

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo : Three Essays.

Sri Aurobindo's 'The Life Divine' : A brief Study.

The Aitareya Upanishad.

All three by V. Chandrasekharam. Published by V. Sadanand. The Personal Book Shop, 10, Congress Building, III, Mount Road, Madras-6. Price : Rs. 2.00, Rs. 1.50, 2.00 respectively.

A COLLECTION of three essays first published two decades ago, the first of these three books of the late V. Chandrasekharam published recently will serve as a genial aid to the study of Sri Aurobindo.

In his first essay, the author hails Sri Aurobindo as "the Recoverer and Vivifier of the submerged soul of India" and supports his tribute by a cogent discourse on Sri Aurobindo, mainly in the light of his exposition of the Gita. The second essay is a continuation of the same theme, now in regard to the Vedas. In the last essay, 'The Taittiriya Upanishad', the author proceeds to establish an effective link between the revelations of Sri Aurobindo and the true conception of the Upanishadic *Vijñāna*.

In *Sri Aurobindo's 'The Life Divine' : A Brief Study*, Chandrasekharam provides us with a lively introduction to the great work. Often one comes across glowing expressions of clear conviction in this small book.

The author's English rendering of the *Aitareya Upanishad*, presented with the original text, is a meritorious contribution to modern studies in the Upanishadic lore. A few lines from the recollections of Amrita will speak adequately about Chandrasekharam's propriety in dealing with these elevated themes : "A man of intellectual attainments, he was a scholar in Sanskrit and knew English very well....Sri Aurobindo kindled the fire in him....Can the fire so kindled ever forsake him?...He studied the Rig Veda with Sri Aurobindo methodically daily at a particular hour. He studied in this way for two or three years, not by the old traditional commentaries, nor in the old style, but in the light of Sri Aurobindo's own revealing interpretation."

MANOJ DAS

The Modern Indian Novel in English by M. E. Derrett. Published by Editions de L'institut de Sociologie, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

In this sympathetic discussion, the author has a comparative approach to characters, forms, themes and style in the modern Indian novel in English. For India, the past two decades have been eventful in a very special sense, for the events have been an achievement, a crisis, and a transition, all in a momentous historic sense. Naturally, Indian literature is expected to have reflected the spectacular surface of these episodes as well as the motifs underneath them. How far does Indian fiction in English fulfil this expectation? Mr. Derrett's work provides, if not an answer, a good basis to ponder over this question. The author not only recognises the emergence of a 'tradition' in this branch of Indian literature, he further observes: "The tradition of this writing is sufficiently established to be worthy the name, and one may have confidence that thereby India will have a worthwhile contribution to make to the world literary scene."

However, it is difficult to accept that in India "the general indifference to worldly values and ambitions, the lack of domestic privacy and personal freedom, the often trying climate and sometimes inadequate diet might well have combined to militate against the creation of a sustained narrative prose fiction." As is well known, the very source of world fiction can be traced to the ancient Indian tales like those of the *Kathasaritsagar* series. If it is to be accepted that in India fiction did not develop on a par with its development in certain other nations at a later stage, then the reason for it must be far deeper. The Indian mind is steeped in the lures of epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, where along with the affluent elements of poetry, philosophy, spirituality and many things more, the *rasa* of fiction is varied and abundant enough to quench the thirst of generations. This, indeed, is a unique position of the Indian mind, and hence that mind did not feel the need to develop fiction as a separate and independent line of literature.

Mr. Derrett's work is a bright example of the growing interest which the scholars of various countries are showing in the contemporary Indian creative process. Certain mistakes in data—for example the one which creates the impression that T.S. Banerjee is no more since 1950, or the other which unwittingly puts V.B. Banerjee's span of life at twelve years only, could easily be avoided.

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