



AUROBINDO ABRIDGED

SRI AUROBINDO: THE HOUR OF GOD; selections from his writings, compiled by Manoj Das; Sahitya Akademi; 334 pages; Rs 200

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), whose 125th birth anniversary is being celebrated this year, was an extraordinary and multifaceted genius. Poet, philosopher, revolutionary and mahayogi, he left behind a vast corpus of knowledge, which has been painstakingly collected in the 30-volume *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*. Manoj Das, a well-known writer and teacher, has, with a devotee's love and labour, offered us the essential Sri Aurobindo in this volume. The elegantly produced and flawlessly printed book is a welcome addition to the personal library of those interested in modern India.

I have often been asked to explain in a few words Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Let me try to do so in Sri Aurobindo's own words. He believed that the goal of human existence is the evolution of consciousness beyond the present human level to a higher plane of perfection: "If a spiritual unfolding on earth is the hidden truth of our birth into Matter, it is fundamentally an evolution of

consciousness that has been taking place in Nature, then man as he is cannot be the last term of that evolution: he is too imperfect an expression of the spirit..."

In other words, our consciousness which at present is at the mental plane, needs to transcend to the higher supramental level: "Mind is only a middle term of consciousness, the mental being can only be a transitional being."

But can the human being become a supramental being? Sri Aurobindo thinks so: "There is no reason why man himself should not arrive at Supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the Spirit manifesting in Nature."

Declares this great teacher: "At present, mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis." The crisis has occurred because it is up to us to voluntarily, lovingly cooperate in this endeavour, not to obstruct it wilfully. This, then, is "The Hour of God", when "even a little effort produces great results and changes destiny".

Sri Aurobindo's yoga is not for the individual alone: it is for all humankind, nay, for nature itself. According to the Mother, Sri Aurobindo's partner in the unfolding saga of the future, the supramental force has already descended onto the earth. What remains for us to do is to submit and surrender all our energies to it, so that it can transform us totally.

Das has made the Herculean task of selecting from Sri Aurobindo's vast and varied oeuvre look deceptively easy. Most of the major texts, including *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *The Future Poetry*, *Savitri*, and *Collected Poems*, are well represented.

Das has tried to present the most important and lucid portions of each text so that the reader's task is made simpler. The seminal Independence Day address, first broadcast by All India Radio, has also been thoughtfully included.

All told, this is a useful book, and I am certain I shall refer to it many times over.

MAKARAND PARANJPE

LIVING WITH NOBODY

COLLISION WITH THE INFINITE: *A Life Beyond the Personal Self* by Suzanne Segal; Blue Dove Press, USA; Rs 500



This book actually makes enlightenment comprehensible. In the spring of 1983, Suzanne Segal, an American Jew, collided with enlightenment while waiting at a bus-stop in Paris. Although she had practised meditation earlier, nothing had prepared her for this sudden transition to non-self.

The book is a chronicle of her struggle to come to terms with not being able to look within or at having to sign the name of one who didn't exist. Convinced that there was something pathologically wrong with her, she spent the next 10 years in therapy. Interestingly, a lack of self didn't hinder her life from being led in the normal fashion. Mothering happened, cars got driven, meals got fixed; non-personal doership was a reality.

Segal's intense fear stopped her from recognising the state as enlightenment until she discovered Buddhist texts that talked of shunyata (emptiness). Two years later,