Preface

This work attempts to bring together the developmental insights contained within the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. I have made a conscious attempt in my work to present Sri Aurobindo and The Mother’s ideas in their own terms and to avoid unnecessary generalisations. The main aim is to identify key developmental ideas from the original works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and put them together in coherent developmental framework that represents the theoretical and application potential. The main method adopted for collating these insights is not just an intellectual analysis but a more comprehensive Indian method of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāśana—i.e. listening to or reading the words and meditating on them deeply. I have attempted to practise some of the concepts mentioned in this work in daily life in the past 10 years and to find their verification in experience. Thus, the aim has not been to collect information but represent real living dynamic ideas that have made deep personal sense to me and have changed the way in which I have lived and experienced life and its developmental potential.

Chapter 1 begins with outlining the aim of the work and the need for undertaking this study. It examines the limitations of the current structuring of the discipline of human development and the relevance of studying Sri Aurobindo and The Mother’s perspective on human development and their vision of psychology as a discipline of study in yielding an alternate agenda of human development. In all, there are identified four major lines of development that are explored across chapters—the cosmic, social, individual and the inner-yogic lines of development. The key ideas of individual and social evolution which form the core of Sri Aurobindo’s developmental theory are examined in Chaps. 2 and 3. Chapter 2 examines the nature and expanse of human personality, the process of forming the human individuality, and the dynamics of its further evolution into a divine individuality. Chapter 3 looks at the broader stages or cycles of social evolution based on Sri Aurobindo’s book The Human Cycle and also examines the spiral nature of development guided by the principles of progress and perfection as given by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The understanding of stages of collective human evolution forms the necessary backdrop against which the emergence of major metatheoretical perspectives in academic discipline of human development are engaged with in Chap. 4. Chapter 4 investigates the nature of the European
culture within which the contemporary discipline of human development took its first form and its key difference from the psychological perspectives based on the Indian view of spirituality. Two broad perspectives—the Neo-Darwinian and the relational metatheories—largely the products of the rational age as conceived by Sri Aurobindo are discussed further in the chapter, in terms of their ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions and their view on the nature of development. Chapter 4 ends with a comment on the limitations of the dominant metatheoretical perspectives in the discipline of human development and a need for deepening the discourse, in keeping with the emergence of the subjective age as conceived by Sri Aurobindo. Chapter 5 examines the nature of cosmic development and the metatheory of human development based on Sri Aurobindo’s perspective on evolution of consciousness i.e. the ontological, epistemological, methodological assumptions and its implications for the nature of development. It revisits the Neo-Darwinian and the relational meta-theoretical perspectives from the integral-developmental perspective and analyses two major psychological theories of development in its light. Chapter 6 attempts to synthesize the key developmental ideas of Sri Aurobindo from across different chapters. It begins by examining the ways in which Sri Aurobindo’s evolutionary discourse potentially extends the boundaries of the current field of inquiry and design a future discipline of study. This is followed by a proposal of a new agenda for human development based on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother’s works. Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter where application potential of this developmental agenda is outlined for its power of informing practices in the areas of education, parenting, work, human relations and healing.

A few names, terms and usages may need clarification in terms of their usage. This work is based on the yogic vision and writings of both Sri Aurobindo and The Mother—who was the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo. Also, the reference to the academic discipline of ‘Human Development’ subsumes within it the discipline of ‘Developmental Psychology’ or ‘Developmental Science’. The term ‘Human Development’ when used from Sri Aurobindo’s perspective indicates an evolutionary view of development.

I would like to thank Dr. Suneet Varma and Prof. Girishwar Misra for the valuable inputs in this work. I would like to thank my family for their unfailing support, and affection. A special thanks to Shikha for her help at a crucial time. And finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Nirodbaran, Ms. Ameeta Mehra and the Gnostic Centre Family for nurturing my inner growth and progress.

New Delhi

Monica Gupta
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Integral Human Development
Designing a Future Discipline of Study
Gupta, M.
2014, XIII, 181 p. 4 illus., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-81-322-1903-3