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## Recent Publications

# Sabta

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In this issue we present "Conundrums of the Indus Valley and Sri Aurobindo", an astute essay that examines the present state of scholarship and debates in Indus Valley studies and relates this to Sri Aurobindo's views on the matter, expressed almost a century ago.

Jugal Kishore Mukherjee, a noted writer and a teacher in the Ashram since 1949, passed away last December. His books cover many subjects, ranging from metaphysical studies on fate, karma, and rebirth, to the principles and practice of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, to an overview of the tenets of integral education, to aspects of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Our first article takes a look at Jugal-da's diverse writings.



A bovine unicorn, one of the most frequently occurring symbols in Indus seals

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**Jugal Kishore Mukherjee** (1925–2009) was born in a remote village in Bengal. His father passed away when he was only an infant, leaving his mother to raise her son under very difficult circumstances. Jugal-da's brilliance as a student was noticed by the village school teacher and he was referred to a better school some distance away from his own village. He later went to Calcutta for his college education and there came in contact with the Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir in College Street, an important centre for the dissemination of Sri Aurobindo's teachings.

In 1949, when only twenty-four, Jugal-da came and settled in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The Mother assigned him work in the Ashram School, where he taught physics. Later, Jugal-da organised the Higher Course in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and was made the head of that section when its location was shifted to the present four-storied building on the seafront which the Mother named Knowledge. He took detailed guidance from the Mother for running the Higher Course section.

In addition to his work at the School, Jugal-da wrote many books in English and Bengali and was a frequent contributor to several journals connected with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

(With acknowledgements to Ranganath Raghavan's article on Jugal-da which appeared in *Sraddha*, a journal from Kolkata)

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## Jugal-da

In the quotidian existence of the majority of humanity, the study of metaphysics is an activity few indulge in. Yet metaphysics cannot be wished away entirely. All of us have beliefs. Indeed, we look at the world always through the prism of our beliefs. Scepticism is not enough to drive out a belief; we need something else to replace it. Because man by his very nature is a thinking creature and searches for mental explanations, he has a need to philosophise. As a prominent philosopher has pointed out, the distrust of philosophy is itself a philosophy. He identifies this with a philosophic school called Instrumentalism. Metaphysics in particular and philosophy in general have the modest function of organising our beliefs.

While it is a fact that Science has effected a unification of mankind in a certain sense – by its universally valid methods of self-justification, procedures that transcend the barriers of language, culture and social

milieu – the hearts and minds of mankind are still divided along diverse lines.

History has another tale to tell. From hoary antiquity to the modern technological civilisation, if there is one lingering preoccupation in the life of man, it is God. No doubt, man's everyday life revolves around many other concerns: social life, family life, conjugal

life, work life and intellectual life. However, the moment he tries to come to grips with himself in the

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*The status as a sadhak-philosopher-scientist which Jugal-da achieves in these works is rare indeed but could be indicative of the future type of mentality—plastic and many-sided but rigorous at the same time.*

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totality of his spatio-temporal experience and existence, ideas, feelings and impulses of a supra-mundane Something, Someone or Somewhat overtake him. This happens rather clumsily in the lives of ordinary men and women but takes deliberate and highly involved forms in the lives of exceptional souls—those who seek the spiritual reality in one form or another.

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Jugal-da was such a soul. Metaphysics was his first love. By educational training he was a man of science. The preoccupation of his adult life was the pursuit of God. A life-long bachelor, an author of rare insight and thoroughness, an inspiring influence for hundreds of his students, an efficient administrator of the Higher Course section of the Ashram School—this child of the Mother left his body on 15 December 2009 at the age of 84.

Born Jugal Kishore Mukherjee on 9 September 1925 in a village in Bengal, he lost his father in his infancy. His childhood and boyhood was spent in penury, his mother being in great difficulty to make ends meet. In spite of this, his brilliance as a student could not be obscured. After completing his master's degree in physics he joined the Ashram.

His was not a facile idealism; a keen student of Life, he was aware of the “aching throb of life”. But he asserted, better than any other person I knew, that this throb can be healed only by union with the Divine. My acquaintance with him was brief – during the last few years of his life – but within this short span of four or five years he exerted a profound influence on my inner life. In this short review of his writings I shall attempt to bring out aspects of his many-faceted mind. He was an intellectual of great integrity, blessed with humility and dedication towards his task in life. The Mother once wrote to him regarding his studies, “Once you have started, you should continue, and the justification of the studies is to find in what has been revealed in the past the prophetic indication of what will be realised in the future.” This indication of the Mother, displayed at the beginning of his best known work, *The Destiny of the Body*, impelled Jugal-da in most of his intellectual outpourings.

In two of his major works, *The Destiny of the Body* and *From Man Human to Man Divine*, Jugal-da

brings to his task his illumined insight—at once combining the intuitive metaphysical element with the discursively scientific, and basing both on the spiritual revelations of his Guru, Sri Aurobindo. The first of these works deals with “the vision and the realisation in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga” that culminates in the transformation of the body. The second, a companion volume, generalises the scope of his scholarly investigations to man as a species, tracing his evolution from his humble origins through his present achievement and culminating in his future evolutionary destiny. Both works have a futuristic



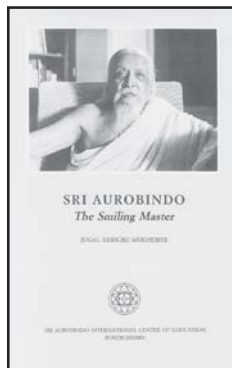
From left to right: Hemant Kapoor, Jugal-da, Nirod-da

slant, something unique to Sri Aurobindo’s yoga, the aspirant of which belongs not to “past dawns but to noons of the future”. Both examine the materialistic and the ascetic solutions to the problem of matter-life-mind, disengaging the elements of truth in them, while at the same time pointing to the limitations of a one-sided view of life and the world. Drawing upon

the works of many savants, Jugal-da discusses the problem of transformation from the individual and collective perspectives. The scientific, the philosophical and the spiritual points of view go hand in hand in these two works. Jugal-da was entirely free from the disgust which an unpragmatic spirituality has towards the lower knowledge. Sri Aurobindo remarks in *The Synthesis of Yoga* that “Yoga does not either in its path or in its attainment exclude and throw away the forms of the lower knowledge, except when it takes the shape of an extreme asceticism or a mysticism altogether intolerant of this other divine mystery of the world-existence.” The status as a *sadhak*-philosopher-scientist which Jugal-da achieves in these works is rare indeed but could be indicative of the future type of mentality—plastic and many-sided but rigorous at the same time.

It is the tendency of accredited experts in one field of specialisation to legislate with impunity in another field of life. This creates a huge confusion in the mind of the layman who, lured by the big name of the expert, ends up swallowing hook, line and sinker all that the person says. The simultaneous expertise in more than one area of knowledge that Jugal-da commanded remedies this situation and has produced a work like *From Man Human to Man Divine*, whose real value has not yet been fully appreciated. Of course, such writings demand a freedom from bias, open-mindedness and a modicum of intellectual development on the part of the reader. Penetrating analysis, an exhaustive enumeration and discussion of the possibilities involved in the issue and then the solution in the light of Sri Aurobindo—all this, presented in the concise diction of a man of science, was the hallmark of Jugal-da’s writings.

*Penetrating analysis, an exhaustive enumeration of the possibilities involved in the issue and then the solution in the light of Sri Aurobindo—all this, presented in the concise diction of a man of science, was the hallmark of Jugal-da’s writings.*



In *Sri Aurobindo: The Smiling Master* Jugal-da brings seriousness to the subject of humour and relates it to Sri Aurobindo. *Śānta Rasa* is deemed to have the quality of Brahman and yogis are separated from ordinary beings by the peace they radiate. Sri Aurobindo too

had the ‘calm as of deep waters’. Yet on the surface of this ocean of peace was the frolic of the waves of humour, of *hāsyā*, of *Ānanda*. This professorial volume undertakes to bring out this aspect of Sri Aurobindo, an aspect unfamiliar to those to those who know him only through his scholarly works like

*The Life Divine*. I can’t resist quoting here some words of Sri Aurobindo with which Jugal-da begins this book: “Sense of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have gone utterly out of balance.”

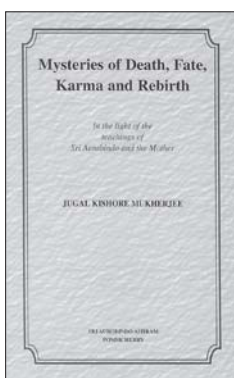
In *Sri Aurobindo Ashram: Its Role, Responsibility and Future Destiny—An Insider’s Personal View* Jugal-da surveys briefly the history of the Ashram and examines its current state of affairs,

dealing in detail with the misgivings people may have, the difficulties that arise in the Ashram’s group-life and many other issues pertaining to our collective life. Towards the end of the book he points out some danger signals for its inmates, such as the effect of frequent absences from the Ashram, the urge to procure personal money and a diminishing spirit of Karmayoga. However, he ends the book on an optimistic note and dismisses the alarmist view that the inmates are passing through great darkness. Being an insider’s personal view, this book has a flavour which is different from that of a mere academic exercise. It has a healthy optimism but also reminds us that we have to tread warily. One quotation from



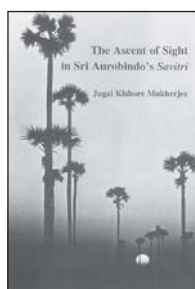
the work nicely summarises its message: “for the Sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo’s Path, although the individual spiritual realisation remains the first necessity, it cannot be deemed complete until it is accompanied by an outer realisation also in life; ‘spiritual consciousness within but also spiritual life without.’”

*The Practice of Integral Yoga* is a ready reference for beginners and even relatively advanced seekers on the path. In this handbook Jugal-da attempts to present in brief summary form the various aspects of the Integral Yoga. When the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were present in their physical bodies it was easy to get guidance. One had only to refer the matter to them directly and receive solutions to the vexatious problems that cropped up during the course of *sadhana*. Now, the neophyte can only refer to their writings. But their writings are comprised of many volumes and it is easy to founder in the ocean of their collected works. Jugal-da’s book is thus immensely helpful and handy. It is true that the Mother was not in favour of presenting Sri Aurobindo’s thought in a chewed and pre-digested manner, but considering the nobility of Jugal-da’s aim, the comprehensiveness of his approach and the fact of his being a most sincere wayfarer on the road of Integral Yoga for several decades, this book need not be criticised on that ground. I personally have found it a useful companion.



The next book under consideration is *Mysteries of Death, Fate, Karma and Rebirth*. This book examines the ideas which see death as a process of life, as part of the single continuity called Life. *Karma* is the moral consequence of our actions expressed through the automatic action of universal

forces. But that which stands behind the process in us is the psychic being. The evolution of consciousness through the soul’s many earthly sojourns enables the psychic being to gain control and mastery over its instruments, the mind, the vital and the physical, leading finally to a spiritualisation of the consciousness. Jugal-da helps us understand that karma can be overcome by growth of consciousness, divine grace or spiritual intervention. He describes the occult journey of the soul and its slumber of assimilation in the psychic world which may be of a long or short duration before it decides to return to the earthly plane. In the end he deals with “some knotty problems of rebirth” in a sort of FAQ manner and provides answers from the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.



Another work by Jugal-da is the monograph in book form titled *The Ascent of Sight in Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Savitri’*. Seeing is believing, goes the proverb. In the spiritual realm sight takes another, an inward aspect. *Savitri*, the supreme creation of Sri

Aurobindo, is, in his own words, “the record of a seeing.” The transformative power of spiritual sight is much greater than that of ordinary thought. In this book Jugal-da traces the “progression of sight from level to greater level.” He looks at sight in the inconscient, the subconscious, the subliminal, the intermediate zone, the circumconscient and in many different planes of consciousness and life, including the levels between mind and supermind. He concludes the monograph with the “future apotheosis of sight”, its supramentalisation.

Another monograph by Jugal-da is *Sri Aurobindo’s Poetry and Sanskrit Rhetoric*. This is a study of the ideational figures of speech, or figures of sense, in Sri Aurobindo’s poetry in the context of Sanskrit poetics. At the beginning of the book Jugal-da quotes

Bhatta Tauta: “One may have the vision, *Darśana*, and be only a seer Ṛṣi, but he becomes a poet, *Kavi*, only when he renders that vision into beautiful language, *Varṇana*.” Sri Aurobindo was indeed a modern *Kavi*. Jugal-da’s study – to paraphrase his own words – reveals the pleasant fact that almost all the rhetorical embellishments as described by the *Alankāra-Śāstra* are exemplified in Sri Aurobindo’s poetry.

The last book I shall discuss is *Principles and Goals of Integral Education*. Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga is not only an individual affair; it has a collective dimension. And this naturally lends itself to the idea of generalising the scope of the Yoga to include the receptive among mankind at large. After Sri Aurobindo’s passing the Mother established the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE) to further Sri Aurobindo’s vision of “preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the elite of today into a new race manifesting upon the earth the new light and force and life” (The Mother, 1951). After Pavitra-da’s passing, Jugal-da almost single-handedly organised the SAICE Higher Course section, for which he had overall responsibility. This book is the result of the many years that Jugal-da spent as a teacher and as the head of the Higher Course. Herein the reader will find all the ideas of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on education gleaned from their writings and from Jugal-da’s personal experience as an educator. Its concise format organised with suitable headings make it an eminently readable work.

Thus ends my appraisal of Jugal-da’s English writings. If there is any flaw in his writings it is a minor one which has been pointed out in an earlier number of the SABDA newsletter by Dr Debashish Banerji. That is, to quote Banerji, “an over-analytical temper—an occasional idiosyncrasy...which asserts its mental interference, though rarely, in the otherwise

luminous clarity of unfoldment”. As a scholar, Jugal-da’s wideness, clarity and penetrating insight stand out. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were the twin stars to whom his wagon was hitched. It was to further their Divine mission in humanity that he wrote.

— Hemant Kapoor

*Hemant Kapoor is a sadhak in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He graduated from IIT Kanpur in 1994. In the Ashram he is associated with the Applied Science Group of SAICE and Mother India, a cultural monthly.*

BOOKS BY JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE		
Title	Pages	Price (Rs)
<b>BENGALI</b>		
Mrityurahasya O Amaratvasiddhi	174	60
Purnayoger Sadhan-Paddhati		
(Pratham Khanda)	284	75
(Dwitiya Khanda)	275	90
<b>ENGLISH</b>		
From Man Human to Man Divine	250	120
Mysteries of Death, Fate, Karma and Rebirth	174	80
Principles and Goals of Integral Education: as propounded by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother	144	75
Sri Aurobindo: The Smiling Master	441	150
Sri Aurobindo Ashram: Its Role, Responsibility and Future Destiny	91	50
Sri Aurobindo's Poetry and Sanskrit Rhetoric	59	20
The Ascent of Sight in Sri Aurobindo's <i>Savitri</i>	92	70
The Destiny of the Body	419	150
The Practice of the Integral Yoga	348	160
The Wonder That is K. D. Sethna	42	25
<b>SPANISH (translations)</b>		
La Práctica del Yoga Integral de Sri Aurobindo (Tomo I)	227	650
(Tomo II)	216	650

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## Conundrums of the Indus Valley and Sri Aurobindo

Debashish Banerji

The Indus Valley or Indus-Saraswati civilization is the earliest layer of civilization unearthed in the Indian subcontinent. But its discovery has introduced a large number of conundrums into the understanding of Indian history. Who were the people who were responsible for this civilization? Why did it end? What is the relationship of its creators with the inhabitants of modern India? What kind of language did they speak? What is the relationship of this language with the languages of India or of the world? This and many other questions continue to puzzle scholars of the material ruins of this civilization. Identity politics has plagued the serious study of these problems from the very beginning of their emergence and continues to infect its scholarship in ever more strident terms in present times. In this essay, I try to provide an overview of the present state of scholarship and debates in Indus Valley studies and relate this to Sri Aurobindo's views on the matter, expressed almost a century back in his writings on the Veda serialized in the *Arya*.

Undoubtedly, among the oldest and primary conundrums of the Indus civilization is the Aryan homeland debate. This debate did not originate with the archeological discovery of the Indus Valley. Rather, that discovery gave material body to the debate, which originated in 19<sup>th</sup> c. European philology with the discovery of a family likeness between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Persian by Sir William Jones (1746–94). The question this raised about the history of Indo-European language migration combined with 19<sup>th</sup> c. European interests in racial validation of world conquest and colonization led to the study of the Rig Veda to support the idea of an Aryan Invasion of the Indian

subcontinent around 1500 BCE. According to this theory, the Proto-Indo-European language (PIE) was spoken by people in Northern Europe, who migrated southwards, occupying Europe, Central Asia, West Asia and finally invading the Indian subcontinent. The excavation of Indus Valley sites such as Harappa and Mohenjodaro began only in the 1920s. From early excavation data, these cultures were dated to have flourished in their mature phase from about 2700 BCE to about 1500 BCE. The disappearance (more properly disintegration) of Indus Valley cultures around 1500 BCE seemed to align itself conveniently with the date for the Rig Veda suggested by Max Mueller (1823–1900)<sup>1</sup>, and the archeology of Indus Valley sites was brought into the evidentiary fold of the Vedic homeland debate.

Sri Aurobindo's engagement with this debate was taken up by him as an aside in his spiritual analysis of the Vedas as part of the *Arya*. Largely written prior to the Indus Valley excavations, its references are, in fact, to the debate as represented in the European philological tradition, particularly historical conjectures from the Rig Veda. Sri Aurobindo makes a number of important points here, which I will summarize. (The interested reader may refer to "The Origins of Aryan Speech", included in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library edition of *The Secret of the Veda*, where these observations are contained):

1. Philology enters the academic mainstream as a science, and must respect the methods of science. This demands that the evidence not be twisted or pushed beyond its boundaries of inference into domains of speculation

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<sup>1</sup> Irene U. Chambers, Michael S. Roth eds., 'Veda and Vedanta', 7th lecture in *India: What Can It Teach Us?: A Course of Lectures Delivered Before the University of Cambridge*, World Treasures of the Library of Congress: Beginnings. Max Mueller's dating was based in Biblical interpretations of world history which are considered arbitrary and fanciful today.

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based on personal or social self-interest or the perpetuation of “generalizations and widely popularized errors.”<sup>2</sup>

2. The Rig Veda as a source of historical analysis is suspect, since it is a spiritual and symbolical text and cannot be made to yield legitimate conclusions about the material world, past or present.<sup>3</sup>
3. The language used by a people is no evidence of racial or ethnic identification of these people or of the migration of races or cultures.<sup>4</sup>
4. The Indian people are racially of a single predominant type with minor variations.<sup>5</sup>
5. Making cultural identifications based on philology is suspect and at best uncertain and thus best avoided.<sup>6</sup>
6. The division of Indian languages into Aryan and Dravidian families may be questioned.<sup>7</sup>
7. The peoples of India may have migrated to the subcontinent from elsewhere though very much earlier than the inception of the Vedas. Sri Aurobindo gives possible credence to Tilak’s idea of an Arctic homeland for the Vedic Indians and points to the fact that Tilak’s identification would make complete sense if the Vedas were seen as naturalistic descriptions.<sup>8</sup>

Since then, a number of developments have taken place, some of which have brought clarity to the conundrums of the Indus Valley and the Aryan homeland issues while some others have introduced new mysteries and debates.

Among the first of these, we must consider the disastrous rise of the race idea and its leveling through World War II and its subsequent role in world history. The pervasive racism of 19<sup>th</sup> c. Europe and its flirtations with the idea of the Chosen Race came to a head and an end with this worldwide genocide, which pushed modern civilization to the brink of extinction. Following this, the use of the term “Aryan” as a racial term was seen as fraught

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**Sri Aurobindo’s contention that language is no evidence of physical migration is now a well-established tenet in the arguments for the spread of Indo-European languages.**

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with dangerous error and the term “Aryan” in “Aryan Invasion Theory” was re-inflected to mean Aryan- or Indo-European-speaking people, i.e., it was recognized as increasingly necessary to separate the senses of Aryan as race and language and to apply the term strictly and solely to refer to the Indo-European family of languages and their speakers.<sup>9</sup>

From the 1980s, the theory of invasion or migration of Aryan language speakers into South Asia began to be increasingly questioned. This arose largely as part of a resurgence of Hindu nationalism, in which the sense of antiquity of the Hindu tradition and of India as the original homeland of Hindus became dominant interests motivating the challenge to the Aryan Invasion Theory. This sought support in the lack of archeological evidence for any invasion in

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<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda* (Pondicherry: SABCL, 1972), Vol. 10, Part Four, pp. 551–52, 554, 561–62. (In *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, the article “The Origins of Aryan Speech” will appear in Vol. 14 *Vedic Studies with Writings on Philology*, not yet published.)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 217, 554.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 553

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 553–54.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 555

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 557–60

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 23–24, 122–23.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Possehl, Gregory L., *The Indus Age: The Beginnings* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH, 1999), p. 42.



Indus Valley sites after over fifty years following the original excavations.<sup>10</sup> This was coupled with the discovery of a large number of new sites bearing the markers of the Indus civilization in extended areas stretching east of the Indus riverine system as far as Haryana and Delhi and south as far as Kutch in southern Gujarat. In the 1990s, satellite photography established the existence of a dry riverbed running through Rajasthan from the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea in Gujarat with most of the new sites clustered along its course. Known as the Ghaggar-Hakra in the Rajasthan area, this river was taken to be identical with the river Saraswati spoken of in the Rig Veda and argued as evidence for a Vedic identification of the Indus Valley civilization. Moreover, it was established that this river dried up around 1750 BCE in a process of headwater capture that may have begun around 1900 BCE.<sup>11</sup> Given that the Saraswati is the most important river hymned in the Rig Veda, which refers to it as the best of all rivers and speaks of Vedic settlements on both its banks, those who argued for the Indus Valley civilization to be a Vedic one pressed for a re-nomination of this civilization as the Indus-Saraswati civilization, simultaneously implying the indigenous Vedic origin of this civilization and the pushing back of the date of the Rig Veda to prior to 1900 BCE.

The lack of any evidence for an invasion, coupled with geological data on seismic activity in the Himalayas in the 1990s, led to a new understanding of the disintegration of this civilization around 1500 BCE. This was now seen to be largely the result of the repeated flooding of the Indus river system and the drying up of the Saraswati, both rivers of primary importance to the settlements of this civilization.<sup>12</sup>

These revaluations have introduced two new debates into the Indus Valley mix: the contentions around



An example of an Indus Valley seal

the dating of the Rig Veda and, in a reversal of direction of migration, what has been known as the Out of India Theory, i.e., that the Indus-Saraswati civilization was a continuous Vedic culture stretching back to its pastoral beginnings (with its upper end at 7000 BCE), centering around the Saraswati River and spreading

westwards, eastwards and southwards, as well as migrating “out of India” to Central Asia, West Asia and Europe, thus accounting for the prevalence of the Indo-European language family across these regions of the world.<sup>13</sup> Though strongly argued by quasi-nationalistic proponents of an indigenous Aryan idea, this view is not accepted at large by a

<sup>10</sup> Padma Manian, “Harappans and Aryans: Old and New Perspectives of Ancient Indian History,” *The History Teacher* 32:1 (November 1998), pp. 17–32. In this essay, Manian discusses the ideological factors involved in the Aryan Invasion Theory and its challenge in the 1980s.

<sup>11</sup> Radhakrishnan, B. P., & Merh, S. S., eds., *Vedic Sarasvati—Evolutionary History of a Lost River of Northwestern India* (Bangalore: Geological Society of India, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Mughal, M. Rafique, “Recent Archaeological Research in the Cholistan Desert,” in Gregory L. Possehl ed., *Harappan Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective*, pp. 85–95 (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Company, 1982), p. 94.

<sup>13</sup> Edwin Bryant, *The quest for the origins of Vedic culture: the Indo-Aryan migration debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 6.

world community of scholars, largely due to lack of archeological evidence. This arena of the debate centers on the evidence of such items as fire-altars, the horse and the chariot—all items of primary importance in the Vedas. The presence of altars for fire rituals has been asserted in some early Indus sites such as Lothal and Kalibangan, but the evidence has not been conclusive. Similarly, there have been repeated attempts to prove the existence of the horse in Indus cultures, but without much conviction regarding its importance. The first incidence of the chariot among Indo-European speakers occurs in Andronovo cultures of the Russian steppes around 2000 BCE and this is generally held to be an early marker for Indo-European culture. On the other side, the items and symbols of importance in Indus cultures often have no place in the Vedas. Archeology and the genetic studies of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (touched on later) have reshaped the map of Indo-European migrations however, and the original hypothesis of a north European origin of Proto-Indo-European is seriously in doubt today. Colin Renfrew (1937– ) and others have posited the Anatolian region of central Asia or regions of the Russian steppes north of the Black Sea (the Kurgan hypothesis) as the origin of Proto-Indo-European and its spread is no longer related

primarily to physical invasions or migrations.<sup>14</sup> Sri Aurobindo's contention that language is no evidence of physical migration is now a well-established tenet in the arguments for the spread of Indo-European languages.

The other strong contention against the Indo-European origin of Indus civilization (and consequently the Out of India Theory) is the linguistic one. Linguists distinguish two independent language families in South Asia—Indo-European and Dravidian. We have noted that Sri Aurobindo had questioned this distinction. Apart

from his writings, we also know that he was engaged in researching these languages and held a hypothesis relating to the separation of Dravidian and Vedic languages from a common Indo-European root. But Sri Aurobindo's researches in this area seem to have been restricted to vocabulary while the linguistic division into two language families relies more strongly on grammatical structure. In this regard, the



language spoken in the Indus Valley, based on the signs depicted on seals, is still a matter of conjecture and fierce debate, divided into three positions—the traditional stand that it was a Dravidian language, the more recent Indo-centric stand aligned to the Indo-European origin theory that it was a Vedic language and the stand, proposed by some

<sup>14</sup> J.P. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, Archaeology, and Myth* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), p. 185. Renfrew's hypothesis places the Proto-Indo-European language origin in Anatolia (eastern Turkey/Iran), though contemporary mainstream preference is for the Kurgan hypothesis, based on linguistic, archeological and genetic information.

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contemporary scholars, that the script does not translate to any language.<sup>15</sup> Of these, contemporary mainstream scholars tend to favor the Dravidian hypothesis, based on computer-based pattern matching studies relating sign distributions to grammatical features of sentence formation and symbology in Dravidian languages.<sup>16</sup> This is supported by the presence of a long-standing culture of Dravidian speakers in regions of southwest Pakistan and Afghanistan (Brahui) and the fact that the Rig Veda demonstrates Dravidian phonological and grammatical features not present in any other Indo-European language.<sup>17</sup>

In this regard, it may be of significance to note that the Vedas are (and have been) unanimously held to have originated in India. This has never been an issue in these debates, particularly due to the recognition of Dravidian modification of Indo-European in Vedic Sanskrit. Linguists have noted that while Dravidian languages in India (Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, Kannada and others) show importations

mostly in vocabulary and little modification in grammatical structure from the Indo-European family, Indo-Aryan, as represented in Vedic Sanskrit, demonstrates structural modifications from Dravidian grammatical features. This has caused many linguists to conclude that Vedic Sanskrit has a Dravidian substratum, something which points to the assimilation of Indo-European language into a Dravidian-speaking base.<sup>18</sup>

Of late, there have been a number of attempts at the decipherment of the script assuming it to be representative of a Vedic or proto-Vedic language. The authors of these attempts have ranged from established scholars in the field such as S. R. Rao to amateurs like Jha and Rajaram or Hasenpflug. The problem with these decipherments lies in their inability to address or resolve the grammatical issue.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, these theories lack the property of disprovability, an essential necessity for scientific hypotheses.<sup>20</sup> Thus, they end up providing variant interpretations which stand alone as independent

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<sup>15</sup> Farmer, Sproat and Witzel have argued that the signs on seals do not represent a language. See Steve Farmer, Richard Sproat & Michael Witzel. "The collapse of the Indus script thesis: The myth of a literate Harappan Civilization." *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 2004. 11 (2): pp. 19–57. This argument has been widely criticized and held untenable by Iravatham Mahadevan, Asko Parpola and many others on both Aryan and Dravidian sides of the decipherment divide.

<sup>16</sup> The Russian scholar Yuri Knorozov led a team of computer analysts who surmised that the symbols represent a logosyllabic script and suggested an underlying Dravidian language as the most likely linguistic substrate. This attempt was succeeded by a Finnish team led by Asko Parpola who also arrived at structural identification of the script as Dravidian.

<sup>17</sup> Bhadriraju Krishnamurti, *The Dravidian Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 40–41; Kamil Zvelebil, "Dravidian languages." *Encyclopædia Britannica* 2008. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 30 Jun. 2008; George Erdosy, *The Indo-Aryans of ancient South Asia: Language, material culture and ethnicity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> How do the symbol patterns translate into grammar? What phonological, syntactical or grammatical laws do they follow? How are these related to Dravidian or Indo-European languages? Most of the decipherments in question here don't ask such questions because they start with an assumption that the script translates unequivocally into Vedic Sanskrit.

<sup>20</sup> See Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1959). The falsifiability criterion for hypotheses implies that all assumptions made in a hypothesis should lend themselves to tests by which they could be disproved.



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possibilities only. They also don't match up with the archeological data in terms of the material remains of the Indus civilization.<sup>21</sup> In the case of Jha and Rajaram, this is further complicated by the lack of vowels in their decipherment<sup>22</sup> and their arbitrary left-to-right and right-to-left readings, when it has been firmly established that seal inscriptions were written from right-to-left.<sup>23</sup>

Among those who claim to have followed Sri Aurobindo's lead in their interpretations, one may consider in

passing K. D. Sethna, a long-term resident of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Sethna has approached several of the conundrums of the Indus Valley in two books on the subject.<sup>24</sup> While Sethna's arguments show an extraordinary awareness of many details pertaining to research in the field, and his views against the Aryan Invasion Theory have been amply validated, his attempts to push the dating of the Vedas back to 7000 BCE show either an ignorance of the present links making up the archeological and linguistic history of ancient Eurasia or a pushing of evidence into the mists of speculation, exactly what Sri Aurobindo warns against. To claim that Indo-Aryan speakers pre-dated the inhabitants of the Indus Valley because *karpasa*

is not mentioned in Vedic literature while the presence of cotton is well attested to in Indus-Saraswati sites is to fall into the fallacy of cultural conclusions based on philology applied to a spiritual text, quite against Sri Aurobindo's caveat. There could be a number of reasons, having little to do

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**Studies have increasingly established that there were no significant additions to the South Asian gene pool since the large-scale planetary migrations 50,000 or more years ago. This has rendered nugatory both the Invasion and Immigration theories when seen in terms of population influx.**

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with material chronology, to explain the absence of a term in a symbolic and spiritual body of literature. Again, even if the horse is present in Indus-Saraswati culture, to claim that it has any place of prominence even close to its

primacy in the Vedas is a stretch of the imagination. Problems of this nature mar a copious output which could otherwise have been of greater significance in early South Asian scholarship.

Another aspect of the argument has come into prominence in the last ten years. These are genetic studies relating to ancestry. Though Sri Aurobindo's observation regarding the common ancestry of Indian people had to some extent been confirmed by physical anthropology, which concluded from skeletal studies of Indus grave cultures that the physical characteristics of the people of this civilization were hardly different from those of modern India, such studies were not held to be

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<sup>21</sup> Horses, cows or chariots are of no prominence in the Indus archeological archive, nor are a number of prominent symbols in Indus culture visible in Vedic literature. A good example of the latter is the bovine unicorn, which constitutes the most frequently occurring symbol in Indus seals.

<sup>22</sup> Jha and Rajaram claim that the Indus script has no differentiation of vowel signs and introduce arbitrary vowels in their proposed decipherments ending up with recognizable Sanskrit terms.

<sup>23</sup> Right-to-left directionality in writing was established by B. B. Lal, past Director General, Archaeology Survey of India, in 1966.

<sup>24</sup> Sethna, K. D., *Karpasa in Prehistoric India: A Chronological and Cultural Clue* (New Delhi: Biblia Impex, 1984). Sethna, K. D., *The Problem of Aryan Origins* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1992).



definitive in the Aryan Invasion debates.<sup>25</sup> The pressing of the arguments against the Invasion Theory resulted in its being largely discarded by the late 1980s, but the mainstream scholarly view replaced this with the Migration Theory. AIT, as the Aryan Invasion Theory had been dubbed, retained its initials in the academy, being renominated as Aryan Immigration Theory. According to this theory, large-scale migrations of Indo-European speakers into the subcontinent around the time of seismic changes in the Indus-Saraswati Valley led to the development of Vedic culture and a southward and eastward migration of the populations of the Indus-Saraswati civilization. From the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, genetic ancestry studies reached a high degree of predictive reliability and have been used to study both the large-scale migrations of human populations in their settlement of the earth as well as more focused regional studies of ancestral history through migrations or other forms of genetic interbreeding. These studies have increasingly established that there



were no significant additions to the South Asian gene pool since the large-scale planetary migrations 50,000 or more years ago.<sup>26</sup> This has rendered nugatory both the Invasion and Immigration theories when seen in terms of population influx.

On the one hand, this has provided added fuel to the Out of India theorists regarding the origin of Indo-European speakers and languages. On the other, it has enabled theories which are more closely aligned with Sri Aurobindo's tenet that there is no

need to see any direct relationship between language change and physical movements of human populations. These theories posit either small-scale immigrations of Indo-European speakers from Central Asia over a long period of time and cultural factors leading to the growth in prominence of linguistic features or settlements of bilingualism developing in the Himalayan headlands due to trade between indigenous populations and Indo-European speakers of Central Asia.<sup>27</sup> Recent discoveries of late Harappan (c. 1900 BCE) continuity in the Swat and "Cemetery H" regions of the headwaters of the Indus, Saraswati and Yamuna riverine systems (now

<sup>25</sup> Comparative skeletal studies by Kennedy and others since 1984 have suggested a continuity of physical type in northwest India. A more recent study with similar conclusions is to be found in B. E. Hemphill, J. R. Lukacs and K. A. R. Kennedy, "Biological adaptations and affinities of the Bronze Age Harappans." *Harappa Excavations 1986–1990*. (ed. R. Meadow, 1991): pp. 137–82.

<sup>26</sup> There is some debate on the genetic front, but this is restricted between the possibilities that there has been long-term continuity of the gene pool in South Asia and that there was some minor Central Asian input in the Bronze Age. Sanghamitra Sengupta et al., "Polarity and temporality of high resolution Y-chromosome distributions in India identify both indigenous and exogenous expansions and reveal minor genetic influence of Central Asian pastoralists," *American Journal of Human Genetics* volume 78, (Feb 2006), pp. 201–21. Sahoo Sangamitra and V. K. Kashyap, "A prehistory of Indian Y chromosomes: evaluating demic diffusion scenarios." *Proceedings at National Academy of Sciences*. 103 (Jan 24):843:848 (January 24, 2006). Kivisild et al., "The Genetics of Language and Farming Spread in India" in Peter Bellwood & Colin Renfrew eds., *Examining the farming/language dispersal hypothesis*, (McDonald Institute of Monographs, 2003), pp. 215–22.

<sup>27</sup> An interesting and plausible nine-stage acculturation model of this kind has been proposed recently by Sujay Rao Mandavilli in S. R. Mandavilli. "Syncretism and Acculturation in Ancient India: A New Nine Phase Acculturation Model Explaining the Process of Transfer of Power from the Harappans to the Indo-Aryans," *ICFAI University Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. III, No. 1, (January 2009) pp. 7–79.

in northern borderlands of Pakistan/Afghanistan), along with archeological pointers to Indo-European culture (cremation, pottery links with Central Asian settlements) have caused several scholars to posit a transition to Vedic language and cultural prominence among Himalayan populations of the Indus-Saraswati civilization from this period.<sup>28</sup> Archeological presence of Indus-Saraswati culture as far north as Shortugai on the Oxus River (Amudarya) in Northern Afghanistan from around 2000 BCE has established the fact of Indus trading colonies proximal to Indo-European-speaking Central Asian settlements. It is fairly certain that the people of these regions shared lapis lazuli and carnelian mines and traded in gold, copper, tin and other goods with Indo-European speakers from what is known as the Bactria-Margiana Archeological Complex.<sup>29</sup> A period of bilingualism due to such trading settlements or joint working situations could very well have led to language and culture assimilation from as early as 2000 BCE. Periods of massive seismic activity such as were experienced in the northern Indus-Saraswati regions in the late Harappan period (1900–1500 BCE) are likely to have caused social instability leading to factors of ideological and cultural change and the



Examples of Indus script

dominance of the Indo-Aryan language. Continuities in certain cultural ideas, terms and even the importance of the Saraswati River are not improbable to such a scenario. The spread of Vedic culture eastwards (towards Haryana and the Gangetic plains) and southwards (along the river Saraswati and clustering around the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat) seems to correspond to this late Harappan phase.<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion, we must invoke Sri Aurobindo's caution to the philologists almost a hundred years ago. In a scientific investigation, mental imagination, however pleasing it may be to a sense of chauvinistic identity, is no substitute for evidence. Many of the mysteries surrounding the Indus-Saraswati civilization stand unveiled today, but many remain and have even multiplied. Further conclusive solutions wait on more evidence. Of these, the history and relationship of Aryan and Dravidian languages among Indian speakers, which Sri Aurobindo was in the process of researching, could yield some important answers. Beyond this, the definitive decipherment of the Indus script could also help to settle many debates. Archeologically, the majority of the settlements along the dry bed of the river Saraswati remain

<sup>28</sup> Cemetery H was excavated by Vats in 1940 and held in early Indus scholarship (e.g. Wheeler in 1947) to be proof of an Aryan Invasion. More recent scholarship has failed to find any intrusive evidence or genetic change. See Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, "Urban Process in the Indus Tradition: A preliminary model from Harappa" in Meadow, R. H. (ed.). *Harappa Excavations 1986–1990: A multidisciplinary approach to Third Millennium urbanism* (Madison, WI: Prehistory Press, 1991), pp. 29–60.

<sup>29</sup> Shortugai eventually became part of the BMAC before the latter's disappearance around 1700 BCE. See Jane McIntosh, *The Ancient Indus Valleys: New Perspectives* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), pp. 97, 196.

<sup>30</sup> Settlements along the Saraswati riverbed include artifacts datable to the mature Harappan phase (c. 2300 BCE) but show Vedic cultural inclusions in the northern regions (close to the origins of the Indus/Saraswati/Yamuna systems, where Saraswati headwater capture was less significant for water loss) and in settlements spreading further to the east and clustering close to the sea in the Gujarat area from c. 1900 BCE. At the same time increasing desertification of the river valley seems to have led to the migration of its populations.

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unexcavated. The highly populated regions of the Gangetic plains have posed great difficulties in archeological explorations and undoubtedly hide important secrets related to Bronze Age and Iron Age India. Further exploration in the headlands of the Himalayas as well as within the Indian subcontinent could thus yield valuable clues. Till then, the debates surrounding the Indus-Saraswati civilization, particularly its identity issues, will

remain unresolved, though it is hoped they will continue to be engaged—with less acrimony than at present.

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**Excerpt from “The Origins of Aryan Speech” by Sri Aurobindo [headings by the editor]:**

**Critical errors in the European philological tradition**

The first error committed by the philologists after their momentous discovery of the Sanskrit tongue, was to exaggerate the importance of their first superficial discoveries....When Max Müller trumpeted forth to the world in his attractive studies the great rapprochement, *pitâ, patēr, pater, vater, father*, he was preparing the bankruptcy of the new science; he was leading it away from the truer clues, the wider vistas that lay behind. The most extraordinary and imposingly unsubstantial structures were reared on the narrow basis of that unfortunate formula. First, there was the elaborate division of civilised humanity into the Aryan, Semitic, Dravidian and Turanean races, based upon the philological classification of the ancient and modern languages. More sensible and careful reflection has shown us that community of language is no proof of community of blood or ethnological identity; the French are not a Latin race because they speak a corrupt and nasalised Latin, nor the Bulgars Slavs in blood because the Urgo-Finnish races have been wholly Slavonicised in civilisation and language. Scientific researches of another kind have confirmed this useful and timely negation. The philologists have, for instance, split up, on the strength of linguistic differences, the Indian nationality into the northern Aryan race and the southern Dravidian, but sound observation shows a single physical type with minor variations pervading the whole of India from Cape Comorin to Afghanistan. Language

is therefore discredited as an ethnological factor. The races of India may be all pure Dravidians, if indeed such an entity as a Dravidian race exists or ever existed, or they may be pure Aryans, if indeed such an entity as an Aryan race exists or ever existed, or they may be a mixed race with one predominant strain, but in any case the linguistic division of the tongues of India into the Sanskritic and the Tamilic counts for nothing in that problem. Yet so great is the force of attractive generalisations and widely popularised errors that all the world goes on perpetuating the blunder talking of the Indo-European races, claiming or disclaiming Aryan kinship and building on that basis of falsehood the most far-reaching political, social or pseudo-scientific conclusions.

**Conjectural and unreliable interpretation of the Vedas**

But if language is no sound factor of ethnological research, it may be put forward as a proof of common civilisation and used as a useful and reliable guide to the phenomena of early civilisations. Enormous, most ingenious, most painstaking have been the efforts to extract from the meanings of words a picture of the early Aryan civilisation previous to the dispersion of their tribes. Vedic scholarship has built upon this conjectural science of philology, upon the brilliantly ingenious and attractive but wholly conjectural and unreliable interpretation of the Vedas, a remarkable,

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minute and captivating picture of an early half-savage Aryan civilisation in India. How much value can we attach to these dazzling structures? None, for they have no assured scientific basis. They may be true and last, they may be partly true yet have to be seriously modified, they may be entirely false and no trace of them be left in the ultimate conclusion of human knowledge on the subject; we have no means of determining between these three possibilities. The now settled rendering of Veda which reigns hitherto because it has never been critically and minutely examined, is sure before long to be powerfully attacked and questioned. One thing may be confidently expected that even if India was ever invaded, colonised or civilised by northern worshippers of Sun and Fire, yet the picture of that invasion richly painted by philological scholarship from the Rig-veda will prove to be a modern legend and not ancient history, and even if a half-savage Aryan civilisation existed in India in early times, the astonishingly elaborate modern descriptions of Vedic India will turn out a philological mirage and phantasmagoria.

#### **Do common terms imply a common civilisation?**

The wider question of an early Aryan civilisation must equally be postponed till we have sounder materials. The present theory is wholly illusory; for it assumes that common terms imply a common civilisation, an assumption which sins both by excess and by defect. It sins by excess; it cannot be argued, for instance, that because the Romans and Indians have a common term for a particular utensil, therefore that utensil was possessed by their ancestors in common previous to their separation. We must know first the history of the contact between the ancestors of the two races; we must be sure that the extant Roman word did not replace an original Latin term not possessed by the Indians; we must be sure that the Romans did not receive the term by transmission from Greek or Celt without ever having had any identity, connection or contact with our Aryan forefathers; we must be proof against many other possible solutions about which philology can give us no guarantee either negative or affirmative. The Indian *suranga*, a tunnel, is supposed to be the Greek *surinx*. We cannot, therefore, argue that the Greeks and Indians possessed the common art of tunnel-making before their dispersion or even that the Indians who borrowed the word from Greece,

never knew what an underground excavation might be till they learned it from Macedonian engineers. The Bengali term for telescope is *durbin*, a word not of European origin. We cannot conclude that the Bengalis had invented the telescope independently before their contact with the Europeans. Yet on the principles by which the philologists seem to be guided in their conjectural restorations of vanished cultures, these are precisely the conclusions at which we should arrive. Here we have a knowledge of the historical facts to correct our speculations; but the prehistoric ages are not similarly defended. Historical data are entirely wanting and we are left at the mercy of words and their misleading indications. But a little reflection on the vicissitudes of languages and specially some study of the peculiar linguistic phenomena created in India by the impact of the English tongue on our literary vernaculars, the first rush with which English words attempted to oust, in conversation and letter-writing, even common indigenous terms in their own favour and the reaction by which the vernaculars are now finding new Sanskritic terms to express the novel concepts introduced by the Europeans, will be sufficient to convince any thoughtful mind how rash are the premises of these philological culture-restorers and how excessive and precarious their conclusions. Nor do they sin by excess alone, but by defect also. They consistently ignore the patent fact that in prehistoric and preliterate times the vocabularies of primitive languages must have varied from century to century to an extent of which we with our ideas of language drawn from the classical and modern literary tongues can form little conception. It is, I believe, an established fact of anthropology that many savage tongues change their vocabulary almost from generation to generation. It is, therefore, perfectly possible that the implements of civilisation and culture ideas for which no two Aryan tongues have a common term may yet have been common property before their dispersion; since each of them may have rejected after that dispersion the original common term for a neologism of its own manufacture. It is the preservation of common terms and not their disappearance that is the miracle of language.



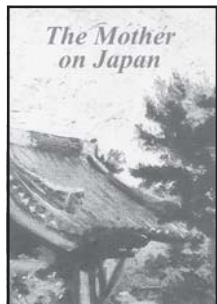
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## NEW PUBLICATIONS

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#### *Compilations*

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— Compiled from the works of the Mother  
Publisher: PRISMA, Auroville  
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Size: 15x21 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

Compiled from the Mother's talks, messages, and letters as well as from her Prayers and Meditations, this work focuses on the Mother's experiences of Japan,

where she lived from 1916 until 1920. It begins with a long introduction extracted from Georges Van Vrekhem's book *The Mother: The Story of Her Life* and includes photographs of the Mother in Japan and her paintings from that period. In these selections the Mother describes her impressions of Japan, Japanese art, and the children of Japan, and comments on the terrible flu that devastated Japan in 1919.

##### **The One Whom We Adore as the Mother (DVD)**

— Prepared by Sri Aurobindo Archives & Research Library

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry  
ISBN 978-81-7058-951-8, Rs 250  
Size: 14x22 cm  
Binding: CD

This DVD presentation on the Mother's life and work combines both familiar and lesser-known photographs with a narration that features passages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings, along with selections from the reminiscences of several of their early disciples. Narrated by multiple voices and enhanced by selections from Sunil's music, it recounts the Mother's early life in Paris, traces her journeys to Algeria, Japan, and her arrival in Pondicherry, and highlights her work in developing the Ashram and in founding the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and Auroville. This audiovisual presentation concludes with some recordings of the Mother's voice and video clips of Terrace Darshans.

*See review on page 21*

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Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Society,

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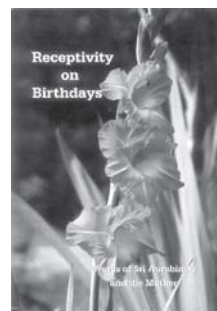
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"The Rishi" is one of the most powerful poetical works of Sri Aurobindo. Composed in the form of a dialogue between the legendary Aryan king Manu and the Rishi of the Northern Pole, this revelatory poem gives a comprehensive view of ancient Vedic knowledge and

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Binding: Soft Cover

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— Dr Narendra

Publisher: Sanskrit Karyalaya,  
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Written in very simple language, this book is an introduction to Panini by the author who, being conscious of his own difficulties in learning this language, has devised an easy and gradual approach. He leads the reader step by step around the more complex aspects of the grammar, thus minimising the difficulty for the modern reader.

## TELUGU

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**Sri Aravindula Vichara Dhara**

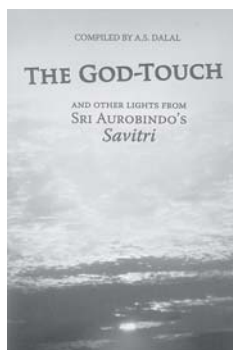
— K. Bhaskara Rao, K. Appa Rao Rs 40

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— Edited by J. Surendracharyulu Rs 40

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **The God-Touch and Other Lights from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri***



— Edited by A. S. Dalal  
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo  
Ashram Publication  
Department, Pondicherry  
139 pp., Rs 65  
ISBN: 978-81-7058-898-6  
Size: 12x18 cm  
Binding: Soft Cover

The book under review is another of the many valuable compilations made by Dr A. S.

Dalal from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But for the first time here is a compilation from the poetical works of Sri Aurobindo, and that too from his magnum opus *Savitri*. Those who love *Savitri* should certainly be delighted to go through this book.

*Savitri* is no ordinary poem; it is Sri Aurobindo's new concept of poetry written from his Overmind aesthesis. According to Raymond Piper, who is quoted in the book's Foreword, the epic is "perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the absolute". Rightly has he called *Savitri* "the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful and perfect cosmic poem ever composed". The poem describes "all Time's huge curve" rising from the viewless abyss of the Inconscient into the equally viewless summit of the Superconscient—"Climbing with foam-maned waves to the Supreme" (*Savitri*, 98). To comprehend such a work of almost 24,000 lines of high poetry, poetically as well as thematically, may prove not only difficult but almost impossible for the general reader.

The title of the compilation and the passages selected therein follow, more or less, in line with the theme of *Savitri*. The title touches on two cardinal aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. In his explanation of the mystery of terrestrial creation Sri Aurobindo puts forward "the cardinal fact of a spiritual evolution as the meaning of our existence here". To him the truth of evolution lies in the evolution of consciousness. Evolution "carries with it in its intrinsic sense, in the idea at its root the necessity of a previous involution...all that evolves already existed involved, passive or otherwise active, but in either case concealed from us in the shell of material Nature. The Spirit

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which manifests itself here in a body, must be involved from the beginning in the whole of matter and in every knot, formation and particle of matter; life, mind and whatever is above mind must be latent inactive or concealed active powers in all the operations of material energy” (*The Problem of Rebirth*). And evolution is the method by which the lights of consciousness in the abyss of the Night emerge as life and mind and a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental: “all must be until the highest is gained” (*Savitri*, 238).

“In the enigma of the darkened Vasts, | In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite | When all was plunged in the negating Void” (*Savitri*, 140), the Being too plunged into the dark to liberate the consciousness (Non-Being) from its inconscient state. Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* shows the way to this stupendous cosmic and supra-cosmic task the Divine has undertaken. The Spirit’s return journey takes the form of evolution, in which the various levels of consciousness emerge stage by stage on earth. Dr Dalal has attempted to show this through sections six to twelve of this compilation. But evolution shall not end here with the achievement of Nirvana and Cosmic Consciousness (sections 14 and 15). Sri Aurobindo’s vision and realisation have taken evolution to its summit (section 13), the Supramental stage—“All the world’s possibilities in man | Are waiting as the tree waits in its seed” (*Savitri*, 482). Some of the passages presented in sections 17 and 20 and elsewhere give the difficulties on the path of Yoga, and these sections shall prove especially helpful to readers.

In the title of the book, *The God-Touch*, Dr Dalal touches on the other cardinal aspect of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga. As Sri Aurobindo wrote in *The Mother*:

The human in us...is too weak and obscure to be lifted up suddenly to a form far beyond it. The Divine Consciousness and Force are there and do at each moment the thing that is needed...and shape in the midst of imperfection the perfection that is to come.

The compiler has rightly emphasised, as Sri Aurobindo has done in *Savitri*, “All can be done if the god-touch is there.” To quote again from Chapter 6 of *The Mother*:

The Mother’s power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal’s Ananda.

If faith, sincerity and surrender are there, the Divine shall act and help, even unannounced and in our unconscious moments.

It is hoped that the present compilation will give a foothold to readers in this regard. *Savitri* is a vast ocean of spiritual and supra-spiritual realms of consciousness which are “a great connected complex movement, rather superimposed with no rigid line of demarcation”. Dr Dalal in his compilation has selected beautiful passages from *Savitri* which describe *some* steps of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga, but the selections do not convey wholly the poet’s yogic vision. However, full credit goes to the compiler for bringing out this work with the specific aim expressed in the Preface: “The way of reading certain passages from *Savitri* on specific themes suggested by this compilation may make a special appeal to some readers, and may induce them to read the epic more often.” Dr Dalal has done a service for such readers, and it is hoped they will be inspired to a deeper study of the poem. The compilation gets added lustre from the Foreword written by Manoj Das.

— Asoka Ganguli

*Dr A. K. Ganguli retired as Professor of English, Delhi University. He is the author of Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri: An Adventure of Consciousness and Sri Aurobindo: The Poet of Nature & Other Writings on Savitri, available with SABDA.*

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In the Preface to his book A. S. Dalal reminds us that in Sri Aurobindo’s poetry, “the delight of Beauty and the illumination of Truth coexist and enhance each other”. His selections from *Savitri* were chosen to convey certain teachings, but they also exemplify the rare beauty of Sri Aurobindo’s poetic language. Section twelve of *The God-Touch* is sub-titled “Life—a Journey and an Ascent”. It contains the following passage from Book III, Canto IV, where the Divine Mother is addressing Aswapati:

Assent to thy high self, create, endure.  
Cease not from knowledge, let thy toil be vast.  
No more can earthly limits pen thy force;  
Equal thy work with long unending Time’s.  
Traveller upon the bare eternal heights,  
Tread still the difficult and dateless path  
Joining the cycles with its austere curve  
Measured for man by the initiate Gods.  
My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.  
Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart,  
Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.  
Only one boon, to greatness thy spirit, demand;  
Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.  
Above blind fate and the antagonist powers  
Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;  
To its omnipotence leave thy work’s result.  
All things shall change in God’s transfiguring hour.”



## The One Whom We Adore as the Mother (DVD)

— Prepared by Sri Aurobindo Archives & Research Library  
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry  
ISBN 978-81-7058-951-8, Rs 250

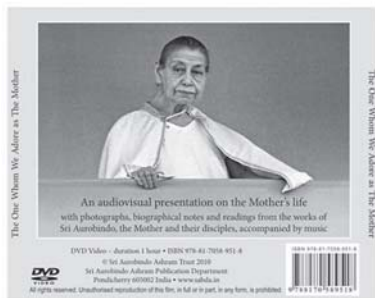
No matter how many times one reads about the life of the Mother, no matter how many times one watches a visual presentation on her, it is always as if one were doing it for the first time, with fresh wonder and joy. We may know all the facts, we may have seen all the photographs, but on every occasion, something of her enters and creates a magic anew. And it is for this alone that one can welcome yet another effort towards sharing the Mother's life with all those who come to her.

As Sri Aurobindo wrote:

The One whom we adore as the Mother is the divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence. The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates.

Despite the magnitude of the 'incomprehensible', her children have always striven towards a surrender to her, to Sri Aurobindo, to all that they stood for together, and this is all too evident as we watch *The One Whom We Adore as the Mother*, a gentle audio-visual presentation which recounts the Mother's life from the very start and follows it through to the very end. One glimpses all the significant events that punctuated her life at intervals, the early influences, her interests, the natural trajectory that led to her coming to Pondicherry, the establishing of the Ashram, and the ceaseless work that took place on both the outer and inner planes.

Photograph upon photograph reveals the magnificent progression of a life that had much to do. Beautiful paintings and sketches made by the Mother are a sheer delight for those who may not have had a chance to see them before. Familiar stories are retold, making one want to be part of the soup ceremony or to have the privilege of sitting at her feet during the question and answer session



or even simply waiting early in the morning for a glimpse of her as she came out to the balcony. Anecdotes from her life in her own words show the extent of her occult knowledge and leave one in a state of awe for it is so often that we think of her as merely our mother, forgetting the heights and depths that she soared or plunged to. Tales recounted by *sadhaks* such as Nolini Kanta Gupta, A. B. Purani, Sahana Devi, and Amal Kiran – each one a giant in him or herself and yet humbled in and within their own devotion – throw light on a time that many of us may have missed out on. Auroville and its wonderful idealism, the adventure of a new consciousness, the making of a divine life upon earth—each is an idea that hits like a thunderbolt, making one snap out of a torpor that may have set in. When she asks, “The world is preparing for a big change. Will you help?”, it is only natural that one should spontaneously reply with a heart full of conviction: Yes.

The narration was intelligently put together using not just a different voice-over for each personality being quoted but also maintaining the authenticity of accents, an aspect which is often ignored. However, the pace set from the start is slow and while most often it is well contained within the moment, on occasion it feels a bit drawn-out. The music, taken from Sunil-da's compositions, while adding to the charm of the presentation, does at times end rather abruptly. These minor flaws apart, it is a commendable effort by the Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research Library, in which one can recognize and appreciate the aspiration with which it was put together. In the end, it is this love for the Mother that reaches out and makes every moment of this effort so very worthwhile.

To end with Sri Aurobindo's words again:

Remember the Mother and, though physically far from her, try to feel her with you and act according to what your inner being tells you would be her Will. Then you will be best able to feel her presence and mine and carry our atmosphere around you as a protection and a zone of quietude and light accompanying you everywhere.

— Shonar

*Shonar writes on all kinds of subjects, from music, travel, and environment to films and cultural and social issues. She is currently living in Pondicherry and working as a researcher, writer, editor—and full-time cat-sitter.*

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## Integral Yoga and Psychoanalysis - II

### *Suffering, Gratitude, and Joy*

— Miranda Vannucci

Publisher: Miranda Vannucci, Italy

140 pp., Rs 600

Size: 12x18 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

*Integral Yoga and Psychoanalysis II: Suffering, Gratitude, and Joy* by Miranda Vannucci is a sequel to her 2006 work. In her introductory remarks the author has explained that she is not comparing the theoretical bases of the two disciplines but is rather exploring the points of contact between them. The author has milked her personal experience as an analyst and as a follower of the Integral Yoga to write this book.

The book briefly touches upon several insightful topics such as pain and grief, depression, guilt, gratitude, attachment, the symbolism of dreams, and the significance of flowers in the Integral Yoga. The author has used extensive quotes from the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and their disciples, citing passages from *The Collected Works of the Mother*, *Letters on Yoga*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and *Mother's Agenda*, among others.

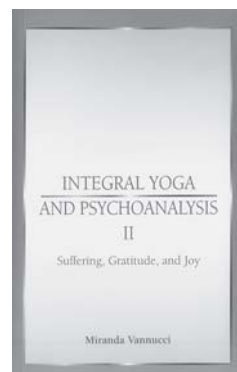
As one reads through the book one gets many insights on how present-day psychoanalysis, as a school of thought inspired by John Bowlby's perspective on psychodynamic philosophy, understands the difficulties of human nature. But the main drawback of the book is that in the author's endeavour to look for contacts between psychoanalysis and the Integral Yoga, the contacts sometimes look forced. The Integral Yoga is a whole universe of experience which inevitably includes all thoughts and ideas. Hence, there are bound to be points of contact between the Integral Yoga and psychoanalysis (as indeed with any other system), but it is the point of view which should be oriented correctly.

A given subject can be looked at either from the inside-out/top-down perspective or from a more superficial one. For example, in the chapter on depression, the author cites as a possible cause of depression the childhood experience

of having an uninterested or uncaring mother. While she provides a quote from the Mother's writings on how one can come out of depression, there is no mention of how the Integral Yoga understands depression and its causes. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have written extensively on depression and the attitude one should develop to overcome it, but these gems are absent from this chapter.

In another chapter titled "Attachment to Pain" the author has drawn parallels between the Integral Yoga's understanding of the vital's attachment to pain and how psychoanalysis views the perversion of a masochist or the reason why a couple continues to live in an aggressive and painful relationship. The author says that the vital's attachment to pain shows that there is a perverted part in us that needs pain and sticks to it.

By cursorily dismissing the vital as the perverted part that needs pain, the author has done away completely with what the vital part of human nature really is. While it is the ignorant, obscure vital living in darkness that seeks the duality of pleasure and pain, the Integral Yoga focuses on the transformation of this vital, and all other parts of the being, to their highest possibility.



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*The Integral Yoga, as Sri Aurobindo has said, is nothing but practical psychology, neither superficial nor a depth psychology as currently understood, but a psychology which understands human nature in all its depths, heights, and connections.*

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Most schools of thought in Western psychology look towards the development of a healthy ego, one that helps in a full adaptation and adjustment to society so that one can function in a fully constructive manner, as the highest possibility in human beings. A person who is

not fully adjusted and not contributing towards the growth of society economically is seen as a burden and a case for psychological therapy. Psychoanalysis also has the same aim, an optimally functioning ego-personality. The Integral Yoga, on the other hand, sees ego in its dual nature, both as a helper and as a bar. Ego has a place in human growth and progress, but it can also become an obstacle when the aim is spiritual growth.

The second major flaw of this book is that it continuously draws parallels between the rebellion, depression, guilt, and pain one experiences in day-to-day life, when the ego desires are unfulfilled, and the rebellion, depression, and pain the vital throws out when it is faced with the Light, which supersedes its darkness and its petty, obscure, and ignorant life. Both are reactions of the vital, yet the origin and cause differ. One is the pain caused by the ego-desire and its expectations; the other is part of the process of growth into something higher and vaster which exceeds the normal (mediocre) human ability. The author is trying to ride in two boats – psychology and yoga – and keeps moving back and forth, trying to look at human nature from both perspectives, differentiating the two from each other. This may work for a non-Indian audience or even for a purely academic one, but even that is doubtful as what is provided is only a partial view of the Integral Yoga and its scope. For the practitioners and students of the Integral Yoga this gulf/rift feels too sharp and even misleading at times. The Integral Yoga, as Sri Aurobindo has said, is nothing but practical psychology. But it is neither superficial nor is it a depth psychology as currently understood. It is a psychology which understands human nature in all its depths, heights, and connections.

This book, though it brings forth insights from Bowlby's understanding of psychodynamic thought, has largely failed to delve deeply into the Integral Yoga's understanding of human nature in general and suffering, gratitude, and joy in particular. A suggestion for improvement would be to deal with fewer topics in greater detail rather than superficially with many. Also, it is very steeply priced at Rs 600 for 129 pages.

Finally, on a positive note, the last four chapters of the book are a delight as they deal with psychic emotions, *Ananda*, the subconscious and unconscious and the subliminal and superconscious in the Integral Yoga, and *Ananda* and the body's transformation. These four chapters are the high points of the book as they open the possibility of a higher, dynamic, revolutionary, and evolutionary potential for psychology and psychotherapy.

— Manasi Pahwa

*Manasi is currently pursuing her PhD in psychology from the University of Delhi, her area of research being psychotherapy and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. She came to Pondicherry in 2006 and has been here since then, working full-time in an Ashram department as a volunteer.*

## Sweet Mother: Luminous Notes

— Conversations with the Mother as recollected by  
Mona Sarkar

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication

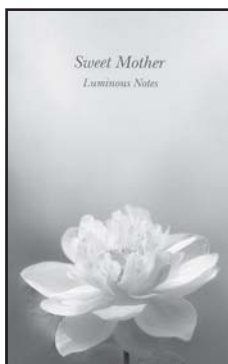
Department, Pondicherry

177 pp., Rs 95

ISBN: 978-81-7058-899-3

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



There are different kinds of books relating to the Truth that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo bring down to earth and men. One kind relates to the teachings; the path they have shown and the truths they have revealed. These books may have a rather impersonal tone

about them and therefore appeal to a certain type of secular mind-set, one that shuns everything devotional or anything that has a ring of revelation in it. To those who can feel and know by a sense deeper than thought, and possess a certain psychic feeling, if one may say so, there is another side of the Truth that reveals itself in the persona of the embodied Divine. It is, so to say, more personal and intimate, appealing to and addressing the heart and the soul. Another kind of book relates to the life and *lila* of the embodied Divine and His way of dealing with our blind and ignorant humanity: leading us by the hand, as it were, or carrying us sheltered in the heart. Naturally such books carry a greater appeal for the devotee who sees with the eye of faith or knows directly by the soul's contact rather than by an indirect and laborious passage through the labyrinth of his mind.

The book under review belongs primarily to the second category. Though in many ways it also addresses the mind of the seeker its thrust is rather to touch and awaken some deeper layer of our being and through that to reach out directly to the soul of the reader. It is only natural that it be so since the book is the result of a personal interaction between a then young disciple and the Mother. To this disciple faith came naturally, and surrender and obedience were the very food of his inner life. Quite naturally it is only to such a one that the Divine reveals his deeper and intimate side. To him, endowed or rather blessed with this faith, is revealed that vision of the glory which hides behind the human persons of the *Avatara*. We, too, feel blessed and uplifted as he shares his experience with those of us who did not have the exceptional privilege of a personal physical contact with the twin *Avataras*, in this

life at least. Just as a student of the Gita is enthralled with the vision of the Lord granted to Arjuna, so too, as we go through the pages of *Sweet Mother: Luminous Notes*, are we enchanted and enamoured, uplifted and inspired, indeed captured by the rapture of the unfolding divine vision, wonder-struck by the priceless gems of truths and rare jewels of the spirit, almost casually strewn before us by an act of Grace. The recipient of this special Grace, Mona-da, may not be an Arjuna but

he is surely among the front rank of our humanity. His illustrious father Shri Sudhir Sarkar was not only a well-known and fearless freedom fighter, who was deported by the British to the Andamans, but was also close to Sri Aurobindo both during India's freedom struggle and after. Mona-da himself is presently the captain in charge of the command during the Ashram March Past. One may well surmise that his straightforward, truth-loving, simple, childlike nature, endowed with a strength and conviction born of faith, must have been one of the reasons for this special Grace. Whatever may be the inner and deeper reasons that elude the human mind, the result of this meeting between the human disciple and the embodied Divine has turned out to be most fruitful for those who followed afterwards. We are grateful that he has chosen to share with us these notes that have been revealed to him in personal moments and in an intimate vein.

The book itself has seven sections, each taking us deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the Divine Mother and Her sublime play with Her children. The first section reveals to us the deeper significance of *Om*, of the Mother's signature, Her photographs, Her gaze, and Her vision. The second section is a most profound and amazing revelation about *Savitri*, "the Truth of Tomorrow". This whole chapter has an extraordinary power in it and can easily be called the very best, indeed the last word to be said on the subject. The third section deals with some personal advice given by the Mother relating to guidance in life and in Yoga. The fourth deals with the veiled realities behind numbers, dates, lines upon the palm, birthdays, etc. The fifth is an exceedingly beautiful chapter on flowers that ends with a most uplifting note inspiring us to be like a flower: *open and radiant, frank and transparent, equal and without preferences, generously giving without*

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*The last section reveals some profound truths about the purpose of Her embodiment, the physical transformation, Her tremendous action in matter and the physical world, and above all Her ever present-help and Grace.*

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*reserve, gentle and sweet.* The sixth section primarily relates to some aspects of the Mother's work and action in the Ashram context; nevertheless, it indicates Her ways of working in general upon the world. Finally, the seventh and last section tops it all by revealing, through subtly dropped hints of deep import, some profound truths about the purpose of Her embodiment, the physical transformation, Her tremendous action in matter and the physical world, and above all Her ever-present help and Grace. It is the supreme assurance always given to man by the incarnate Divine: that whatever happens we must cleave to Him by faith for He never abandons His devotee, even when appearances seem otherwise. To quote from this last part of the book:

You know, once I have taken his charge (*referring to a disciple who was seriously ill*), whatever may happen to him, it may be some painful or disagreeable thing, you understand...but the Grace will protect his soul and carry him nearer to me. There is nothing better one can expect.

The Grace is the greatest protection and the quickest means to come closer to me. It is invincible and does not follow the slow natural route but jumps, takes a leap, towards the goal. Whatever may be the outer consequences, the Grace carries you directly to me. Indeed the book itself is an act of Grace and is best received as such, with gratitude and openness. It is not an intellectual treatise but a revelation that surpasses any intellectual analysis. It is about truths that the mind can never know by intellectual effort. The human mind skims upon the surface and, tied to the outposts of the material senses, cannot dive deep. This book takes us deeper, holding the hand of the Divine Mother, and shows us what mortal eyes cannot see and reveals what the mind cannot think. A priceless treasure of nearly 170 luminous pages, it is available for a mere Rs 95. Neatly printed and with a beautiful cover, it is a treat and a feast for the inner and outer eyes, a delight to the hungry heart and the seeking soul.

— Dr Alok Pandey

*Dr Pandey, psychiatrist and philosopher, is a seeker on the path of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. He writes and lectures extensively on varied issues of life and yoga.*