaction and relationships; the development and growth of collectivities; and the principles and methods of psychological integration and development. These fundamental concerns of active exploration in Western psychology should not be neglected by Integral Psychology. They are rich fields of opportunity that will benefit from the deeper insights that an Integral Psychology can provide. While there have been useful contributions in some of these areas by integral psychologists, (see, for example, A. S. Dalal's *Sri Aurobindo and the Future Psychology* and Martha Orton's *The Quest for Knowledge and Mastery*), much more needs to be done. By examining these concerns in addition to the higher and deeper levels of consciousness, Integral Psychology will help guide humanity out of the ignorance and suffering of the lower nature into the light and peace and mastery of the inner and higher spiritual nature.

## References

A. S. Dalal, (Ed.), *A Greater Psychology: An Introduction to the Psychological Thought of Sri Aurobindo*, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 2001.

A. S. Dalal, *Sri Aurobindo and the Future Psychology*, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 2007.

Martha S. G. Orton, *The Quest for Knowledge and Mastery: A Comparative Study of Motivation in the Light of Sri Aurobindo*, Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry, 2008.

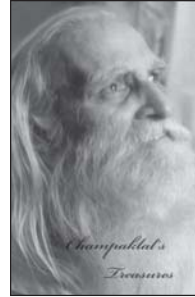
## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### ENGLISH

#### Compilations

##### Champaklal's Treasures

— Edited by M. P. Pandit, Revised by Roshan  
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication



Department, Pondicherry  
262 pp., Rs 165  
ISBN: 978-81-7058-895-5  
Size: 14x22 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

This book comprises writings and talks of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that were collected and preserved by Champaklal, who served them personally for more than five decades. It is organised into five parts: a section of short letters by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which have been arranged and provided titles by the editor; some notes, prayers, and reflections of the Mother; a section that includes the significance of their blessings and symbols, and Sanskrit names given to disciples and devotees; letters written by Sri Aurobindo to some of the early disciples; and records of some interviews and talks. Containing new material recently found among Champaklal's papers, this is a revised and enlarged edition. The book is available again after a long time.

*see article on page 21*

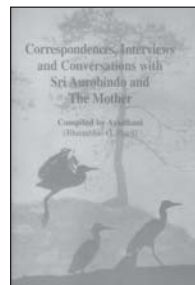
##### Correspondences, Interviews and Conversations with Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

— Compiled by Avadhani (Bhanabhai G. Patel)

Publisher: Avadhani, U. K.

100 pp., ISBN: 978-0-9545855-0-1, Rs 90

Size: 14x22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



This compilation offers a wide choice of extracts from some of the correspondences, interviews, and conversations that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had with various sadhaks. The topics covered range from the importance of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, the nature of avatarhood, the right attitude in work, and the significance of dates

with certain numerical combinations, to European and Indian music, wars and destruction, and India's role in the world. The selections include material from A. B. Purani, Dyuman, Dilip Kumar Roy, K. M. Munshi, Udar Pinto, Nagin Doshi, Amal Kiran, Mona Sarkar, and others.

## Other Authors

### Udar

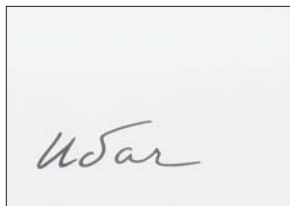
#### *one of Mother's children*

— Edited by Gauri Pinto  
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo  
Udyog Trust, Pondicherry  
167 pp., Rs 280

Size: 30x22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

This book commemorates the birth centenary of Laurence Pinto (1907–2001), who was given the name “Udar” by Sri Aurobindo in 1938. Printed on art paper, it is a collection of anecdotes, facts, stories, and over 400 photographs that reveal the story of Udar’s life. Educated and trained as an aeronautical engineer, his talents and skills were used by the Mother in the creation of Harpagon Workshop and the construction of Golconde, the organisation of the Physical Education Department, and the development of the Handmade Paper Unit, the Laboratoires Senteurs, Coco Garden Concrete Works, and Honesty Engineers and Contractors. The photographs and memories recorded here give vivid testimony to Udar’s dynamic presence in the daily life of the Ashram over a span of many years.

*see articles on pages 18 and 19*



### Songs of Youth

— Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya  
Publisher: Department of  
Physical Education, Sri  
Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry  
189 pp., Rs 100  
Size: 22x28 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

These forty-two songs, written and composed by Pranab Bhattacharya over the course of many years beginning around 1967, appear in their original Bengali with English translations. Musical notations have also been provided. When the first set of songs was published in 1971, the Mother gave a message calling them “ideal songs to give courage, determination, and a push towards realisation”.

### The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo

— Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)  
Publisher: Clear Ray Trust, Pondicherry  
138 pp., ISBN: 978-81-87916-07-9, Rs 125  
Size: 14x22 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

This book examines and evaluates Sri Aurobindo’s considerable poetic output in blank verse, his

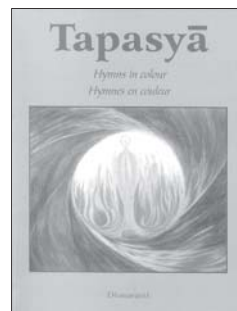
achievements in quantitative metre, a medium that had eluded English poets, and his creation of a new type of poetry that reached beyond the ranges of inspiration familiar to most poets to reveal new heights and intensities of mystical and spiritual expression. Before it was first published in 1947 it had the distinction of having been read out to Sri Aurobindo, who professed his admiration for the substance and style of this literary criticism by Sethna. The book is available again after a long time.

### Tapasya

#### *Hymns in colour*

— Dhanavanti  
Publisher: Auroville Press  
Publishers, Auroville  
84 pp., Rs 495  
Size: 22x28 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

In this book of paintings, the artist presents her work along with the poems or lines of poetry which inspired them. The paintings depict her visions of inner worlds and experiences such as “Universal Transcendent” and “A Mystic Passion”, inspired by some lines from Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*, and “Illumination”, which envisions a passage from his short poem “The Island Sun”. Other paintings visually interpret her own poems or those of the English poet Frank Townshend. The text appears in both English and French.

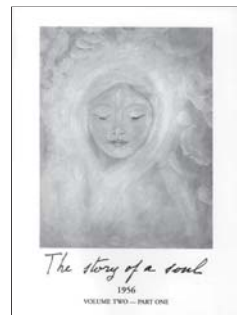


### The Story of a Soul

#### *Volume Two, 1956—Part One*

— Huta  
Publisher: The Havyavahana  
Trust, Pondicherry  
198 pp., Rs 300  
ISBN: 978-81-87372-21-9  
Size: 18x24 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

Huta’s journey on the path of self-realisation is told here through a narrative that includes numerous letters and notes to her from the Mother, reports of her conversations with the Mother, extracts from her spiritual diaries, and quotations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that have a special relevance to her circumstances, experiences, and inner difficulties. When the first version of the book was read out to the Mother in October 1972, she commented, “This is the interesting story of how a being discovers the Divine Life.” *The Story of a Soul* runs from 1954 to 1973—this volume covers the first half of 1956.



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## OTHER LANGUAGES

### FRENCH

Tapasya: Hymnes en couleur — Dhanavanti Rs 495  
(see *Tapasya: Hymns in colour* on page 11)

### ITALIAN

Su Il Cibo — Parole dagli scritti di Mère e Sri Aurobindo  
ISBN: 978-81-7058-905-1 Rs 75

### SPANISH

La Evolución Espiritual : Los seis últimos capítulos  
de La Vida Divina — Sri Aurobindo Rs 1370  
ISBN: 978-84-936142-2-5

La Vida Divina - Libro I : La realidad omnipresente  
y el universo — Sri Aurobindo  
(Published by Fundación Centro Sri Aurobindo,  
Spain) ISBN: 978-84-935352-6-1 Rs 1500

### HEBREW

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother  
— Compiled from the works of Sri Aurobindo and  
the Mother. ISBN: 008-0-00-960811-7 Rs 150

### ASSAMESE

Ma — Sri Aurobindo Rs 25

### BENGALI

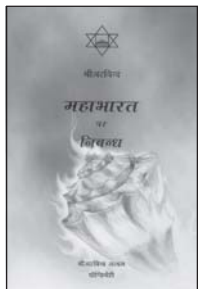
Pather Katha — The Mother Rs 120  
*Ma Bai Samparke Srima* — The Mother Rs 85  
Taruner Gan — Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya Rs 100  
(see *Songs of Youth* on page 11)  
Mayer chatrachayay bere otha — The Mother's  
correspondence with Tara Jauhar Rs 100  
Pratibha o Prakash : Kavyabhabanar Bikash : Ved theke  
Shriurobinde — Ranajit Sarkar Rs 150  
Ananta Alokdhara — Saurendranath Basu Rs 150

### GUJARATI

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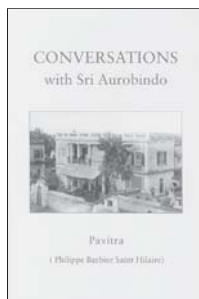
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## BOOK REVIEWS



### **Conversations with Sri Aurobindo** — Pavitra

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram  
Publication Department,  
Pondicherry  
165 pp.,  
ISBN: 978-81-7058-879-5, Rs 85  
Size: 14x22 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

*A new consciousness is seeking expression in you. In India there are people, Yogis, who can help you in this and give you a new birth. There will be difficulties in finding them, because you do not speak their language and they are often hard to approach. Still this is one of the solutions before you.*

*This spiritual consciousness will give you Mukti. Personally, my Yoga would be completed if my goal were liberation. Mukti is only the first part. The second is to bring down the Light into all the instruments, to make them perfect and to become an embodiment of Truth. The universal Truth and Power will act through you as an instrument. Some persons are more or less unconscious instruments of the Shakti, but it is a question of being perfectly conscious.*

Sri Aurobindo told this and more to a young seeker from France, during what was probably their second meeting, on 18 December 1925. The Master said at the end of the day's not-too-long conversation, "Well, if you want to try, you may stay."

Thus does the seeker record his response: "I fell at his feet. He gave me his blessing and it was over. You see, a whole chapter of my life had come to an end. The search, the search for the source of light, the search for the one who would lead me to the Truth was over."

And extraordinary indeed had been the search of Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire (1894–1969), later well known to us as Pavitra, the name Sri Aurobindo bestowed on him, and loved and respected by all who came in contact with him. When World War I broke out in August 1914, Pavitra was obliged to discontinue his studies at the prestigious École Polytechnique in Paris. He joined the French army and served at the front and then as an artillery intelligence officer. Surprisingly, it was during those violent and restless days that he began to be

interested in para-psychical phenomena. He was no doubt a seeker whom his destiny was guiding forward along a zigzag way to his final discovery. From the para-psychical phenomena his interest moved on to occultism. That led him to theosophical literature. What was further surprising was that, despite his Western scientific training, the theories of *karma* and reincarnation appeared to him absolutely natural—truths that obviously lay imbedded in his evolved consciousness.

Towards the end of the war a terrible epidemic, notoriously known as the Spanish flu, broke out, killing millions. Our young seeker, aged twenty-four, had this flu at the time his battalion had "just broken through the German lines". This was how he described his feeling at that time:

That day, I can say, was the decisive day in my life. In the field-hospital at the front, under the tents where I was, the sick were dying. Each morning three or four people were dead. Well, I clearly remember the very strong idea that took away all fear of death from me: it was giving, self-giving, giving myself so that my destiny, my spiritual destiny might be fulfilled, whatever it might be, with the offering of my life, truly, sincerely, if I was supposed to die. And if I was supposed to live, well, consecration to the Divine.

After the war ended he resumed his studies at the École Polytechnique and graduated in civil engineering. He worked as a civil engineer for a short time, but the call of a radically different life, a life that would support his search for its very purpose, for Truth, was irresistible. He went to Japan – a country which, unlike today, was not so accessible in 1920 – and studied Japanese, Chinese and Indian spirituality while earning his living through sundry jobs. The Mother had left Japan for Pondicherry shortly before Pavitra's arrival. He had heard about her through mutual friends and decided to write to Pondicherry, but received no reply. The Mother might have just arrived, and the formation of the Ashram was six years away.

He met a group of lamas who happened to visit his workplace in Japan. He joined them and, travelling through northern China, reached a Mongolian hermitage of Tibetan lamas. He spent nine months there before setting out for Vietnam, thence for Sri Lanka, and at last reaching his great destination, Pondicherry, in 1925. "And finally I reached at the place I had to reach," he says.

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This destined disciple had the grand opportunity to personally report to Sri Aurobindo all about his *sadhana*, the problems he faced and the questions that arose in his mind, and the Master solved them with deep compassion. During this initial year of his stay, Pavitra also had a number of invaluable exchanges with the Mother. After each meeting he wrote down his questions and observations and also the Master's and the Mother's responses, and this book presents the records of these conversations, extending from 18 December 1925 until 1 June 1926, though some pages are missing from the original manuscripts. These dialogues give us not only an introduction to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo as explained by the Master himself to an early initiate, but also glimpses of the expected and the unexpected experiences a determined *sadhak* had to go through.

Pavitra's was a life of exemplary dedication to the Mother. Great was his contribution to the shaping of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, of which the Mother had made him the Director. He continued working with his customary ease and equanimity even when he knew that his end was near. This reviewer had the impression, on first meeting him in 1963, that he personified the dignified sanctity his name suggested—Pavitra, the Pure One.

— Manoj Das

*Shri Manoj Das is a well-known writer. A Padma awardee, he is a recipient of the Saraswati Samman and Sahitya Akademi award.*

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*Part of a conversation with Sri Aurobindo, recorded by Pavitra and dated 20 December 1925:*

At first the contact is mental—the zone of the spiritual mind. A person recognises his mind, his emotions and his body as not himself. He finds that he exists above them—above the spatial and temporal form. He has peace and certitude.

To achieve this, the first thing, especially for you, is to stop the thoughts at will. One must first separate oneself from the mind *mentally*, for one is not yet able to do it otherwise; one must observe it and study it. When this is done, it becomes easy to stop the thoughts. This is the first lesson of Yoga. Thus, while talking with you at this moment, I have no thoughts. I see what is around me, but without thinking (unless I wish to think and call the thought). When I began Yoga I went to see Lele [Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, a Maharashtrian Yogij] and asked him to help me. He told me to sit beside him and practise this mental separation. At the end of three days, I succeeded and slew the thoughts.

There are other means of achieving this, such as sitting down and opening oneself to the influx from above, so that this process may be accomplished from above without personal effort. To you I would recommend the first method. Until one has this first realisation, everything is mental; intuition is only fragmentary, uncertain and intermittent. One has to go beyond. Gradually a strong aspiration brings about the inrush (sometimes abruptly) of something new into the consciousness. Sometimes it is peace, solid as a rock. Sometimes light, almost physical, which illumines everything, inner and outer. Sometimes guidance. In any case, ineffable peace is followed by knowledge. And all this comes down from above—not, as with the Tantrics, starting from the lowest chakra, but on the contrary from above.

So for you, the first goal is to separate yourself from your mind and recognise it as being outside you. Take the attitude of the witness. Let thoughts come, but don't let yourself be carried away by them. Practise during meditation. Then you have to infuse into daily life what you first established in meditation.

#### **The Mother's statement on how Pavitra passed away on 16 May 1969**

It was very interesting, the experience I had that night. Nothing like it I ever had in my life. It was the night before the day he passed away. The time was 9 o'clock. I felt he was withdrawing, withdrawing in an extraordinary manner. He was coming out of himself and gathering and pouring himself into me. He was coming out consciously and deliberately with the full force of a concentrated will. He continued to do so steadily, ceaselessly for hours. It ended at about 1 o'clock, I looked at the time.

There was no slackness or interruption or stop at any moment. It was throughout the same steady continuous flow, without a break, without a diminution in the strength. Such a concentrated undiminishing stream it was. The process continued until he was wholly within me as though he was pumping and exhausting all he was in the body till the last drop. I say it was wonderful—I never experienced such a thing. The flow stopped when there was very little left in the body: I let the body remain as long as it was needed for the work to continue, till long, quite long after the doctors declared it dead.

As he was in life, he could not have done the thing, I did not expect it of him, it must have been some past life of his that was at work and did the thing....He is merged in me wholly, that is dwelling within me, not dissolved: he has his personality intact.... A remarkable story. A great and very difficult thing Pavitra has done.

25-5-1969

*CWM, Vol.13, Words of the Mother, pp.186-7.*



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**At the Feet of the Master:  
Reminiscences**

— T. Kodandarama Rao  
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram  
Publication Department,  
Pondicherry  
60 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7058-848-1,  
Rs 35  
Size: 12x18 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

Under the imprint "SMRITI", the Sri Aurobindo Ashram had commenced issuing small booklets authored by disciples who came in living contact with Sri Aurobindo. In this monograph, which is part of the series, T. Kodandarama Rao describes his meeting with the Master and his sojourn in Pondicherry in the early 1920s. He also refers to some of his spiritual experiences and describes how he was helped by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in his *sadhana*.

The author recounts how he first chanced upon an issue of the *Arya*, the monthly journal brought out by Sri Aurobindo from 1914 to 1921, in his college hostel. He decided to travel to Pondicherry with a friend during the college vacation in December 1920 in order to meet Sri Aurobindo. Unsuccessful in their initial attempts to meet him, they finally managed to have his *darshan* and get his guidance on some matters. Some time later, he again visited Pondicherry, taking time off from his studies and thus creating tension in his relations with his in-laws.

The author visited and lived in what later came to be known as the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at a time when the yoga was especially intense and the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were personally involved in the *sadhana* of all disciples. It was also around this time that the *sadhana* had descended into the vital plane and the disciples were having spiritual experiences of a rather brilliant and colourful nature. It is known that even casual visitors felt the intensity of the atmosphere and had significant spiritual experiences during this period.

In the *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo describes how a realized person can transfer something of his experience to others around him. It is also mentioned in the *Record of Yoga* that Sri Aurobindo was experimenting

with the transference of yogic achievements to some of his early companions in Pondicherry. Kodandarama Rao was lucky to be in Pondicherry at the time when Sri Aurobindo was still meeting and talking to visitors and disciples. Later, after 1926, personal interviews were no longer possible because Sri Aurobindo had withdrawn himself in order to concentrate all his energies towards the descent of the Supermind into the earth atmosphere.

On his third visit, the author was asked by the Master to stay for one year. The very open and flexible nature of the Integral Yoga is described quite well by the author. There were no *pujas*, no traditional functions, no collective meditations, no lectures or sermons. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were guiding the *sadhaks* largely by example and influence. The flexibility and freedom of the individual's choice of activities was such

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*"Sri Aurobindo sowed the seed of divinity in me and awakened the aspiring soul in me to go forward, more by his will than words, in the manner of the great Rishis of old, who worked wonders through silence and looks and will power."*

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that there was no ban on non-vegetarian food or even smoking. The tightening of external rules of behaviour later became a necessity when the Ashram grew much larger and the need to regulate individual behaviour to the requirements of harmony and discipline in the larger collective community was felt.

By June 1924 Kodandarama Rao had run out of funds and had to leave Pondicherry because the community itself was short of money and could not afford to support more than a certain number of *sadhaks*. With financial help provided by his father-in-law, he then joined a law course and, after passing the examination, started his legal practice. As soon as he began practising law, he encountered an ethical problem. Some in the legal profession were of the opinion that a lawyer must defend the client, whether innocent or guilty. A lawyer must not prejudice the issue. Others held the opposite view and contended that lawyers must accept only genuine cases and the defence of criminals and cases based on falsehood were not to be undertaken. The author wrote to Sri Aurobindo on this matter and received the following reply:

T. Kodandaram,

It is true the lawyer's profession as practised by many in India is full of things which are not what they should be but it is not a necessary character of the legal profession. Even here many carry on the profession with a scrupulous honesty in all respects like

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Duraiswami and succeed. A lawyer has to do his best for his client and make every point he legitimately can in his favour—to bring out the weak note of the case is the other party’s function, not his; but it is his best to which he is bound. He is not bound to do what the client demands as the best. It is a question of establishing an honourable but practical and commonsense standard for the profession.

The author also speaks of his wife who, while meditating, used to see visions depicting the descent of great *Shaktis* into the Mother, whose greatness at that time was not visible to all. When he casually mentioned these visions to some of his fellow-*sadhaks*, they were incredulous. But the Mother’s great spiritual status was clearly revealed and established when Sri Aurobindo withdrew into seclusion in 1926 and placed the Mother in charge of the Ashram and the *sadhana* of all the disciples.

T. Kodandarama Rao ends the book with a wonderful and striking incident. He was accustomed to spending the Christmas season in the Ashram with his wife and daughter. In 1950 he intended to do the same, arriving in time to attend the November 24<sup>th</sup> Darshan. But a severe bronchial attack made him vulnerable and he could not attend the Darshan. When his condition worsened, he felt he must see Sri Aurobindo and so started for Madras on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. In Madras he consulted a physician who advised him to return home and not proceed to Pondicherry. Here’s how the author described what happened next:

I hesitated and at last wended my way homewards, on the 4<sup>th</sup> [December 1950]. I prayed to the Master for my recovery. That night I had a dream about the passing away of a great and effulgent being, taking into himself the poison of the earth, and devouring my illness also and a bright goddess appeared by his side shedding peace and Light on the world. Next morning the papers announced the passing away of the Mighty Master and I was free from my ailment. How compassionate he was in protecting me from my illness! And his protection and Grace are always with his devotees!!

— Ranganath Raghavan

*Ranganath came to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1945 at the age of six. After completing his studies in the Ashram School, he joined the Ashram Press, as directed by the Mother, and worked there for forty years. At present he teaches at SAICE and also works in the Archives and Research Department.*

## **The Quest for Knowledge and Mastery** *A Comparative Study of Motivation in the Light of Sri Aurobindo*

— Martha S. G. Orton

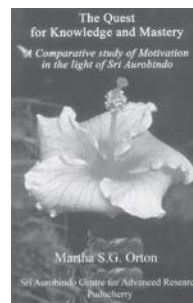
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry

358 pp., ISBN: 978-81-901891-7-0, Rs 360

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

As a scholar of Sri Aurobindo studies and an experienced psychotherapist, Dr. Martha Orton brings about an extraordinary triple achievement in this book. In the first part she works out Sri Aurobindo’s theory of motivation,



which he did not formulate as such but which she finds encompassed in his major works *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*. In the second part she sketches out the theory of motivation in the main disciplines of psychology and in the thought of Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit priest, scientist, and Christian mystic. The third achievement lies in the

insightful comparisons she makes between Sri Aurobindo’s theory and these modern theories of motivation, comparisons which have the potential to deepen our understanding of all the perspectives under review. A concise overview at the beginning of each part, a comprehensive summary at the end, and the distinct structure of the chapters in between allow the book to be read according to one’s interest.

Theories of motivation seek to analyse what causes human behaviour and to reveal what is important and meaningful to people, what drives them to live their lives as they do. Thus they address the very core of human psychology and are a matter of interest to all who want to develop a profound understanding of the psyche. Dr. Orton emphasises that it is her intention to identify Sri Aurobindo’s theory of motivation as an intellectual expression of his supra-intellectual spiritual knowledge, received in a silent mind and experienced, realised, and described in his writings in a comprehensive and complex vision and analysis of human life and consciousness. Sri Aurobindo recognises humans as being driven by an impulsion to seek knowledge and mastery, first of the material world all around them, then of themselves, and finally to arrive at the awareness that the knowledge they seek is the realisation of the Divine. He sees the working out of this urge as the central problem of human life,



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interwoven within his overarching vision of the involution and evolution of consciousness.

One outstanding point referred to is the soul – not dealt with in psychology – which must be free in a witness consciousness in order to become master of the outward nature; but Dr. Orton also elaborates on several other essential elements of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy and his Yoga to arrive at an integral theory of motivation. She examines the theory’s philosophical origins in Sri Aurobindo’s thought through such concepts as the oneness of existence and the underlying reality of *Sachchidananda*, the fourfold order of knowledge, and the progressive offering of one’s self to the Divine as the key to attaining true knowledge and mastery. Her excellent elucidations are themselves a chance to obtain a general idea of Sri Aurobindo’s main concepts and his vision.

Dr. Orton concludes that it is truly a grand theory of motivation, in which Sri Aurobindo provides a detailed developmental perspective which includes both the full range of growth and progress available to the individual as well as humanity’s purpose and the goal of its existence.

The synopsis of various psychological theories of motivation was especially valuable to me as it clarified and completed the knowledge that I was able to gather on this topic during my years of work in psychotherapy. Dr. Orton looks at psychoanalysis (Freud, Jung, and Erikson), social psychology (Rotter and Bandura), personality psychology (McAdams and Emmons), humanistic psychology (Maslow), transpersonal psychology (Assagioli and Vaughan), and Ken Wilber’s integral theory of consciousness and works out all the details that are necessary to capture the essence of each approach to human motivation. This close study shows that those systems which do not have a strong spiritual dimension but describe a lower view of the human potential are further from Sri Aurobindo’s perspective than those which either express or accommodate a view

of spirituality. On the whole Dr. Orton’s research discloses that Sri Aurobindo’s conceptualisation of motivation and consciousness is more complete and also expresses a much greater view of the potential for spiritual growth and transformation. In his explanation of the higher levels of consciousness Sri Aurobindo offers a vision of spiritual reality unequalled in its conception.

As to Teilhard de Chardin’s Christian theological perspective, I found Dr. Orton’s description and discussion especially helpful, as his name and some of the keywords he uses (for example, the Omega Point, the Parousia, or the second coming of Christ, and the concept of pleroma, or the fullness of the Godhead which dwells

in Christ) come up every now and then in discussions, and I belong to the majority of people who did not read his books in the original and have had only a vague idea about the meaning of these terms. Teilhard de Chardin’s thought supports Sri Aurobindo’s perspective on some essential points, yet Dr. Orton holds that Sri Aurobindo’s conceptualisation of the evolution of consciousness exceeds Teilhard de Chardin’s view in its degree of explanation and development as well as in the scope of spiritual evolution and transformation which he envisions. A further advantage is that Sri Aurobindo includes the concept of reincarnation.

Reading Dr. Orton’s book was an enriching experience for me in many ways. I would like to recommend it to all those who are interested in gaining a succinct insight into Sri Aurobindo’s perspective on motivation and its place in relation to modern psychological theories of motivation.

— Raphael G. Schlitt  
*Dr Schlitt, who holds a Ph.D. in Medicine, worked for 15 years as an internist in the University Clinic of Muenster/ Westf., Germany, became a psychotherapist, and founded the Forum for Integral Medicine. She is currently studying Sri Aurobindo’s writings at SACAR.*

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## Udar

### *one of Mother's children*

— Edited by Gauri Pinto

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Udyog Trust, Pondicherry

167 pp., Rs 280

Size: 30x22 cm

Binding: Hard Cover

“Oh, what an elegant cover”, was the first impression and reaction of many of my friends when they held the book *Udar* in their hands. In contrast to the colourful garden of covers of other Ashram publications, the cover of *Udar* stands in stark relief, almost like an announcement or formal invitation that attracts you to want to open the book as soon as possible. And once you begin turning the pages inside, you just feed on the feast of photographs; actually it is a grand banquet. The book is elegantly designed and printed, and the cream-coloured hard binding enhances its beauty and durability.

Some in the Ashram knew Udar as one of the several secretaries of the Mother and one who was involved in the building of Golconde and the organising of Harpagon workshop, who was known for making machine tools, building and repairing our Playground equipment, or carrying out repairs to the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's rooms. But in the 165 pages of this book we see the whole gamut of activities in which Udar was involved. This includes more than thirty-five modes of work, such as the establishment of a series of workshops and small industries like the handmade paper factory, and varying in scope from organising the work of concreting, crop harvesting, and the hoisting and transport of huge logs to activities as diverse as watch repairing, research into solar power, hydroponics, aviation, and even officiating at marriage ceremonies!

Along with Udar's many activities the book puts on record the histories of many Ashram departments, how some of them were started and managed with his intuitive know-how—often with very few resources in hand. It is a storehouse of details regarding the Ashram activities from the early 1930s to the early 1990s.

The book also gives us an insight into the working of the Mother with the *sadhaks*. The detailed interest she took in all aspects of Ashram workplaces, too, can be seen in the photographs of the Mother at various Ashram units and departments. The photos are indeed a pictorial history of many aspects of Ashram life.



The Mother with Udar at the Press in 1961

And coming to the sweetest part of the book, there are such unique anecdotes, as when the Mother explained with beautiful gestures the origin of the game of table tennis. Here is how Udar recounts the story which the Mother told:

First a Mandarin on one side hit the ball as we do now but in such a way as to make it easy for the Mandarin on the other side to return it. This was Ping. The receiver then made a courtly bow and returned it the same way—Pong. Then the first one bowed and returned it and so on. A very courtly game indeed and quite in character with their high culture, and entirely different from the Western concept of the game where one is determined to defeat an opponent.

Then there is a very interesting incident describing what happened when the Mother and Udar went up to the terrace to watch a reported UFO fly over Pondicherry. She later commented to Udar that earth was not the only world created in the process of manifestation, but that those other worlds are static, without any idea of progress. So they like to make contact with the earth because they feel some sense of movement, of evolution.

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Later on there is a most unexpected story of two very senior disciples regarding the killing of a cockroach. A question was put to the Mother, who explained that cockroaches belong to the forces that oppose or obstruct the evolution and can be destroyed without hesitation! Through all the stories and anecdotes and photographs we learn how the Mother nurtured Udar, moulding his aspirations and ideas into a pliable material for her use, and developed a *sadhak* who was willing to be shaped by her divine hands. Udar comes out as indeed a brilliant and many-faceted gem fashioned by our adorable Mother.

— Sunanda Poddar

*Sunanda came to stay in the Ashram in 1951, when she was sixteen. She began working at SABDA while still a student at SAICE and continued until 1994. In 1952 she also began her work of telling and writing children's stories. She has been looking after Sri Smriti since its inception in 1989.*

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### **LIFE, THOU ECSTASY...** **In fond memory of Udar**

As I was leafing through the beautiful volume *Udar, one of Mother's children* many delightful, and sometimes challenging, memories began to surface in my mind from the depths of more than fifty years of my close association with Udar, starting with the earliest days when he entrusted me, hardly fourteen years old at that time, with the responsibility of supplying the table tennis balls to the table at Fenêtres and guarding against their misuse. My next task was to post the results of the previous day's athletics competitions on the notice boards of the Ashram Main Building and the Playground. After I completed my studies in the SAICE in the year 1955, Udar collared me and entrusted me (who had absolutely no business genes in his Bengali blood) with the challenging task of starting a bookselling business after teaching me the rudiments of doing business correspondence, stock keeping and accounting. That was the genius of Udar for shaping suitable instruments with unlikely material and that was the genesis of the Honesty Book House, which served its purpose of making a modest profit every year and offering it to the Mother.

During all these years I had plenty of opportunity of observing this multifaceted personality from very close

quarters. The first thing that I noticed in Udar was his tremendous vitality, dynamism and zest for life. Even a few years before his passing at the age of ninety-four, his daily routine was to get up at three o'clock in the morning, give himself a good oil massage and do vigorous physical exercise for an hour or so.



Udar (centre) in 1987 on his 80th birthday  
with his wife Mona (second left) and Aniruddha (extreme right)

Earlier, in the late 1940s, after a full day's heavy work in the Harpagon workshop and then in the Playground (he was captain of the Blue Group and organizer of the athletic competitions and the table tennis and, later, the tennis tournaments!), starting at seven-thirty in the morning and going on till seven-thirty or eight in the evening, he still had enough energy in store to lead us

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youngsters in unloading the Ashram's cargo of machinery or other goods from the ships or in "log-lifting", i.e. shifting the heavy logs that had arrived by goods train, from the railway lines at the southern end of Pondicherry to the Ashram timber godown at the northern end!

In the Christmas season, I remember, after we had worked till midnight at Golconde, packing the Christmas gifts and the cakes for the Mother to distribute to the ashramites, Udar took us for a walk through the quiet streets of Pondicherry—singing Christmas carols!

Udar was very good with his hands, always with an eye for perfection. Among other things, he designed and made an electric toaster which is still giving excellent service after nearly sixty years. In his spare time he was always tinkering with something or the other. Mentally too, he was always alert and active. Apart from reading voraciously, he took time every day to solve the crossword puzzles which appeared in *The Mail* and *The Hindu*.

Udar was very fond of children. He could not refuse them anything. Once, a few young girls had started taking piano lessons. One of them saw in the newspaper that a well-known pianist would be giving a recital in Madras that evening. She and her friends were very eager to have a first-hand experience of a professional piano recital. They approached Udar who, after obtaining the Mother's permission, drove them all the way to Madras and back in Millie's famous Jeep of wartime vintage, starting at six in the evening and returning the next morning at six o'clock just in time for the Mother's Balcony Darshan. There were many other outings too, some of which had to be scheduled at night after the evening Blessings. I remember the occasion we were caught in a heavy downpour. The headlights of the Jeep stopped working, and Udar had to drive almost twenty miles on a pothole-strewn country road in pitch dark by the light of a torch which one of the boys, sitting on the bonnet, held in his hand!

On less adventurous occasions, he drove us some twenty miles to the north-west of Pondicherry to 'discover' the Fossil Land with its massive fossilised tree trunks, dating back to a prehistoric era. This area has since been taken over by the Indian government and protected behind barbed wire as a national heritage. It was also he who first introduced us to the unforgettable, soul-stirring experience of listening to the souging of the breeze blowing through the casuarina groves.

Those who came in contact with Udar were struck by his cheerfulness and irrepressible optimism. He had a whole repertoire of English songs popular in London in the late 1920s, such as "Yes, we have no bananas today", "Show me the way to go home", "Old Man River", "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile", which he sang in his rich baritone whenever the occasion demanded. He had a sizable store of jokes and anecdotes, some of them a little risqué, which he narrated not only to us but dared to tell the Mother too, even at the risk of drawing an exclamation of mild (and perhaps feigned) reproof from her: "Oh, Udar!"

Once I heard him say something to this effect: "who knows, perhaps, even cancer may serve the cause of physical transformation; if somehow just one human cell gets transformed into a cell of light ... and then the chain reaction ... just imagine the possibilities!" Isn't this optimism par excellence?

In moments of crisis Udar was a good man to have beside you. That was because he always kept his head. His unshakeable faith in the Mother gave him the courage and determination to face every eventuality. I remember the time the Ashram was most unexpectedly attacked by a violent mob during the anti-Hindi agitation. While we were desperately trying to hold the attackers at bay, Udar went through the hostile crowd to the Lieutenant Governor to get police protection for the Ashram.

At a very advanced age, Udar decided to learn Sanskrit. With his characteristic determination and optimism he tackled this uphill task under Pujalal-ji's guidance and made good progress. Still later, he made it his life's goal to learn the whole of *Savitri* by heart and, what is astounding, he succeeded. He exemplified Browning's dictum, "Learn, nor account the pang; | Dare, never grudge the throe!"

Udar led a very full life himself and inspired many who had the good fortune to come in contact with him to live life to the brim, cheerfully and optimistically, with complete faith in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

— Aniruddha Sircar  
*Aniruddha-da (Babu-da) settled in the Ashram in 1946, completed his schooling at the SAICE in 1955, and has since been teaching English at the Ashram school.*

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## Remembering Champaklal

One of the books in the new publications section is an enlarged and revised edition of *Champaklal's Treasures*. We asked two people, Mohan Mistry and Sushila Melvani, who were both close to Champaklal, to share some reminiscences with our readers. Mohan-bhai first came to the Ashram in 1959, when he was a young man of twenty-one. He worked in the Dining Room, then in the Electric and Water Service Department, where he did plumbing work for eighteen years, and eventually was given work cleaning and dusting in Sri Aurobindo's room. He has always composed music and sang, and now teaches vocal music in the school and to individuals. Here Mohan-bhai shares a few memories of his association with Champaklal:

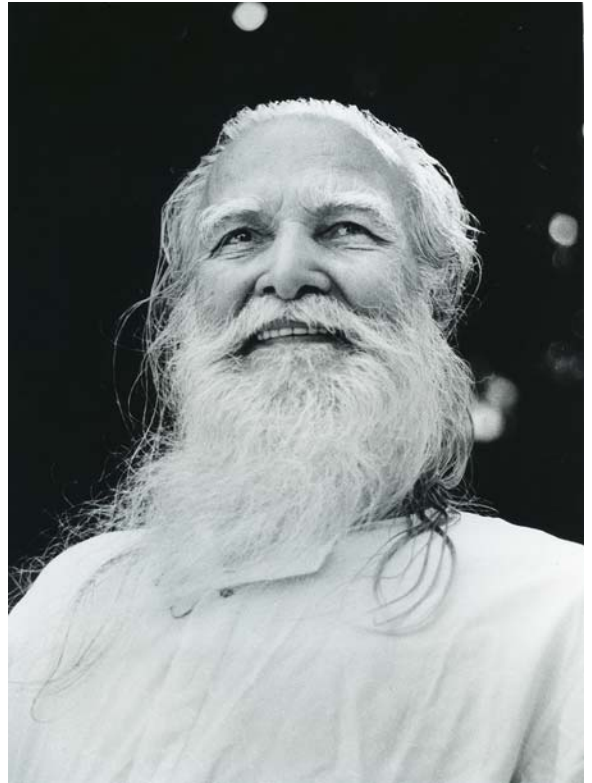
I had my first personal contact with Champaklal in 1971, when I was planning to attend my sister's wedding in Navasari, near Baroda. I went to see him before I left, and he at once told me that he knew Navasari as it figured in the story of his first journey to Pondicherry in 1921. A group of them from Gujarat had decided to go walking to Pondicherry. Along the way they stopped at Navasari, where they stayed at an Ashram run by a disciple of Motilal Roy of Chandernagore. A decision was taken to prepare sandals, sell them, and use the proceeds to pay for the rest of their journey. So they bought a big bag of leather in Navasari. Eventually the plan was abandoned and they completed the journey by train.

After this first contact I became much closer to him. He had written some prayers in Gujarati which were published in 1986. Even before the book came out, Champaklal asked me to compose music for these prayers and record them. He told me and other people that he himself "is singing through Mohan". Champaklal was very fond of listening to these recordings. An English translation of the book, titled *Prayers and Aspirations*, was then published in 1992. About these prayers he commented that "this is not poetry, it is not song either, these are only my inner being's utterances. I have not written them, the Supreme Mother and Lord have made me write them. Whatever I have had to say I have said in these lines."

In 1988 I travelled to Europe and the USA with Champaklal and Kamalaben. As he had very high blood pressure, the doctors were amazed that he was undertaking such a trip, but Champaklal felt it was the Mother's work he was being called to do. Many people came to meet him in the course of our travels. They told him their problems, he prayed to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and help would come just as it

### Champaklal's Treasures

— Edited by M. P. Pandit, Revised by Roshan  
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication  
Department, Pondicherry  
262 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7058-895-5, Rs 165  
Size: 14x22 cm; Binding: Soft Cover



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was needed. Two images stand out in my memory while we were in Europe. The first was Champaklal meditating at the Berlin Wall in 1988. The following year, in November 1989, this symbol of division and political tyranny was torn down by a joyous crowd of German citizens. I can't help but wonder what his thoughts and feelings were when he sat there to meditate.

The second image is somewhat amusing. We were visiting Le Clos Lucé, the Renaissance chateau in the Val de Loire in France to which Francis I, King of France, brought Leonardo da Vinci to live in 1516. Champaklal sat in the courtyard, idly playing with some pebbles on the ground, when several French school children saw him and exclaimed, "Regard, regard, c'est Leonardo!" (Look, look, it's Leonardo!) Champaklal's long hair and beard, his dress and demeanour, gave him an aspect not unlike that of the great da Vinci, at least in the eyes of those children. Champaklal himself related the story of showing a copy of da Vinci's painting "Mona Lisa" to the Mother, who told him that Sri Aurobindo was the artist in a past life. And I think it was Nirodbaran who read the story of a young boy who was devoted to Leonardo da Vinci, and who was much loved by him in return. Nirodbaran felt that anyone reading the story would find a strong likeness between the character of Champaklal and that of the boy.

Travelling with Champaklal and serving him as best I could were a great joy and wonderful privilege. His sincerity and tremendous will to serve the Divine remained always his strongest traits. These capacities and the way he lived his life attracted many people to him, and he gave of himself unstintingly. To help others experience the grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was the very essence of Champaklal's nature.

**S**ushila-ben joined the Ashram during her first visit in December, 1961, when she came to attend the first annual conference of the Sri Aurobindo Society. The Mother gave her work in the Society with Navajata-ji. She is the member secretary of the Society's Executive Committee and also edits the monthly magazine *Awakening to the Beauty of the Future*. Her close contact with Champaklal can be readily seen and felt in this brief reminiscence:

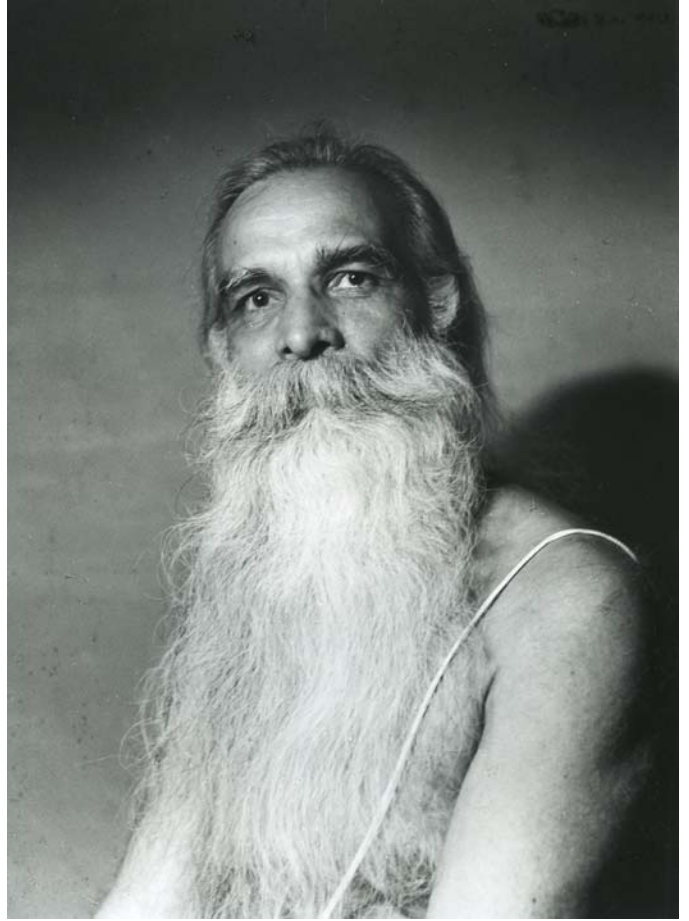
As soon as I opened the envelope in front of me, my heart leapt with joy to see the living and radiant picture of Champaklalji, with his eyes turned towards the glory of the future. I was really happy to receive this revised and enlarged edition of *Champaklal's Treasures* and at the same time felt grateful to Roshan, not only for doing such a wonderful job as editor of the book, but also for remembering to send me this precious copy with love. It touched me deeply. She knew that I was close to Champakbhai and would be delighted to have his book.

Holding the book in my hands was like feeling Champakbhai's presence! It brought back to me fond and treasured memories of the times I spent working with him in his room. This is the story of how he came to choose me as an instrument, however unfit, for work I thought was beyond me. One day, when I went to him for some other work, he asked me to read the English translation of one of his visions written by him in Gujarati. When I finished, he looked at me. At that time he was observing *maun* (silence), but his expression indicated that he wanted me to say something. I asked him about some details concerning the vision, and it was wonderful how he described them so beautifully and clearly through the gestures of his hands, arms, eyes and head. It was simply remarkable! I replied, "But these words do not really say what you want to express. Is this what you mean?" And I spoke some words in English. He expressed an emphatic "yes" with his index finger and nodded his head. He again gestured to me to write down what I had said. I hesitated and told him that the translator, who was a senior *sadhak*, might object to my changing his translation. He immediately understood and gestured that I should go and tell the *sadhak*

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on his behalf that he would like to put the words mentioned by me in place of what was written in the translation. Champakbhai was a warrior who stood by his truth and would not mind if someone got offended. His own conviction enthused me and I went off to complete my task straightaway. The *sadhak* listened to what I said, understood, hesitated, but replied that Champaklalji could change the words as he liked. I returned soon and reported to Champakbhai. He was pleased and told me to make the changes and give the copy to Amal for publishing in *Mother India*.

This was the beginning of our new inner relationship. Henceforth he asked me to translate his dreams and visions which he wrote very clearly and beautifully in Gujarati. Kamalaben, who looked after him, read out each sentence in Gujarati. I would write the English version and then read it out to him. What followed was something indescribable. After Kamalaben read or I translated or asked something, he would express his dream or vision in such a living and lively manner that I would feel that I was there in that wonderful plane of consciousness. He had the power to lift one to that plane to experience the reality of what he had seen.



One day he showed me a book that was the English translation of his spiritual poetry in Gujarati, which he described as *udgars*. They were his prayers and aspirations. Someone had translated them. It seemed to be in manuscript form. He described silently, with gestures, that he did not like the translation and that, pointing straight to me, he would like me to undertake this translation work. I was taken aback and blurted out, “Me and translating poetry—that too from Gujarati to English! I have never done it!” I expressed my utter incapacity. But he was undaunted and again pointed at me with a smile, indicating “yes, you will do it”. And it was his force and grace that worked in me. As during my translation of his visions and dreams, so also during poetry translation sessions, time and again I would approach him with a heavy heart and plead with him to pray to Sri Aurobindo for me. I felt like a dunce; even with the help of a dictionary and other books I could not get the appropriate words which I required to adequately translate his beautiful lines of poetry. He would give me a smile of encouragement and that would do the trick. In this way he helped me to widen myself, pray and face the challenges in life.

*Champaklal's Treasures* is about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. But Champakbhai himself was and is one of their precious treasures, and to be in touch with him and his writings is to be in contact with the Force, Consciousness and Grace of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

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These remembrances of Champaklal bring forward certain aspects of his personality: his eagerness to help others receive the grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and his meticulous attention to the truth of an experience. Indeed, Champaklal preserved the notes and correspondence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with other disciples and devotees with a rare devotion. He said that "these writings to devotees are most valuable. I have preserved them not only for myself but for others, so that they may receive what I have received from them."

The writings presented in *Champaklal's Treasures*, whether just a few sentences or a long letter to a disciple, offer us unexpected insights into the life that was concentrated around Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Thus we have these frank words of the Mother to an unknown disciple:

Your mind is driven by passion and, to support the passion, it gives a twist which prevents you from seeing the truth of things. Guard against the twist, be conscious of the passion.

Action perverted by such a twist looks like insincerity.

Be always on your guard against this persistent defect.

This is my gift for the New Year.

Later in the book is a long section containing correspondence with early disciples that includes several letters from Sri Aurobindo to his brother Barindra Kumar Ghose. The following extract is from a letter written in 1920 and translated from the original Bengali:

The utility of the psychic experiences and knowledge of the invisible worlds as of other Yogic experiences is not to be measured by our narrow human notions of what may be useful for the present physical life of man. In the first place, these things are necessary for the fullness of the consciousness and the completeness of the being. In the second place, these other worlds are actually working upon us and if you know and can enter into them instead of being the victims and puppets of these powers we can consciously deal with and control and use them. Thirdly, in my Yoga, the Yoga of the Supramental, the opening of the psychic consciousness to which these experiences belong are quite indispensable. For it is only through psychic opening that the supramental can fully descend and with a strong and concrete grasp transform the mental, vital and physical being.

Such "treasures" as these, gathered carefully by Champaklal during a lifetime of service, are a rich heritage for the future. They evoke the intensity of the collective life that grew up around Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and they continue to offer insights on how to see, understand, and live one's life in a higher consciousness.

### Without Thy Grace

Without the Supreme Mother's and Lord's will,  
Nothing ever happens in the whole universe.  
In vain carries man the burden on his head,  
Without Your Grace, nothing ever happens.  
Even Your constant remembrance  
can only come by Your Grace,  
By Your Grace alone it comes.  
Day and night is then lived only in Your presence,  
Only in Your presence, in Your presence only,  
Ma... Ma... Ma... Ma... in Your presence alone.

(13.11.73)

From *Prayers and Aspirations* by Champaklal