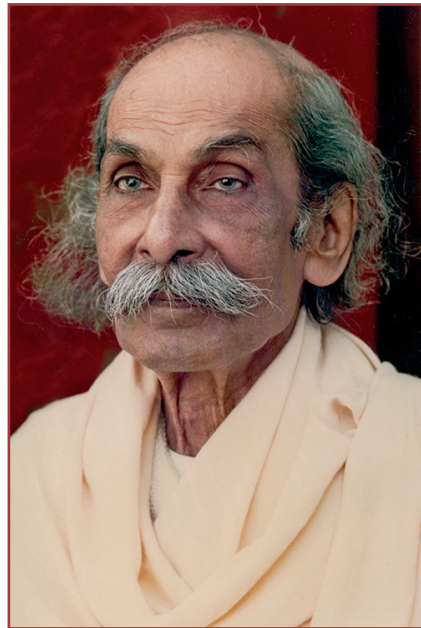


Recent Publications

S a b d a

CONTENTS

Nolini Kanta Gupta: "A Remarkable Mind"	2
RECENT PUBLICATIONS	9
Ordering Information	14
BOOK REVIEWS	
New Words of the Mother	15
Divine Possibility	18
Sri Aurobindo and Philosophy	21
Discourses on <i>The Synthesis of Yoga</i>	
Vol 9, Part III: The Yoga of Divine Love	24
ESSAY	
Love in the Integral Yoga	26



Nolini Kanta Gupta

In his reminiscences of Nolini-da, Nirodbaran mentions a comment by Sri Aurobindo that Nolini-da had a remarkable mind. In the *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta* we discover for ourselves some measure of that remarkable mind. Out of print now for several years, the first two of the eight English volumes have been recently reissued and are reviewed in this issue's lead article with the hope that readers new to his work will appreciate the exceptional clarity of his insights and their relevance to contemporary times.

The newsletter ends with an essay on the Yoga of Love written by a final-year student of the Higher Course of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. Drawn from Sri Aurobindo's considerable writings on the subject, it is her studied appreciation of this essential component of the Integral Yoga.

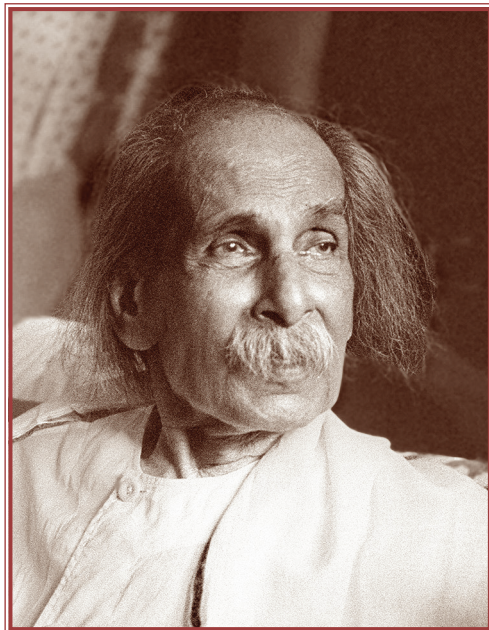
Nolini Kanta Gupta: "A Remarkable Mind"

Nolini Kanta Gupta (1889–1984), referred to endearingly by many as Nolini-da, a term of respect for elder brothers in Bengali, hardly needs an introduction to those familiar with the twentieth century culture of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. But time has a habit of layering over its past with more immediate objects of concern, so he remains unknown to many today. This should hardly be the case, since his life is so closely wrapped up in those of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This should be even more so given his legacy for the Ashram, not least of which is his extensive output of thought expressive of his spiritual experience and insight.

Nolini was a fourth-year student at Presidency College, Calcutta, when he joined Barin Ghosh's group of revolutionaries and was imprisoned along with Sri Aurobindo and others in the Manicktola Bomb Case of 1908. Acquitted in May 1909 after the trial, he served as a subeditor of *Dharma* and *Karmayogin*, two papers founded and edited by Sri Aurobindo. When Sri Aurobindo moved to Pondicherry in 1910, Nolini joined him after six months, living in his household. Here he studied Greek, Latin, French and Italian literature from Sri Aurobindo and became the latter's disciple in Integral Yoga. From time to time Nolini returned to Calcutta but settled permanently in the Ashram in 1926. For almost sixty years he served as general secretary of the Ashram and later, after the foundation of the Ashram trust in 1955, as a trustee till his passing. Apart from the languages he learned from Sri Aurobindo he was proficient in Sanskrit, Bengali and English. He taught for many years in the Ashram's school and started and/or edited a number of English and Bengali journals, including the *Advent*, the *Bulletin of Physical Education* (later renamed *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*), the *Bartika*, and other Bengali publications. His extensive writings in Bengali, English and French were published in these journals as well as in books. In 1970, his Collected Works, consisting of eight volumes in English and French and eight volumes in Bengali, were published. These were reprinted in 1979 and again as a Birth Centenary Edition in 1989. This set has been out of print for a while and the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education has undertaken to publish a new edition.

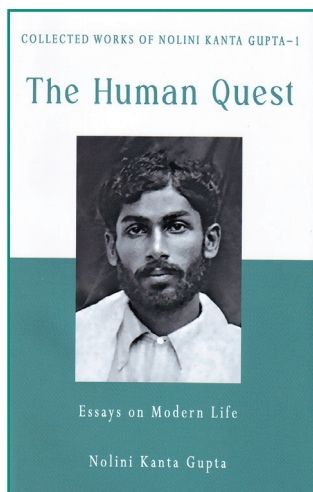
As part of this edition, the first two volumes have presently been published. These volumes include his essays on society, culture, modernity, the arts, and mysticism, the last including his writings in English on the Veda and Upaniṣads. In the Centenary edition, volumes seven and eight include more writings on mysticism and Vedic literature, but here translated from his Bengali writings. Nolini's writings span a period from 1910 to the 1980s, seven decades of the twentieth century, the most eventful and changeful century so far in human history. As such, it is regrettable that neither the Birth Centenary

edition, nor what has been published so far of the new edition, contains an editorial on the historicity of the texts published. The difficulty for the reader is compounded due to the threefold historicity of what is read. The first of these is the historicity of what is written about, especially if it is a modern event. For example, when Nolini writes about “the world war” does he mean the First World War or the Second World War? Or if he is writing about a routine event of the Ashram, what are the historical specifics of this event? Knowing when the piece was written would be helpful in contextualizing the event. Secondly, there is the historicity of the author’s life. For example, the author has written a number of articles on the same poet or thinker. Knowing when it was written clarifies the changing or maturing views of the author. Thirdly, there is the historicity of public perception of what is written about, which itself is based on influential commentaries and their availability. Knowing when a work was written contextualizes it in terms of the perception of its time. Nolini’s Collected Works lend themselves to all these three forms of uncertainty, as we shall see. Hence it is hoped that the new edition will include a timeline for the works before the completion of publication of the series.



The breadth of erudition, the currency of modernist consideration and the originality of insight in these volumes is nothing short of dazzling. Ancient Sanskrit, Greek, Latin literature; continental European art or poetry of the Renaissance; French, English, Greek, Russian or Bengali modernist art or literature; world wars and ideological wars as a sign of modernity; mystics, ancient and modern, and the place of mysticism in our times; contemporary thinkers of the master intuitions of the age—all are brought under the global and penetrating gaze of an interpretive vision steeped in the consciousness of Sri Aurobindo. At the same time, it is not a dependence on the master’s vision as a crutch, it is the self-confidence of an original and unique intuition living in the experience opened up by the master. The Integral Yoga moves in both vertical and horizontal dimensions—an ascent and integration process is interlocked with a creative interpretation and expression that includes clarity of perception and skill in action towards an integral consciousness. Interpretations of the prevailing ideas, tastes and forces of our time in the light of a progressive, clear perception from the heights is a necessity for oneself and those who

are willing to engage in such a vision. Nor are such interpretations meant to be static and canonical for organizing religious axioms; they are expressions in time, expressions of becoming and thus forms of thought-action in relation to the topic of consideration, most relevant to their historicity. This is what makes the knowledge of the history of these texts so important. It also highlights the necessity for continued engagement over time with these concerns and texts, using the writings as avant-garde models of Integral Yoga in action. Unfortunately, we find very little engagement of this kind in the years that have followed, leading to a period of unthinking conservatism in the Integral Yoga. It is hoped that the republication of Nolini's Collected Works will be inspirational in rekindling a creative intuition in interpreting our times.



The essays in the first two volumes may be divided broadly into three areas of critical review: (1) civilizational, social and political; (2) literary and artistic; and (3) mystical and spiritual. Volume One carries essays related principally to the first area. It casts its gaze both on the wide arc of the modern age and the current vicissitudes of nationalism, world wars and social reconstruction based on an integral vision and trajectory. As a characteristic essay of the first kind, we may consider “The Intuition of the Age” which originally appeared in the book *The Coming Race*. Here in a penetrating insight, Nolini identifies two master-intuitions working out behind the modern age, fueling its seeking. These are the exceeding of the human in the “superman” and the exceeding of reason in intuition, ideas attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche

and Henri Bergson respectively. This is very prescient, given that the historical advance of the age has only made more insistent the need for these desiderata. In contemporary times, humanism is castigated as a modern ideology which is Eurocentric, androcentric and anthropocentric. Emerging in the European Renaissance, it is a privileging of rationality justifying colonialism, the demotion of other ways of knowing and the exploitation of nature. This kind of humanism has brought us to the edge of extinction and is rejected by many contemporary philosophers, most of whom look to Nietzsche as one of their inspirations. Posthumanism is a contemporary philosophy that has emerged in response with ideas of the “superman” or “overhuman” as a strand of posthumanist thought, seeking a way out of the dead end of humanism. At the same time, the critique of rationality and its collusion with humanism in establishing conservative regimes of fascist obedience has been launched by an entire generation of recent thinkers, starting from Martin Heidegger with his lecture “What is Called Thinking?” to Gilles Deleuze with his chapter “The Image of Thought” in his book *Difference and Repetition*. In both

cases, it is intuition that is meant to be substituted as “true thinking” or “thought without image” respectively. Nolini, in his essay, looks more closely at what Nietzsche means by the superman and what Bergson means by intuition. In both cases, he critiques the errors and limited scope of these ideas and revises them with the vision of Sri Aurobindo. Looking at Nolini’s critiques today, one can see how he is responding to the prevalent reading of both thinkers. This is again a crucial reason for knowing the historicity of Nolini’s texts. Nietzsche was appropriated as an apostle of brute power by the Nazis before and during the Second World War, which colored his reception even among those who did not accept the image of his Nazi appropriation. This view was revised only in the 1960s with the publication of Walter Kaufman’s edition of his works as well as the interpretations of Karl Jaspers and Heidegger. Similarly, the equation of Bergson’s intuition with “vitalism” was a cause of his gradual obsolescence from the mid-twentieth century, but a far more complex understanding of his ontology and epistemology has emerged in more recent times, thanks largely to Deleuze. A revised consideration in our time of Nolini’s landmark insights is the need of the hour.

Moving to his essays on literature and art, these are mostly carried in Volume Two, though with some significant inclusions in Volume One. An example of the latter is his essay, “Modernist Poetry”, dealing with Anglophone poetry of the early twentieth century, dominated by the critical ideas of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Since the examples dealt with don’t go beyond the 1930s and since Nolini has a later essay in Volume Two dealing with Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, which was published in the 1940s, we have a sense of the climate of English poetry he refers to. Nolini identifies the modernist sensibility as a global one, encompassing world cultures and world histories and able to move at will and at once over its vast terrain. This is what expresses itself “when Ezra bursts into a Greek hypostrophe or Eliot chants out a Vedic mantra in the very middle of King’s English.” If these represent the dimensions of global space and time present in the modern individual, a third dimension identified by Nolini is that of consciousness, a range from the heights to the nether depths or put differently, from the sublime to the absurd or ridiculous. It is this third aspect which gives us lines like the famous opening of Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” or those from the third subsection of part one of Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* which Nolini quotes:

O bright Apollo
“Tin’ andra, tin’ heroa, tina theon,”
What god, man or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!¹

1. Gupta, Nolini Kanta. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, 2nd edition, vol. 1: *The Human Quest: Essays on Modern Life*. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 2023), p. 135.

Nolini's essay notes the attempt to bring together the elevated subject matter of traditional poetry and the unrelieved insignificance of modern mundane existence. He gives some examples which he considers successful in this manner but as a whole he dismisses the trend as missing the poetic mark, in the words of another modernist English poet, Ronald Bottrall, due to its being "fused in no emotive furnace." The method of the bricoleur in combining heterogeneous fragments of culture and history is a demonstration of Eliot's injunctions in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," an essay in his book on literary criticism *The Sacred Wood*, published in 1920. This text has been considered the manifesto of Anglophone modernist poetry of the first half of the twentieth century. The cynical irony of juxtaposing the sublime and the ridiculous is here seen as serving a political function, rudely awakening the reader to a specific emotion, part despair, part outrage, part comic absurdity. In the same year, Sri Aurobindo wrote his essays comprising *The Future Poetry* in the *Arya*. This is also a manifesto but with a very different aim, that of manifesting cosmic perceptions of reality through language. Nolini may be reading the products of one manifesto in the light of another. Nevertheless, his question is valid—can this specific modernist emotion find an intensity of expression belonging to a cosmic consciousness?

In a later essay on Eliot's *Four Quartets* carried in Volume Two, we find a more charitable Nolini and a maturer Eliot. It is known that Sri Aurobindo wished to update *The Future Poetry* with a chapter on Modernist poetry, for which he had Nirodbaran read him examples. Eliot's *Four Quartets* was one of these, its lines on the kingfisher's wing eliciting a comment on its fineness by Sri Aurobindo. Nolini quotes these lines in his consideration:

..... After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
At the still point of the turning world.²

He also comments on and quotes approvingly rhymed lines of mystic beauty and unrhymed ones of a philosophic height reminiscent of the Upaniṣads:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.³

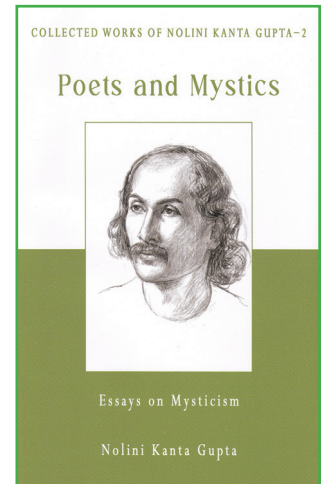
2. Gupta, Nolini Kanta. Vol. 2: *Poets and Mystics: Essays on Mysticism*, 2024, p. 161.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

In Volume Two, Nolini also parses the mystical symbolism of a variety of continental modernist poets such as the French poets Charles Baudelaire, Jules Superville, René Char and Jean-Claude Renard, the Greek modernist Nobel laureate George Seferis and the Russian Boris Pasternak. He is equally at home with modern Bengali mystic poetry, whether of Rabindranath or more recent symbolists and surrealists. In an essay titled “Mystic Poetry”, he draws an important critical distinction between mystic and spiritual poetry, which he relates by analogy to the lunar and the solar qualities respectively. Whereas mystic poetry seeks indirection (*parokṣa*) to bring to awareness hidden or secret realities, spiritual poetry finds a direct language of revelation (*pratyakṣa*) which brings us into contact with the body and sense of spiritual experience. He considers Sri Aurobindo a poet of the latter kind:

His spirit mingles with eternity’s heart
And bears the silence of the infinite.⁴

Another area considered in Volume Two is mysticism, both studies of modern and past mystics, such as Rishi Dirghatamas of the Vedas, Blaise Pascal, Walter Hilton, William Blake, Nicholas Berdyaev, Nicholas Roerich, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo; and studies in the Vedas and Upaniṣads. Indeed, along with the work of Kapali Shastri, Nolini’s writings on the Vedas and Upaniṣads constitute some of the most helpful illuminations of these highly esoteric texts. In Volume Two, the nine sections of his essay “Upaniṣadic Symbolism” can open up vast tracts of understanding for students of the Upaniṣads. In conclusion, I’d like to draw attention to his succinct commentary on Nachiketas’ three boons in the Kāṭha Upaniṣad.⁵ In Nolini’s interpretation, Nachiketas’ first boon relates to the maintenance of the physical form, longevity (*āyus*) and freedom from disease (*ārogya*). His second boon relates to the psychic integration leading to a temporal eternity, the “passage beyond death” through continuity of consciousness from life to life. This is referred to as the kindling of the triple fire of Nachiketas, the psychic flame which is lit in the mental, vital and physical sheaths, psychicizing them and making them universal. The third boon is the knowledge of the transcendental origin of the cosmos, “the seat of Viṣṇu”, the supramental solar godhead, Puruṣa of the Veda, “than whom there is no higher.” In knowing this, Nachiketas possesses the immortal status of the supramental,



4. Sri Aurobindo. *Savitri*. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, 1997) CWSA vol. 33, p. 80.

5. *Poets and Mystics*, pp. 36–40.

both in the Being and the Becoming, both “passing beyond death” and “enjoying immortality” in the language of the Īśa Upaniṣad.

It is salutary to see the republication of the Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta due to their deep illumination of our times; and it is hoped that these works will be read and engaged with extensively.

—Debashish Banerji, PhD

Debashish is the Haridas Chaudhuri Professor of Indian Philosophies and Cultures, the Doshi Professor of Asian Art, and the Department Chair, East-West Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. He is the author of The Alternate Nation of Abanindranath Tagore, Seven Quartets of Becoming: A Transformational Yoga Psychology Based on the Diaries of Sri Aurobindo, and Meditations on the Īśa Upaniṣad: Tracing the Philosophical Vision of Sri Aurobindo.



RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

WORKS OF THE MOTHER

New Words of the Mother

Supplement to Volumes 12–15 of the Collected Works of the Mother

—The Mother

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication
Department, Pondicherry
532 pp, Rs 370, ISBN: 978-93-5210-280-8
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This volume consists of short written statements of the Mother – letters, notes and messages – that, apart for a few exceptions, do not appear in her Collected Works. Many new writings have come to light since the seventeen-volume set of Collected Works of the Mother was organised and published in 1978 around the time of her birth centenary. This new material supplements other statements previously published in Volume 12, *On Education*, and Volumes 13, 14, and 15, *Words of the Mother—I, II, and III*, and has been arranged by subject, following the categories already established in the above volumes.

The Note on the Texts at the back of the book provides further details that should enhance the reader's understanding and appreciation of these new words of the Mother.

See review on page 15

COMPILATIONS FROM THE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Divine Possibility

Selected Writings of Sri Aurobindo

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication
Department, Pondicherry
143 pp, Rs 130, ISBN: 978-93-5210-281-5
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The brief passages collected in this compilation cover the central features of Sri Aurobindo's vision of life and his method of spiritual practice, the Integral Yoga. Drawn from letters to his disciples and from his major prose works such as *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and *The Human Cycle*, the selections focus on all aspects of life and *sadhana* and in their profundity demonstrate a beauty and elegance of expression characteristic of Sri Aurobindo's style.

(previously introduced in the February 2024 issue)

See review on page 18

OTHER AUTHORS

The Human Quest: Essays on Modern Life

(Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol I)

—Nolini Kanta Gupta

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo International Centre
of Education, Pondicherry
490 pp, Rs 575, ISBN: 978-93-5210-273-0
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Comprising five books of essays that deal with the problems of humankind in today's world and the prospect of a brighter future, this is Volume I of the Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta. First published between 1923 and 1955 the books, *The Coming Race*, *The Malady of the Century*, *Towards a New Society*, *The Quest and the Goal*, and *The March of Civilisation*, address the urgent demand for a fresh approach to all aspects of life, an approach that will prepare for the emergence of a new society based on unity and harmony instead of division and strife. They point the way through some of the most pressing sociological and political problems of the day. The appendix includes his editorials from the quarterly journal *The Advent* published between 1944 and 1951.

(previously introduced in the February 2024 issue)

See article on page 2

Poets and Mystics

(*Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol II*)

—Nolini Kanta Gupta

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry

410 pp, Rs 510, ISBN: 978-93-5210-294-5

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This second volume of the revised and enlarged edition of the *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta* comprises six books that deal primarily with mysticism and poetry. The first four are collections of essays. Their titles, along with their first year of publication, are: *The Approach to Mysticism* (1946), *Poets and Mystics* (1951), *Seer Poets* (1970), and *Man, Human and Divine* (c. 1958). The fifth book, *Towards the Light* (1938), is a collection of aphorisms and the sixth, *To the Heights* (1944), a collection of forty-seven poems. Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Pascal, Blake, Goethe, T.S. Eliot, Rishi Dirghatama, Shakespeare, and Dante are among the poets, mystics, and seer poets featured in these essays. In *Man, Human and Divine*, essays on the democracy of tomorrow, human destiny, the language problem and India, and the philosopher as an artist represent a wide range of subjects.

See article on page 2

Sri Aurobindo and Philosophy

—Pariksith Singh

Publisher: BluOne Ink LLP, Noida

410 pp, Rs 995, ISBN: 978-93-92209-01-7

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover

In the first few short essays that introduce this book, the author sets out to describe Sri Aurobindo as a *darshanik*, one who does not speculate and intellectualise, but who directly realises or spiritually and intuitively perceives the truth of existence. Sri Aurobindo expanded this traditional role to include Western thought and truths in a universal synthesis. In a series of very personal mini essays, he writes on Sri

Aurobindo's role of *darshanik* vis-à-vis Indian philosophy, Western philosophy, linguistic and literary philosophy, and the philosophies of psychology, religion, history, and what he terms the political thought for humanity's future. Singh calls Sri Aurobindo a philosopher in action, who not only spoke the truth for his times but for the next few hundred years, calling men to awaken to their highest possibilities and showing the way it was to be done.

(previously introduced in the February 2024 issue)

See review on page 21

Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol V

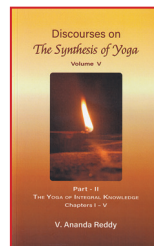
Part II: The Yoga of Integral Knowledge (Chapters 1–4)

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

270 pp, Rs 320, ISBN: 978-93-85391-11-8

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



Continuing the author's series of books transcribed from his talks on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Dr Reddy commences his commentary with the first five chapters of Part Two: "The Yoga of Integral Knowledge". In these chapters the author examines Sri Aurobindo's definitions of the object of knowledge, both spiritual and temporal, and the status of knowledge, first the ordinary function of knowledge and secondly the true knowledge that comes with an inner realisation, with the experience of identity with the Divine. Further chapters emphasise the purification of all parts of the being as a requisite for attaining an accurate and clear mental knowledge, as in the power of concentration and a right understanding of the inner renunciation of all attachment, desire, and self-will that divides the human being from a life unified with the divine consciousness.

Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol IX
Part III: The Yoga of Divine Love (Chapters 1–8)

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced
Research Trust, Pondicherry

361 pp, Rs 425, ISBN: 978-93-85391-36-1

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Volume Nine of this series commences with Part Three of *The Synthesis of Yoga*: “The Yoga of Divine Love”. Love as “the crown of works and the flowering of knowledge” forms the basis of the first chapter. Discourses then follow on love as the essential motive and the fulfilment of the Integral Yoga and on the need to turn Godward all parts of the human being to establish contact, enter into a relation, and unite with the Divine. “The Way of Devotion” is to consecrate the entire being, to bring an intensity to one’s yoga that culminates in the complete and utter surrender to the Beloved. The power and intimacy of the divine personality set against an intellectual principle of a divine consciousness is the seeker’s dilemma addressed in Chapter Five. The last three chapters discuss the experience of Ananda on the path of Yoga and explore the very nature of love and its profound place at the centre of our relation with the Divine.

See review on page 24

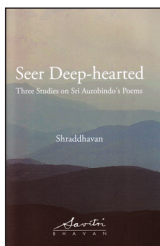
Seer Deep-hearted

—Shraddhavan

Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville

44 pp, Rs 150, ISBN: 978-81-955260-9-3

Size: 14 x 21 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



The title of this booklet is taken from one of Sri Aurobindo’s poems of the same name. The first section is on a few “autobiographical” poems and statements of Sri Aurobindo which are arranged chronologically, giving us a timeline of his development as

a poet and a yogi. In the second section, the author elaborates on poetry as mantra.

With few exceptions, poets in Sri Aurobindo’s time were abandoning metre and rhyme for a freer self-expression. Sri Aurobindo sympathised with them, but insisted that “metre...is not only the traditional, but also surely the right physical basis” for great poetry. In his own poetry he explored ways of adding quantity to stress and accent for creating new rhythms in English verse. In the final section of the book, Shraddhavan examines an 8-line metrical fragment by Sri Aurobindo as an example of his experiment with quantitative metre.

The Legend of the Flute Player

—Story by Noel Parent; Illustrations by Marina Minina

Publisher: Harper Collins Publishers India
Pvt.Ltd., Haryana

40 pp, Rs 225, ISBN: 978-93-5699-923-7

Size: 25 x 20 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

This storybook, a parable for children, is written by Noel Parent and illustrated by Marina Minina, both of whom live and work in Auroville. The

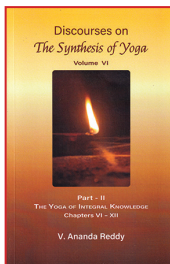


book tells the journey of a young boy who makes a flute out of a wooden stick and masters the art of flute-playing by learning first from all the different sounds of nature and afterwards from long years spent in meditation listening to the silence of his soul. Unaffected by praise or criticism, the young boy relentlessly perfects his music—until at last his playing is pure enough to bring joy to the hearts of all who listen.

Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol VI
Part II: The Yoga of Integral Knowledge
(Chapters 6–12)

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for
Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry
462 pp, Rs 530, ISBN: 978-93-85391-37-8
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



Dr Reddy's commentary, transcribed from his talks on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, continues with Chapters 6–12 of Part II: "The Yoga of Integral Knowledge". In these chapters the author examines Sri Aurobindo's stipulation that the aim

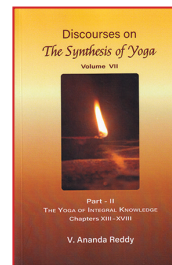
of seeking knowledge must be to realise our own supreme self, to break free from any false identification with our body, mind, and life. To achieve this we must follow a systematic process, beginning with securing our release from subjection to the body, initially through the separation between Prakriti and Purusha. Next, as the satisfaction of desire is one of the primary motives that drives the ordinary human life, we must follow a discipline to release us from the desires of the heart and the mind. Chapter Nine highlights both the immense difficulty and the absolute necessity of transcending the ego. Then, moving toward the true knowledge of our supreme self, the last three chapters expound on the realisation of the cosmic Self, the modes of the Self, and the realisation of Sachchidananda.

Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol VII
Part II: The Yoga of Integral Knowledge
(Chapters 13–18)

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for
Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry
288 pp, Rs 350, ISBN: 978-93-85391-38-5
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

Transcribed from Dr Reddy's talks on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Volume VII continues the examination of "The Yoga of Integral Knowledge" with Chapters 13–18. The first chapter examines the difficulties of the mental being in embracing not only the transcendent peace and bliss of the One, but also recognising the divine spark at the origin of creation. Likewise, the chapter on the passive and the active Brahman seeks to establish the connection between both aspects in the Integral Yoga and the effects of that connection on *sadhana*. Moving from the state in which Brahman alone exists to one in which we see Him everywhere and in all things, we must know what it means to identify with the cosmic consciousness. Similarly, the final chapters lay out the path to reach the Supreme Oneness, how that Oneness manifests in duality, and the true meaning of the soul's liberation.

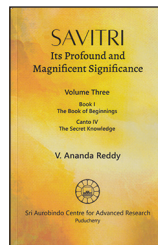


***Savitri: Its Profound and Magnificent Significance*, Vol 3 , Book I Canto 4**

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced
Research Trust, Pondicherry
306 pp, Rs 360, ISBN: 978-93-85391-39-2
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

In these transcriptions of his talks delivered at Savitri Bhavan in 2013–2014, the author discusses canto 4 of Book I, "The Secret Knowledge". The canto describes the secret knowledge that Aswapati discovers as he ascends in his spiritual journey. It deals with the present human condition, the emergence of the psychic being, the Upanishadic description of the nature of Brahman,



and the world as experienced by Aswapati. The Mother's conversations, particularly those on the psychic being, bring an invaluable clarity and richness to the book.

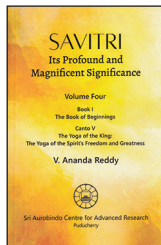
Savitri: Its Profound and Magnificent Significance, Vol. 4, Book I Canto 5

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry

167 pp, Rs 275, ISBN: 978-93-85391-40-8

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover



In Volume Four of these transcribed talks delivered at Savitri Bhavan in 2014, the author expounds on canto 5 of Book I, "The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness". Armed with the secret knowledge

described in canto 4, Aswapati continues his individual yoga, culminating in his psychic and spiritual transformation. He realises that the world is destined to evolve further towards a higher realisation, prompting him to undertake the next phase of his yoga as a Traveller of the Worlds in Book II.

The Theme of "Transformation" in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri

—Shraddhavan

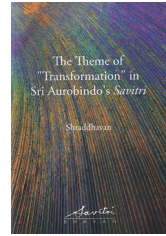
Publisher: Savitri Bhavan, Auroville

24 pp, Rs 120, ISBN: 978-81-955260-8-6

Size: 14 x 21 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

In this paper presented at a 2005 conference, the author traces the theme of transformation through the course of Aswapati's *sadhana*. At every stage Aswapati has to make an effort of *sadhana* to be able to receive the transforming grace of the Mother. When at last a glimpse of the New Creation is revealed to him he then prays for the descent of a human embodiment

of the Supreme Mother to come on earth to save and transform mankind. The supramental transformation, which only has the power to make earth the field of divine life, is shown as being prepared by Aswapati, embodying the steadfast aspiration of the earth, and Savitri, embodying the grace of the Supreme Mother.



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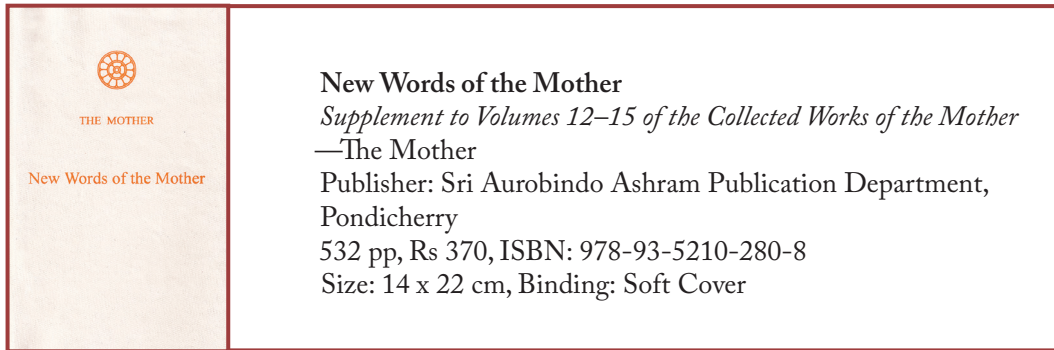
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BOOK REVIEWS



This book is the third in a series of five books intended to bring the publication of the Mother’s writings and talks up to date. Although it is issued as an independent book, it is a supplement to the Collected Works of the Mother. The book contains 530 pages of texts not published in the Collected Works. All are short written statements arranged by subject. The material includes public messages, private notes and (mainly) letters to Ashram *sadbaks*. The texts in this book supplement similar material in four volumes of the Collected Works: *On Education* and *Words of the Mother—I, II and III*. Let us look, then, at a few of the new “words”.

Volume 12. *On Education*. The first entry is a prayer written by the Mother for the children of the small school she opened in December 1943. They recited it together every day before starting classes: “Sweet Mother, Grant that we may be, now and for ever, simply thy little children.” (p. 3)

There follow almost fifty pages of advice on education. A student asked, “What advantage do we have of being here in the Ashram right from our childhood?” The Mother replied, “The advantage of living in the Truth atmosphere that Sri Aurobindo has created here.” (15) A teacher wanted to extend his class period beyond one hour. The Mother explained the ground reality to him: “It is difficult for children to be attentive more than one hour; that is why the classes are of one hour only.” (17)

A group of teachers criticised the students of the Free Progress system for their indiscipline, irregularity and poor work; the teachers concluded that out of 134 students, only 4 were doing good work and 3 very good work. The Mother wrote to them: “In spite of what one might think, the proportion of very good students is satisfactory. If out of 150 students, there are 7 individuals of genuine value, it is very good.” She added that “the whole purpose of our school is to discover and encourage those in whom the need for progress has become conscious enough to direct their lives”. (22)

A teacher had difficulty interesting the boys in her class in study. The Mother advised her, “Instead of trying to teach them . . . try to *learn* with them, *study* the subject with them, and *with them* make an effort to *understand better*.” (30) A most original outlook on teaching. A teacher composing a dance wanted only boys to be butterflies because “boys jump better than girls”. The Mother remarked, “Here, the girls too jump well. It would be better to try them before rejecting them.” (46)

There are also six pages of letters on physical education. A charming example:

I hear that you have challenged two of my boys or either of the two, announcing that you can knock them out easily. Just now it would not be a fair fight as they have long been out of practice. But after a period of one month I agree to their answering the challenge. (56)

Volume 13. *Words of the Mother I.* This volume has letters, notes and messages on Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, the Ashram, Auroville, India and other nations.

The material on herself includes a dozen pages of inspiring prayers and mantras which she recited regularly as part of her “sadhana of the body”. For example:

O my sweet Master,
Lord God of Goodness and Mercy.
What you want us to know, we shall know,
what you want us to do, we shall do,
what you want us to be, we shall be—for ever. (75)

There is also a letter in which she defends the use of make-up and concludes:

If a sadhika has the spare time and the inclination to wear make-up, I see no harm in that, provided she does not do it out of vanity or affectation.

What matters in sadhana is not what one does but the spirit in which one does it.

Ill will, criticism, doubt, scepticism and depression are far more serious obstacles to spiritual development than the trifles and childish pursuits of life accepted without attaching importance to them. (87)

The section on the Ashram contains a number of sobering letters. A respected older sadhak sought approval for the “psychic relation” he had formed with a young woman. The Mother set him straight: “There is *nothing* like a *psychic relation or attraction*. The psychic lives *always entirely consecrated* to the Divine and does not concern itself with any human relation.” (119) The editor of an Ashram journal sent his article on “the Indo-Pak conflict” for her approval. She crossed out the entire article with two large Xs and wrote, “NO politics in any of our publications.” (131)

Volume 14. *Words of the Mother II.* This volume contains letters, notes and messages on relationship with the Divine, the path of Yoga, elements of Yoga, difficulties, human relationships and work.

Someone asked, “Where does God live? Can I ever see him?” The Mother replied, “God lives everywhere and in everything, and you will be able to see Him if you can find Him deep in yourself.” (241) To a disciple who may have been trying to do the Yoga too much by himself, she counselled:

Give up trying.

Give up the will for progress.

Give up the aspiration for Realisation.

Give up everything and say to the Lord in all sincerity, *Let Thy will be done.*

With love and blessings (273)

A comment on freedom: “Those who are truly free never worry about lack of freedom.” And a clue: “If you want to be free, first liberate yourself from the slavery to desires.” (297) When should one lie? “You must never lie. There is no *good* or *useful* lie. He who lies has no power.” (301) Someone complained to the Mother that she had not sent him a word of sympathy for the difficulties he faced. She wrote back, “I am full of sympathy but unshakably convinced that each one meets in this life the circumstances which he has, inwardly and outwardly, built for himself.” (305) On work she remarked, “If one does not like work, one is always unhappy in life. To be truly happy in life, *one must like work.*” (364)

Volume 15. *Words of the Mother III.* This volume consists of letters, notes and messages on the Divine and the universe, religion, morality, wealth, government, progress, perfection, transformation, the future, health, messages, prayers and practical affairs.

The Mother gave this mantra for the removal of adverse beings or forces:

In the name of The Mother

For the sake of The Mother

By the power of The Mother

With the strength of The Mother

To all adverse harmful beings or forces

I order to quit this place at once and for ever. (383)

On money she observed, “Money is like water, to remain pure it must run.” (394) On wealth she offered this insight: “We become richer with what we give than with what we take.” (395) On government, she opined, “It is not the bottom that must govern, it is *the top.*” (399) To save the world, she put her faith in no ideology or system: “Nothing but a radical change of consciousness can save humanity from the terrible plight into which it is plunged.” (401) How to progress? “The greatest progress is made through steadfast and joyful equality.” (407) A reminder about karmic consequences: “The harm you have caused willfully always comes back to you in one form or another.” (420)

On medicines she declared, “The best medicines are Hope, Confidence, Courage.” (452) On seeing doctors: “Once you have gone to the Doctor you must take his treatment.” (453)

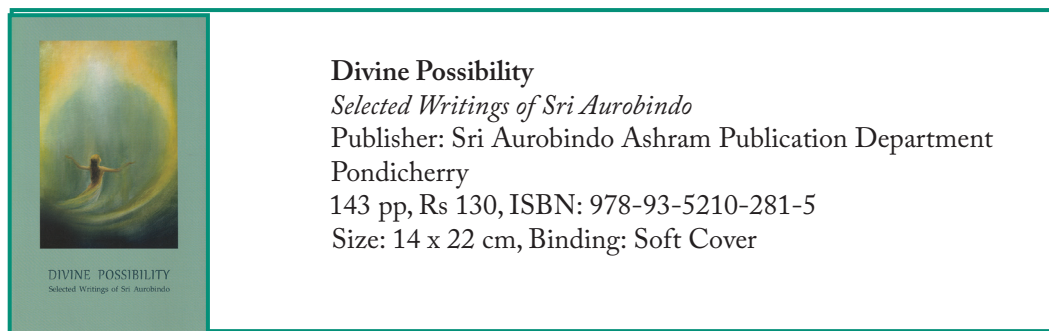
On medical treatment, a thumbs up:

There is no slavery in following a medical treatment. Sometimes it is quite indispensable to help the body to overcome its difficulties, and taken in the right spirit – as a help to the Divine action – it does not interfere with this action and keeps you receptive to the Force of the Grace. (453)

The volume concludes with messages, prayers, personal letters and notes and letters on practical affairs. *New Words* is a composite volume covering many subjects. Each of the hundreds of entries is a potential help to the reader.

—Bob Zwicker

Bob is the Director of the Archives and Research Library of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram



Divine Possibility

Selected Writings of Sri Aurobindo

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department
Pondicherry

143 pp, Rs 130, ISBN: 978-93-5210-281-5

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

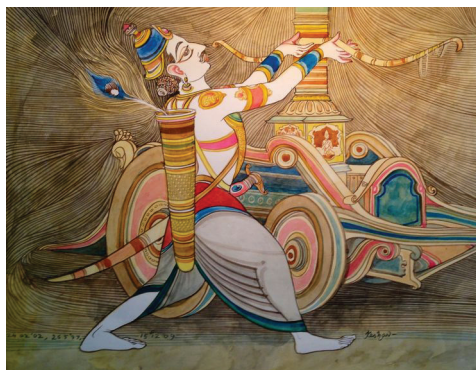
Divine Possibility begins with the highest ideal that Sri Aurobindo has placed before humanity—the ascent towards a divine life. To exceed our human limitations and to awaken the divine possibilities within is the great and difficult task before us. However, Sri Aurobindo assures us that “to follow after the highest in us may seem to be to live dangerously...but by that danger comes victory and security.” (p. 4)

The first chapter contains passages that hint at the nature of the Divine, the divine conscious force (the Divine Mother), and the Supermind. Here, Sri Aurobindo encourages us to approach the Divine Mother for help and guidance, for only she can liberate us from our lower nature and remake us into a higher divine Nature. To seek the divine is to become the divine. Sri Aurobindo beautifully describes this ‘becoming’ in the following words, “When the Ananda comes into you, it is the Divine who comes into you; just as when the Peace flows into you, it is the Divine who is invading you, or when you are flooded with Light, it is the flood of the Divine Himself that is around you.” (8-9)

The selections in the second chapter further our understanding of the all-encompassing nature of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga. We learn that “[t]his Yoga implies not only the realisation of God, but an entire consecration and change of the inner and outer life till it is fit to manifest a divine consciousness and become part of a divine work.” (13) The chapter also

outlines the prerequisites for an aspirant of the Integral Yoga. In a letter to a disciple Sri Aurobindo writes:

The goal of Yoga is always hard to reach, but this one is more difficult than any other, and it is only for those who have the call, the capacity, the willingness to face everything and every risk, even the risk of failure, and the will to progress towards an entire selflessness, desirelessness and surrender. (15)



Arjuna's Surrender
watercolour by Keshav

Chapters Three, Four, and Five prescribe the means and methods to advance along the path. Equality and Peace form the twin foundation of this yoga. *Samatvam yoga ucyate*—Equanimity is yoga, the mantra from the Gita comes to mind as one delves deeper into the content of the third chapter. The result of this equality is a resting peace that begins to settle into the being. Chapter Four presents freedom, personal effort, and opening as the necessary conditions for this yoga. Chapter Five enlists sincerity, faith, aspiration, love and devotion, and self-giving as the five essential practices to proceed on the path.

The Mother calls these the five psychological perfections to be achieved by the *sadhaks* of the Integral Yoga.

Chapter Six gives us an introduction to the divine Mother, without whom even a single step ahead in this journey would be impossible. Sri Aurobindo instils the need for an absolute reliance on the Mother's force with these words: "There is no method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness." (40) Further, in one of his letters on the Mother, Sri Aurobindo writes that the Mother's embodiment "is a chance for the earth-consciousness to receive the supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation necessary for that to be possible". (39)

Chapter Seven briefly explains the purpose of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram—an entity unlike any other; the sole aim of the Ashram is to prepare the earth for the age of spiritual transformation. The members of the Ashram continue to strive to fulfil the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, long after the masters have left their physical bodies.

Chapter Eight touches upon the three-fold path of the Gita—the way of knowledge, the way of works, and the way of bhakti. Sri Aurobindo brilliantly revives the age-old teachings of the Gita in a way that appeals to the modern mind.

Chapter Nine provides us with a nuanced understanding of the different parts of our being. To integrate all these parts under the influence of the psychic is a great step ahead in this yoga.

Chapters Ten to Thirteen serve as practical guides on topics concerning daily life. The tenth chapter advises us on the means to maintain the physical life with selections on food, sleep, illness, sports, and exercise:

If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. *Śarīram khalu dharmasādhanaṃ*, says the old Sanskrit adage,—the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma. (72)

Chapter Eleven deals with the intricacies of human relationships. While the twelfth chapter expounds upon the difficulties of human nature and the attitude with which they should be met, Chapter Thirteen emphasises maintaining a steady focus on inner growth instead of dwelling on the difficulties of the outer nature. This chapter also explains the importance of courage, discipline, patience, and cheerfulness in this *sadhana*.

The next two chapters delve into topics of general interest. Here readers can find Sri Aurobindo's views on subjects such as religion, morality, evolution, beauty, karma, destruction, war and peace, and death. It gives us a glimpse of Sri Aurobindo's vast intellect and his ability to write on varied topics with the utmost clarity and ease.

The concluding chapter is a delightful read on "God's ways of working"—the playful manner in which he is leading everyone towards their destined goal. "God is our wise and perfect Friend; because he knows when to smite as well as when to fondle, when to slay us no less than when to save and to succour." (133)

Overall, this book comprising selected writings of Sri Aurobindo is a useful aid for aspirants. It offers guidance and inspiration to a seeker of the Integral Yoga in a simple and concise manner. In his epic poem *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo writes, "Heaven's call is rare, rarer the heart that heeds." I hope that using the guidance in this book, many of us will be inspired to realise the ideal of life that Sri Aurobindo has envisioned for us.

—by a member of the editorial staff at SABDA

Selections from *Divine Possibility*

Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound forever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility. CWSA 13:205

...if it is to be of real service, the intellect must consent to pass out of the bounds of a finite logic and accustom itself to the logic of the Infinite. CWSA 21:337

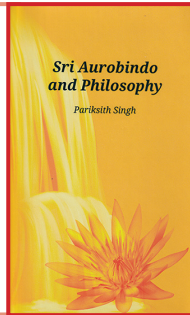
Sri Aurobindo and Philosophy

—Pariksit Singh

Publisher: BluOne Ink LLP, Noida

410 pp, Rs 995, ISBN: 978-93-92209-01-7

Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Hard Cover



This is a book that could interest different readers for somewhat different reasons. Those without extensive knowledge of

philosophy can expect to find in it an accessible introduction to an otherwise forbidding topic. Specialists, on the other hand, are likely to discover in these pages unexpected new perspectives on modern India's most important philosopher. The conflicting approaches suited to such diverse audiences could not, perhaps, have been combined with perfect success in a single volume. Academic critics may find fault with the book on various grounds, including an excessive reliance on quotations from general histories of philosophy and an almost complete lack of references to primary sources. Yet Dr Singh – who is not a professor of philosophy, but a medical doctor – has carried off his ambitious project with admirable flair and written a book whose merits seem to me to outweigh its limitations.

One of the strengths of the book is the balance it maintains in its view of the subject, beginning in the introduction with “Sri Aurobindo the Philosopher” and “Sri Aurobindo the Non-Philosopher” and extending to the equal treatment of Sri Aurobindo as an Indian philosopher or *darshanik*, on the one hand, and at the same time as a global thinker whose contributions can be adequately appreciated only in the context of world philosophy. Especially surprising in a book by a non-academic is the way it brings out the relevance of Sri Aurobindo to some of the more recent developments of modern philosophy in chapters such as “Sri Aurobindo and Walter Benjamin” and “Sri Aurobindo and Saussure”. Although the treatment of these subjects leaves much room for further work, here and elsewhere we get a sense of Sri Aurobindo's ability to illuminate discussions that were only beginning to take place during his time.

The author himself describes his book as a collection of “blogs”. He invites us to read it accordingly, explaining: “In this world of digital Attention Deficit Disorder, my attempt is to let the reader have the freedom to pick essays at random as they attract his fancy.” The blog concept partly accounts for the relatively easy readability of a book that deals with inherently demanding ideas. But it is also responsible for an occasional superficiality in the discussion of topics that call for scholarly and philosophical treatment. The book's accessibility may give it a wider readership than a work of serious philosophy would ordinarily enjoy. The lack of the expected trappings of scholarship, however, will tend to limit its impact on the field of academic philosophy both within and outside of India.

Dr Singh himself raises the question: “Why has one of the greatest philosophers of India...not been studied in detail in our academic circles and universities? Perhaps he is too pragmatic for them. For to understand him even intellectually would mean changing one’s life. Perhaps the colonial mindset that Indian intellectuals have suffered prevents them from a deeper immersion in his vast outlook and inlook.” Both factors may well be involved in the academic neglect of Sri Aurobindo (with notable exceptions) even in his own country. The present book is at least a step in the right direction, though only an initial step. One hopes that it will contribute to a philosophical renaissance in India that will not be contingent on the vagaries of academic endorsement.

Sri Aurobindo’s pragmatism – in the philosophical sense of the word associated with the American psychologist and philosopher William James, among others – is rightly emphasised by Dr Singh, who devotes a substantial chapter to “Sri Aurobindo and Pragmatism”. The pragmatic view of philosophy, which evaluates ideas in terms of the difference they make to our lives, cannot be better illustrated than by a passage in *The Life Divine* where, after a brief discussion of contrasting theories of the relationship between consciousness and the world, Sri Aurobindo comments:

The difference, so metaphysical in appearance, is yet of the utmost practical import, for it determines the whole outlook of man upon life, the goal that he shall assign for his efforts and the field in which he shall circumscribe his energies. For it raises the question of the reality of cosmic existence and, more important still, the question of the value of human life. (CWSA vol. 21, p. 23)

This being the true function of philosophy, its over-professionalisation and relegation to specialised university departments is clearly a defect of modern civilisation, especially in India where widespread philosophical movements have played such a historic role since antiquity. For this reason, the basically non-academic character of the present book can be welcomed as perhaps a sign that the Indian philosophical spirit is beginning to reawaken on its own terms not derived from the West and may once again take hold of life, turning it towards the higher objects of human existence as happened on a large scale several times in the past. If so, Sri Aurobindo’s writings are sure to be among the chief sources of inspiration.

Dr Singh accurately credits William James with being one of those who “opened Western philosophy to a new kind of subjectivism, that of consciousness turning upon itself and observing its own movements”. Henri Bergson’s “Creative Evolution” is mentioned in the same passage, along with the names of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Camus, key figures in the movements of phenomenology and existentialism. But with the exception of Bergson, who is the subject of another chapter, these names occur only in passing here and elsewhere in the book. The author has missed the opportunity to bring out more systematically the significance of the turn towards subjectivism in philosophy and culture to which Sri Aurobindo gave so much importance. It is also a little surprising that the book contains only scattered references to Nietzsche, who was a forerunner of

twentieth-century subjectivism and the modern European thinker to whom Sri Aurobindo most often alluded.

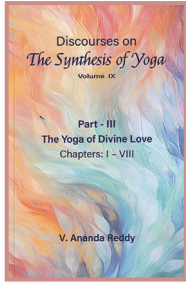
Although Sri Aurobindo mentioned by name only a few philosophers of his own time – notably Nietzsche, James, Bergson and Bertrand Russell – his writings are remarkably relevant not only to traditional branches of philosophy such as metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics and ethics, but to the expanded range of topics with which contemporary philosophy concerns itself, including philosophy of history, philosophy of science and philosophy of language. In order to highlight his potential contributions to these disciplines, it is both legitimate and necessary to juxtapose his ideas with those of thinkers he never referred to and perhaps never heard of. Dr Singh does this freely in some of the most ground-breaking and thought-provoking chapters of the book.

In “Sri Aurobindo and Karl Popper”, we might have expected to encounter Sri Aurobindo’s views on questions central to what we now call philosophy of science, a field in which Popper was a major figure. As it turns out, the chapter focuses instead on Popper’s no less influential role as a social commentator, as represented especially by his book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, written in the early 1940s a few years after Sri Aurobindo had described the rise of “totalitarian mysticism” in his revision of *The Human Cycle*. (CWSA vol. 25, p. 206) Popper’s defence of the individual provides an occasion for presenting crucial aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s political philosophy, such as his ironic unmasking of the pretension of state collectivism to be benevolently subordinating the individual to the good of all, when it is actually immolating him on the sinister altar of a magnified egoism. Today, when we see a new wave of authoritarianism sweeping over the world, Sri Aurobindo’s insights once again offer clarity as we confront the burning issues of our times.

What is called the “linguistic turn” has been a significant feature of the development of philosophy since the early twentieth century. The convergence of philosophy with linguistics has taken a variety of sometimes contradictory forms, ranging from Saussure’s Structuralism to Wittgenstein’s Ordinary Language Philosophy. In chapters relating to these trends, Dr Singh correctly identifies Sri Aurobindo’s reflections on language, especially in connection with his interpretation of the Veda and in his writings on poetry and translation, as a feature of his thought that could be of particular interest to contemporary philosophers. Once again, the treatment of these and other topics in *Sri Aurobindo and Philosophy* may not be definitive, but at the very least it is stimulating. The book points in a number of hitherto largely unexplored directions. It can be recommended as a refreshingly original and open-minded introduction to what Sri Aurobindo called the intellectual side of his work for the world.

—Richard Hartz

Richard studied philosophy at Yale University and South Asian languages and literature at the University of Washington. He first visited Pondicherry in 1972 and settled in the Asbram in 1980. He works in the Archives and Research Library.



Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Volume IX
Part III: The Yoga of Divine Love (Chapters 1-8)

—V. Ananda Reddy

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for
Advanced Research Trust, Pondicherry
361 pp, Rs 425, ISBN: 978-93-85391-36-1
Size: 14 x 22 cm, Binding: Soft Cover

The ninth
Volume
of Dr Reddy's
writings on Sri
Aurobindo's
*The Synthesis of
Yoga*, this book

comprises talks given by him in 2009 and 2010, transcribed and edited to provide readers with the author's insightful interpretation from an emic perspective, further complemented by his scholarship and personal experience. Since Dr Reddy grew up in the Ashram community and met The Mother on several occasions, this approach not only deepens the reader's understanding of these delightful chapters of *The Synthesis of Yoga* but also offers a unique perspective of how an insider of the Ashram community perceives and interprets this remarkable treatise on The Yoga of Divine Love.

Since love is a proclivity of the heart and things of the heart are best spoken in its own terms, the author's anecdotal language and simple style are well-suited to convey the essence of its message effectively. Readers will feel as though he is speaking directly to them, a style which renders complex ideas accessible to a wider audience. While his style is straightforward, his interpretations of these chapters draw significantly from his own scholarship on Indian Philosophy. Although purely from an academic perspective there might be a difference of opinion regarding certain allusions that Dr Reddy makes vis-à-vis Indian philosophy to explicate the nuances of Sri Aurobindo's approach to Bhakti and Divine Love, these interpretations nonetheless provide a fresh and valuable addition to existing scholarly narratives. Furthermore, by eclectically drawing wisdom and stories from other seers and mystics of India's past, such as Ramakrishna and Meerabai, he brings yet another connective element to his commentary. This integration not only enhances the richness of the material by speaking directly to the heart through these tales and stories but also situates the path of love and devotion within the broader spiritual tradition of India.

These discourses are not only limited to the Indian context but draw equally from other cultures. For example, by drawing parallels between bhakti and the Western and Christian notion of love the interpretation is enlivened not only by the nuances of this cross-cultural insight but more so by the awareness of the universal aspects of devotion and love that transcend geographical boundaries, making the topic pertinent to a global audience. Contemporary readers will appreciate the author's endeavour to integrate these principles into today's context, bridging the distance between ancient wisdom and modern concerns.

The structure of the book that follows the original lectures is carefully crafted to facilitate one's comprehension. The author often summarises key points from the previous chapter at

the start of the next one. This helps readers follow the logical progression of his arguments and also helps the reader tune into the inner logic and rhythm of Sri Aurobindo's writing. This approach, moreover, ensures that even complex ideas are clearly understood, making it easier for readers to keep track of the overall narrative without necessarily delving deeply into a scholarly analysis.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of this book is the author's personal accounts and anecdotes of The Mother and the Ashram of yesteryear, which imbue the reading experience with a certain nostalgic delight. These personal stories not only serve to illustrate his interpretations but also render the seemingly abstract principles contained in *The Synthesis of Yoga* more tangible and understandable.

While the past certainly possesses a powerful allure, the future after all is where the Integral Yoga directs our vision. The author goes to great lengths to evince how Sri Aurobindo has synthesised the various aspects, stages and dimensions of the path of love and devotion of the past to redefine its meaning and relevance and satisfy our need for an integral approach to the Divine. In the same vein, he elaborates upon the distinctions between religion and spirituality, ethics and yoga, and worship and adoration to make readers aware of the extent to which the structures of the past continue to inform our individual and collective lives alike. At the same time, he emphasises the necessity of moving beyond these old ways by welcoming and adapting to a new, deeper understanding which finds expression in Sri Aurobindo's synthesis.

As Sri Aurobindo writes, "Love and Ananda are the last word of being, the secret of secrets, the mystery of mysteries." To understand and unravel this ultimate secret is not an easy task and can seldom be accomplished through language and rational explanations, although these may come to our aid. This book serves as a helpful guide to navigate the nuances and complexities of Sri Aurobindo's profound teachings. Through insightful explanations and soulful anecdotes, the spiritual concepts and principles presented by Sri Aurobindo in the Yoga of Divine Love are made clearer and more relatable, although one must take into account that Dr Reddy's is but one perspective among innumerable others.

Sri Aurobindo writes, "In the Yoga of Bhakti it is the emotional nature that is made the instrument", and Dr Reddy's book quite convincingly speaks to this aspect of the individual. The function and importance of Love in the Integral Yoga is paramount, and even a mental understanding of this beatific principle goes a long way. Thus it not only provides readers with a deeper understanding of Sri Aurobindo's own words but can also inspire them to embrace the transformative power of Divine Love, ultimately leading one closer to the very heart of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga.

—Anshul Sinha

Anshul is an alumnus of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE) and holds a Master's degree in Philosophy from Pondicherry University. He is currently pursuing further post-graduate studies online at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Sri Aurobindo's writings on the path of love and devotion in the Integral Yoga are expounded primarily in Part III of The Synthesis of Yoga, "The Yoga of Divine Love". Unlike some other parts of the Synthesis serialised in the Arya, this part was not revised by Sri Aurobindo. However, numerous letters touching on the subjects of sadhana through devotion and the role of the psychic being enhance and clarify our understanding of the principles and methods of this branch of the Triple Path.

In this essay undertaken as part of her study of the Integral Yoga, Kaninika Majumdar, a final-year student of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, attempts a grand overview of the Yoga of Love as distilled from Sri Aurobindo's voluminous writings.

Love in the Integral Yoga

Since he withdraws into impersonality, we follow after his impersonal being and delight, but since he meets us also in our personality and through personal relations of the Divine with the human, that too we shall not deny ourselves; we shall admit both the play of the love and the delight and its ineffable union. (CWSA vol. 24, p. 588)*

Union has been the aim and culmination of all yoga — the union of the individual with the Divine, the many with the One, the transient with the Eternal. The highest goal conceived of was a merging with That, becoming one with the source that is Brahman. Our ancient forefathers had arrived through their *tapasya* at a vision of the world and life that revealed to us that the present existence, however beautiful, concealed a greater Truth, a greater Bliss that was attainable by man and within the scope of his experience. That such a life and world, imperfect as they are with their dualities, disharmonies and painful contradictions, could be the seat of Light, Truth and God was a secret known to them. But with the passage of time, it was forgotten that matter is also Brahman. The worldview split in two between those who distrusted anything of the Spirit, believing only in matter, and those, enamoured of the Beyond, who rejected all material existence and turned away from life. The *sannyasin* saw worldly life as an obstacle to cross, a veil to rend or a prison house to escape. "In my hopelessness I see as though the whole world is a prison." (9, 578) [translated from the original Bengali]

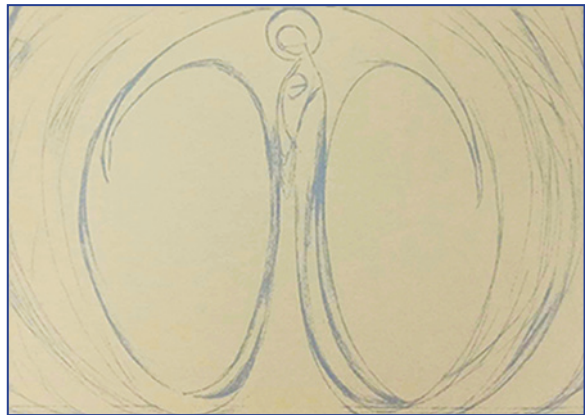
If the aim of life is to escape from the world, what could be the reason or meaning behind creation? The Divine created existence out of Himself, choosing to manifest Himself into multiplicity. He hid Himself in ignorance so that he could enter into relation with Himself in infinite ways, "creating and re-creating Himself in Himself for the sheer

*All references to texts in the CWSA apart from the first one give only the volume and page number in parentheses. Other references are cited in footnotes.

CWSA (Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo) CWM (Collected Works of the Mother)

bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation, — Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the playground.” (21, 111) For the rapture of union with Creation, she was created. “What was projected into space had to be brought back to itself without, however, destroying the universe so created. Therefore Love burst forth, the irresistible power of union.”¹

The first impulse of creation came out of Ananda. “From Ananda,” says the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, “all existences are born, by Ananda they remain in being and increase, to Ananda they depart.” (21, 109) “Love and Ananda are the last word of being, the secret of secrets, the mystery of mysteries.” (24, 605) Ananda Brahman is the bliss existence which is the highest experience of the transcendence. Complete possession of the Ananda Brahman happens when its consciousness manifests above, within and around. Yet, the richest knowledge of this Ananda cannot be only of the impersonal presence and delight. “Worship of the Impersonal Divine...tends to be more etherealised and the knowledge that enters into it makes devotion less intense or rapid.”² Our adoration must be “intimate enough for this Being to reveal to us out of its wide-extended joy the face and body and make us feel the hands of the Friend and Lover”. (24, 598) Even when Sachchidananda, the sole essential Existence, takes on an impersonal aspect, Ananda is always there—“but Love needs a Lover and Beloved”. (27, 701) Love is an expression of that Ananda, created and composed of Ananda. Love and Ananda are the same in essence, one derives from the other, but at the same time, they are different experiences. The Mother explains, “Those who feel Ananda are those who like to receive, who have the capacity to receive, and those who feel Love are those who have the capacity to give.”³ True love for the Divine comes with a total surrender of the being, which is the highest form of giving. This passion for the divine is the natural culmination of the soul’s devotion. For might not one say that love is a most blissful, a most richly fulfilling way of connecting with the Divine?



“Aimer est un processus de transformation”
(To love is a process of transformation)

Painting by Dhanavanti from her book *Tapasyā*, p. 46

1. CWM vol. 5, p. 236.

2. Purani, A.B. *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* 4th edition (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, 2007), p. 639.

3. Conversation with a disciple, 17 July 1963.

That great Divine Love created the universe; everything in the creation results from love. The Mother says that love does not only manifest in man but that it is there everywhere, its movement also evident in plants, stones and animals. Thus, all of creation yearns for the Divine, impelled by that Love immanent in the soul and spirit of all matter. It is this that the *bhakta* feels as devotion in the heart. It is this natural upward movement of the flame of love in his inner being that makes his heart yearn for a living Soul, “for the source of all life is not an idea or a conception or a state of existence, but a real Being”. (24, 576) The intimate supplication of the human heart and soul to the Divine to come to meet him concretely in the human form is beautifully expressed in this poem by Amal Kiran. The last lines, in particular, speak of the need to put a form and a face to that love divine.

This Errant Life

This errant life is dear although it dies;
And human lips are sweet though they but sing
Of stars estranged from us; and youth's emprise
Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.

Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.
If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:
Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
And all Thy formless glory turn to love
And mould Thy love into a human face.⁴

This need to shape abstraction into form is not wishful thinking but can become a reality. That highest, that undefinable, that ineffable can be felt and experienced as a Person because it is as much a Being as it is the Impersonal. “The impersonal is a truth, the personal too is a truth; they are the same truth seen from two sides of our psychological activity; neither by itself gives the total account of the Reality, and yet by either we can approach it.” (24, 581)

Although attaining union with the Impersonal has been the highest aim of the mind's ascension through knowledge, the heart through its emotions longs for a Person. The Impersonal is not something we can have a relation with; with the Personal we can. “Its impersonality is the blissful greatness of the Brahman, but from that can look out upon us the sweetness and intimate control of the divine Personality.” (24, 598) We can adore the Divine Impersonal, but can we love the Brahman the same way we can love Krishna? Krishna represents the Godhead, universal and immanent with whom we can meet with our being.

4. Sethna, K.D. “This Errant Life”, *The Secret Splendour*. (Bombay: K.D. Sethna, 1941), p. 3.

The Mother says that Krishna's flute is the Supreme Lord's smile of love. The love for Krishna is very concrete because though he is God, he is also the little child stealing butter, he is the mischievous boy playing with the *gopis*, and of course, he is the supreme lover. Krishna can be loved in so many ways. One may love him as a child, another perhaps as a friend, and most intimately he can be loved as a lover. He is the Divine having taken the human form for the bliss of relations with the soul of man aspiring godward.



Confidante persuading Radha to relent as Krishna plays mesmerising tunes on his flute. Painting from Kangra, depicting a scene from the Gita Govinda, circa 1825, LACMA, Los Angeles.

The heart finds it easier to adore and love by seeing itself, to begin with, as separate from the Beloved and, in the end, by becoming one with the Beloved. This union is different from the merging into the Transcendent. Here, individuality is not lost or forgotten; instead, it is the essential oneness discovered that retains difference for the joy of relation. In the traditional way, it is the soul that merges with the Spirit. The body and all the other parts of the being, untouched by the soul, still full of worldly imperfections, get left behind on earth. Our aim, though, is to grow into a likeness of the Divine—to transform the body, purify the heart, and get beyond the limitations of the mind. Our little self has to learn to give itself to that larger Self that it may take possession of it, not extinguishing individuality, but rather holding the self in a close embrace of love.

All the being can partake in the Love for the Divine, the vital and vital-physical included are all capable of the same self-giving. The school of Chaitanya laid sole emphasis on this one-pointed love of the heart as the means to attain the bliss of the Divine Love. Such contacts of the heart with the Ananda, the highest attainable experience expressed in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, result in an intense Godward passion and exaltation, with the vital's direct contact with that beatitude of union. But his experience was not, Sri Aurobindo says, that of the Supermind, for "[t]he Supramental is something in which the basis is absolute calm and however intense a Divine Love there is in it it does not disturb the calm but increases its depth." (29, 465–66) Passing through the Supermind ensures the highest

Ananda as there is “a unification and harmonisation of all the divine Powers (Knowledge, etc. as well as Love and Ananda)”. (29, 466) Different *sadhana*s emphasise one aspect or another as the highest—“Concentrated love has a profundity of its own which cannot be measured; concentrated wisdom has a wider profundity but one cannot say that it is deeper.” (29, 484) “It is this union of all that must be the true base of the highest realisation and experience.” (29, 466)

Through the heart we can approach the Divine with love, but there are other ways too by which union with the Divine can be achieved. Man is a being made of multiple parts. He is the body, he is the heart, and he is also the mind. We may respond more to the yearnings of one part over the other, be more inclined to seek its singular fulfilment based on our individual temperaments. The ancients, aware of this tendency, developed systems of yoga that allowed individual *swabhavas* to seek a divine consummation in their own way: *Jnanayoga* for the mental man in thirst for knowledge, *Bhaktiyoga* for the emotional man’s need to love and be loved, *Karmayoga* for the worker who attains God by becoming his instrument. The upward movement, the search for perfection or God, is there inherent in the form of sincerity in works, pursuit of knowledge, and devotion and love for the Divine. When there is a synthesis of the three, it becomes an Integral Yoga.

The way of love brings knowledge and works together to make the Integral Yoga. By loving the Divine, we get to know the Divine. Loving the Divine also means the surrendering of our will to His will so that His work can be done through us. “It [*an integral Yoga*] may commence with the way of love, as with the way of knowledge or of works; but where they meet, is the beginning of its joy of fulfilment. Love it cannot miss, even if it does not start from it; for love is the crown of works and the flowering of knowledge.” (24, 551)

One who loves the Divine also has all his faith in the Divine; when he calls, he knows that the answer shall come. Faith and love in the heart are the twin flames that help guide in times of need. There is little despair or difficulty on the path of *Bhaktiyoga* because by surrendering to the Divine, our work gets taken up by Him. It is the Divine in us that does the work. The inner being of the *bhakta* is turned upwards, looking with sincerity and aspiration towards an equally or more loving Person, who also looks down with an intimate gaze. “The creation moves upward through love towards the Divine and in answer there leans downward to meet the creation the Divine Love and Grace.”⁵

The spark of the Divine is the psychic being in us. The psychic being is the personalised soul—the evolving soul accompanying us through our many lives. Deep within behind the heart, the psychic being waits to be discovered. Love too waits to be discovered in the silent depths of the heart. It is by the emotions felt through the psychic that we can best love the Divine, for psychic love “finds the fullness of its fire and ecstasy more easily when

5. CWM vol. 03, p. 74.

it is lifted towards the Divine”. (31, 307) It is only through the psychic being that we can know true love. Perfect love exists only in the Divine. And divine Love can be understood only when we find the psychic being.

The coming to light of the psychic being is the first step in the yoga of devotion. Because love is a movement kindled from within, it seeks in the secret depths a response, a light and the face of the divine Beloved. The identification with the psychic is a process of self-discovery. It must be awakened and brought forward by developing a personal relation with the Divine. It makes the being a receptacle for the higher descent. It aligns and purifies all that opposes and is in conflict with it in the lower nature and prepares it to be able to receive a greater Truth. This psychic transformation of the being brings a change from within and prepares the foundation for the next step, which is the spiritual transformation. The spiritual transformation is something more dynamic, it is the descent of a higher consciousness from planes above the mind. Speaking of the love realised on those higher ranges, Sri Aurobindo says, “The Divine’s love is that which comes from above poured down from the Divine Oneness and its Ananda on the being—psychic love is a form taken by divine love in the human being according to the needs and possibilities of the human consciousness.” (29, 336) “The two must join together to make the highest divine love.” (29, 337)

“When the psychic loves it loves with the Divine Love.”⁶ Radha’s love symbolises perfect psychic love. In her there is integral surrender, her love lives in total peace. Her complete self-giving can be felt in her prayer, as expressed by the Mother, “Every thought of my mind, every emotion of my heart, every movement of my being, every feeling and every sensation, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood, all, all is yours, yours absolutely, yours without reserve.”⁷ Radha’s love is human love perfected.



Radha sheltered in the Lord's embrace
Garhwal, 1820–1830

Divine love is very different from the human experience of love. It is vast, true, powerful, unconditional and eternal, comparable to no earthly feeling. We know the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s love to be such a love. Many have experienced the Mother’s love as intense,

6. CWM vol. 14, p. 124.

7. CWM vol. 15, p. 209.

powerful, and sweet, and Sri Aurobindo's as vast and compassionate, upholding all. They are both still present, as concretely as ever. She has said so herself, that she would see Sri Aurobindo in his Supramental light sometimes above the Samadhi materialising himself in a way that could be felt physically. The Mother speaks of her experience of the meditation held on August 15, 1962, Sri Aurobindo's ninetieth birth anniversary, as the most beautiful August 15th. She says, "all his sweetness and all his splendour and all his power and all his calm were there—and far stronger and clearer than when he was in his body!"⁸

They have both given us a beautiful gift. Remembering the Mother, loving her alone and surrendering to her opens us to her love and force. Her presence, her grace is there, always. In 1977, Nolini Kanta Gupta had a vision of the Mother. He writes:

The Mother says: "Just see. Look at me. I am here, come back in my new body—divine, transformed and glorious. And I am the same mother, still human. Do not worry. Do not be concerned about your own self, your progress and realisation, nor about others. I am here, look at me, gaze into me, enter into me wholly, merge into my being, lose yourself into my love, with your love. You will see all problems solved, everything done. Forget all else, forget the world. Remember me alone, be one with me, with my love..."⁹

For those of us who have taken refuge in them, there is reassurance, guidance and love at every moment. All that is asked of us is to open to their light, so we may receive. As the Mother has beautifully expressed in her prayer of November 3, 1912, translated by Sri Aurobindo,

Let Thy Light be in me like a Fire that makes all alive; let Thy divine Love penetrate me. I aspire with all my being for Thy reign as sovereign and master of my mind and heart and body; let them be Thy docile instruments and Thy faithful servitors.¹⁰

—Kaninika Majumdar

8. Conversation with a disciple, 18 August 1962.

9. Gupta, Nolini Kanta. *The Mother Abides* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, 2012), p. 31.

10. CWM vol. 01, p. 3.