

# Essays Divine and Human



*Sri Aurobindo*

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# Essays Divine and Human

Writings from Manuscripts

1910–1950



## Publisher's Note

*Essays Divine and Human* consists of short prose pieces written by Sri Aurobindo after his arrival in Pondicherry in 1910 but not published before his passing in 1950. Short prose works written during the same period and published during his lifetime appear in *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, volume 13 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

There are indications in Sri Aurobindo's Pondicherry notebooks that he intended to bring out a collection of essays on yoga and other subjects. The headings written above two pieces, "Essays Divine and Human" and "Essays — Human and Divine", seem to have been intended as possible titles for this proposed book. The editors have chosen the first of these to be the title of the present volume.

The material has been arranged in four parts:

- I. *Essays Divine and Human* — complete essays on yoga and related subjects, arranged in five chronological sections.
- II. *From Man to Superman: Notes and Fragments on Philosophy, Psychology and Yoga*, arranged in three thematic sections.
- III. *Notes and Fragments on Various Subjects*, arranged in five thematic sections.
- IV. *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, as arranged by the author in three sections, with a section of additional aphorisms.

All the writings in this book have been reproduced from Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts. He did not prepare any of them for publication and left many in an unfinished state. Simple editorial problems arising from illegibility, incomplete revision, etc. are indicated by means of the system explained in the Guide to Editorial Notation on the next page. More complex problems are discussed in the reference volume.

## Guide to Editorial Notation

The contents of this volume were never prepared by Sri Aurobindo for publication. They have been transcribed from manuscripts that present a variety of textual difficulties. As far as possible the editors have indicated these problems by means of the notation shown below.

Notation	Textual Problem
[?word]	Doubtful reading
[ . . . ]	Illegible word(s), one group of three spaced dots for each presumed word
[.....]	Word(s) lost by mutilation of the manuscript (at the beginning of a piece, indicates that a page or pages of the manuscript have been lost)
[word]	Word(s) omitted by the author or lost through damage to the manuscript that are required by grammar or sense, and that could be supplied by the editors
[? ]	Word(s) omitted by the author that could not be supplied by the editors
[ ]	Blank left by the author to be filled in later but left unfilled, which the editors were not able to fill
[ <i>note</i> ]	Situations requiring textual explication; all such information is printed in italics

Some textual situations requiring editorial intervention could not be handled by the above system. Such cases are discussed or tabulated in the reference volume (volume 35).

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# Part One

## Essays Divine and Human

The essays in this part have been arranged chronologically in five sections. The contents of several of the sections or subsections seem to have been intended by Sri Aurobindo to be published as series or collections of essays.





Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry



Section One

Circa 1911



## Certitudes

In the deep there is a greater deep, in the heights a greater height. Sooner shall man arrive at the borders of infinity than at the fulness of his own being. For that being is infinity, is God —

I aspire to infinite force, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss. Can I attain it? Yes, but the nature of infinity is that it has no end. Say not therefore that I attain it. I become it. Only so can man attain God by becoming God.

But before attaining he can enter into relations with him. To enter into relations with God is Yoga, the highest rapture & the noblest utility. There are relations within the compass of the humanity we have developed. These are called prayer, worship, adoration, sacrifice, thought, faith, science, philosophy. There are other relations beyond our developed capacity, but within the compass of the humanity we have yet to develop. Those are the relations that are attained by the various practices we usually call Yoga.

We may not know him as God, we may know him as Nature, our Higher Self, Infinity, some ineffable goal. It was so that Buddha approached Him; so approaches him the rigid Adwaitin. He is accessible even to the Atheist. To the materialist He disguises Himself in matter. For the Nihilist he waits ambushed in the bosom of Annihilation.

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

# Moksha

The pessimists have made moksha synonymous with annihilation or dissolution, but its true meaning is freedom. He who is free from bondage, is free, is mukta. But the last bondage is the passion for liberation itself which must be renounced before the soul can be perfectly free, and the last knowledge is the realisation that there is none bound, none desirous of freedom, but the soul is for ever and perfectly free, that bondage is an illusion and the liberation from bondage is an illusion. Not only are we bound but in play, the mimic knots are of such a nature that we ourselves can at our pleasure undo them.

Nevertheless the bonds are many and intricate. The most difficult of all their knots is egoism, the delusion that we have an individual existence sufficient in itself, separate from the universal and only being, ekamevadwitiyam, who is one not only beyond Time, Space and Causality. Not only are we all Brahman in our nature and being, waves of one sea, but we are each of us Brahman in His entirety, for that which differentiates and limits us, nama and rupa, exists only in play and for the sake of the world-drama.

Whence then comes this delusion of egoism, if there is no separate existence and only Brahman is? We answer that there is separate existence but only in manifestation not in reality. It is as if one actor could play different parts not in succession but at one and the same moment; each part is He Himself, one and indivisible, but each part is different from the other. Brahman extends Himself in Time, Space & Causality which do not condition Him but exist in Him and can at any time be changed or abolished, and in Time, Space & Causality He attaches Himself to many namarupas which are merely existences in His universal being. They are real in manifestation, unreal outside manifestation.

# Man

The Shastras use the same word for man and the one divine and universal Being — Purusha — as if to lay stress upon the oneness of humanity with God. Nara and Narayana are the eternal couple, who, though they are two, are one, eternally different, eternally the same. Narayana, say the scholiasts, is he who dwells in the waters, but I rather think it means he who is the essence and sum of all humanity. Wherever there is a man, there there is Narayana; for the two cannot be separated. I think sometimes that when Christ spoke of himself as the Son of Man, he really meant the son of the Purusha, and almost find myself imagining that *anthropos* is only the clumsy Greek equivalent, the literal and ignorant translation of some Syrian word which corresponded to our Purusha.

Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that man is full of divine possibilities — he is not merely a term in physical evolution, but himself the field of a spiritual evolution which with him began and in him will end. It was only when man was made, that the gods were satisfied — they who had rejected the animal forms, — and cried सुकृतमेव, “Man indeed is well and wonderfully made; the higher evolution can now begin.” He is like God, the sum of all other types and creatures from the animal to the god, infinitely variable where they are fixed, dynamic where they, even the highest, are static, and, therefore, although in the present and in his attainment a little lower than the angels, yet in the eventuality and in his culmination considerably higher than the gods. The other or fixed types, animals, gods, giants, Titans, demigods, can rise to a higher development than their own, but they must use the human body and the terrestrial birth to effect the transition.

# Philosophy

The knowledge which the man of pure intellect prefers to a more active and mundane curiosity, has in its surroundings a certain loftiness and serene detachment that cannot fail in their charm. To withdraw from contact with emotion and life and weave a luminous colourless shadowless web of thought, alone and far away in the infinite azure empyrean of pure ideas, can be an enthralling pastime fit for Titans or even for Gods. The ideas so found have always their value and it is no objection to their truth that, when tested by the rude ordeal of life and experience, they go to pieces. All that inopportune disaster proves is that they are no fit guides to ordinary human conduct; for material life which is the field of conduct is only intellectual on its mountaintops; in the plains and valleys ideas must undergo limitation by unideal conditions and withstand the shock of crude sub-ideal forces.

Nevertheless conduct is a great part of our existence and the mere metaphysical, logical or scientific knowledge that either does not help me to act or even limits my self-manifestation through action, cannot be my only concern. For God has not set me here merely to think, to philosophise, to weave metaphysical systems, to play with words and syllogisms, but to act, love and know. I must act divinely so that I may become divine in being and deed; I must learn to love God not only in Himself but in all beings, appearances, objects, enjoyments, events, whether men call them good or bad, real or mythical, fortunate or calamitous; and I must know Him with the same divine impartiality and completeness in order that I may come to be like Him, perfect, pure and unlimited — that which all sons of Man must one day be. This, I cannot help thinking, is the meaning and purpose of the Lila. It is not true that because I think, I am; but rather because I think, feel and act, and even while I am doing any or all of these things, can transcend the thought, feeling and