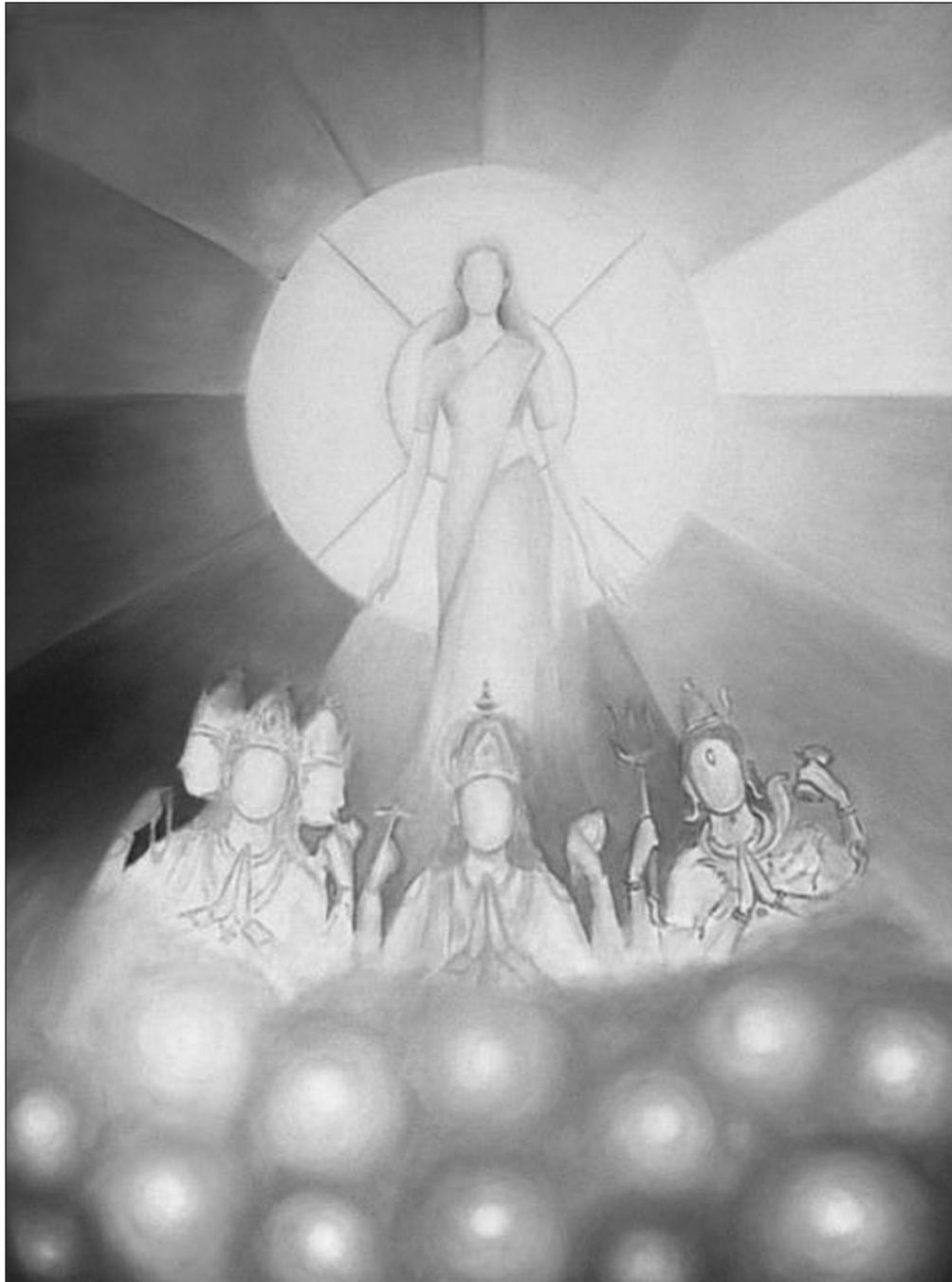


Collaboration

Summer & Fall 2011

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 36, Nos. 1-2



Special double issue on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, *A legend and a symbol*



About the cover

"Creation of the gods." This is a grayscale copy of a painting by Shiva Vangara done in Alkyds, the most advanced colors from Winsor and Newton, London. Throughout this issue we feature Shiva's fine paintings, many of which are based on *Savitri*. These paintings and others can be viewed in all their exquisite colors on his blog: <http://visionsoncanvas.blogspot.com>.

The authors

Arabinda Basu, a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, is a philosopher and scholar of Integral Yoga, and editor of the journal *Gavesana* (Quest for Light). He has taught and lectured on comparative philosophy and religion internationally.

Kalpna Bidwaikar (kalpanacb@rediffmail.com) is an Assistant Professor of English at the College at Bilaspur (Chattisgarh State). She also lectures on the vision and works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in Chattisgarh and Delhi.

Richard Hartz (richardahartz@hotmail.com) is a scholar on Sri Aurobindo's thought who works in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives Department on the publication of Sri Aurobindo's Complete Works.

Kailas Jhaveri (richardkailas@gmail.com) is a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Her biography, *I am with you*, was published in two volumes by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The late **Mangesh Nardkarni** (1933-2007) was a gifted and widely-known speaker on *Savitri* and other aspects of Sri Aurobindo's thought. He was connected the Sri Aurobindo Society and often traveled to the US.

Mona Sarkar is a senior member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, whose outstanding books *Sweet Mother: Luminous Notes* and *The Supreme* recount his conversations with the Mother.

Larry Seidlitz (lseidlitz@gmail.com) is a facilitator of online courses on Sri Aurobindo's thought at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research and editor of *Collaboration*.

Shraddhavan (shraddhavan@auroville.org.in) is the director of *Savitri Bhavan* in Auroville (www.auroville.org/education/edu_centres/savitribhavan_main.htm). She is also the editor of the institute's journal *Invocation*, and holds classes on *Savitri*.

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Important note: In this special version for the *Savitri* Yajna website, some content has been removed, in particular, the two sections Current Affairs and AV Almanac. The page numbers of the other articles have been adjusted accordingly.

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From the office of Collaboration

In this special issue, we focus exclusively on *Savitri*, and reproduce a number of excellent articles that have been written on Sri Aurobindo's great epic poem. In Current Affairs, we have articles on two U.S. centers that specially concentrate on *Savitri*, the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center near Crestone, CO by Swaha, and Auromesa, near Taos, NM by Tizia O'Connor. Both centers engage in regular *Savitri* study, and often have special *Savitri* workshops in the summers. Both are located in relatively remote scenic locations not far from each other that readers may like to visit. We also have a report by Anurag Banerjee on the passing of Amal Kiran, at age 106, who was so instrumental in eliciting Sri Aurobindo's explanations about the overhead poetry used in *Savitri*. In Briefs, we report on a *Savitri* play that was staged at the AUM 2011 in Lodi, CA (more on the AUM in next issue), and bring news from Matagiri and a new *Savitri* study group.

In AV Almanac, we have an article by Muriel Ghion on Savitri Bhavan, a center of *Savitri* studies in Auroville, home to "all kinds of materials and activities to enrich our understanding and enjoyment of Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic." It is also noteworthy that *Savitri* Bhavan publishes the *Invocation* newsletter (more like a journal), from which four of the articles included in our special issue have been selected, with the kind permission of Shraddhavan, the director. *Savitri* lovers should consider subscribing.

Our main articles start off in Chronicles with Mona Sarkar's account of the Mother's discussion with him about *Savitri*, in which she conveyed its extraordinary importance and value. Upon reading this recollection, which was written seven years after their discussion, the Mother said that although she could not remember her words, it was correct and true as an appreciation of *Savitri*, and recommended others to read it. This is followed by an article by Shraddhavan, in which she discusses various ways in which to read, study and utilize Sri Aurobindo's epic poem. These first two articles do not focus on the content of the poem per se, but on its value and on ways to appreciate and use it.

The next article, in Essays, by Kailas Jhaveri, provides a stimulating summary of *Savitri*, recounting the plot and highlights of the spiritual journey that is revealed. Using ample quotes, it gives a synopsis of the poem especially helpful for newcomers, and for others it is an excellent review preparatory to the articles that follow. Next comes a talk by the late Mangesh Nadkarni, a widely known speaker on *Savitri*. This is also an overall summary, but focuses on certain aspects of the poem he found particularly important. It is followed by a talk by Arabinda Basu, one of the Ashram's great Sri Aurobindo scholars, that takes us into the depths of the poem through the immense spiritual and philosophical significance of one key line, "A god come down, and greater by the fall." Next comes a penetrating study by Richard Hartz that not only highlights the affirmative nature of *Savitri* and of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy, but examines critical parallels between *Savitri* and *The Record of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo's yogic diary, pertaining to four inter-related affirmations on which his yoga is founded. This is followed by a study by Kalpana Bidwaikar, a chapter from her doctoral thesis, of the supramental transformation as expressed in corresponding ways in *Savitri* and *The Life Divine*. The last essay is by Larry Seidlitz, the only one previously unpublished, on certain key symbols in *Savitri*, which gathers together a variety of insights from other writers that bring into focus fundamental issues in the poem and in the Integral Yoga.

These main articles are followed by important source material from Sri Aurobindo on the nature of overhead poetry, and from the Mother in several extracts from *Mother's Agenda* that each bring out the deeper significances of particularly interesting passages.

In the Poetry Room, there is a selection of extended passages from throughout the epic which I believe exemplify the greatness of the poem, and bring home some of the profound wisdom embodied there. In *Apropos*, I have similarly selected a set of short passages ranging from one to several lines, each expressing a world of meaning.

The artist

Shiva Vangara (4d.dimensions@gmail.com) is from an artist family in Andhra Pradesh. He lived in the Ashram from 1983-1986, and was initiated to *Savitri* by a senior Ashramite. Inspired by the Mother's words, his view of art developed. For the past 18 years he has been working to realize his dream of a Hollywood adaptation of *Savitri*, in IMAX 3D, followed by 7 sequels to cover the entire epic poem. At present he lives in Mumbai pursuing the film project. Apart from film and painting, his interests include contemporary dance, Bio Technology, Nano Technology, and Quantum Physics and Consciousness.

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About SAA: The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville, and supports projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current officers: Lynda Lester, president; Vishnu Eschner, vice president; John Robert Cornell, secretary; Kalpana Patel, treasurer.

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Chronicles

Savitri—A revelation

by Mona Sarkar

From Mona Sarkar's book, *Sweet Mother: Luminous Notes, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2010.*

When I went to see the Mother on my 26th birthday, She spoke to me first about kindling the psychic flame. Then She spoke about *Savitri*. She had spoken to me about *Savitri* earlier, but this time, it was in a special way, for it was a complete teaching that She revealed. I remained as quiet and as concentrated as I could, in order to assimilate Her words.

Back home, I wanted to note down what the Mother had explained to me about *Savitri*. But something within me kept saying that the task was too difficult, that I would not be capable of rendering it, that it was too beautiful and much too extraordinary and that I would spoil it all. So I put aside the idea of writing down what the Mother had explained.

Years passed, but some phrases kept echoing in my mind, words like: "I have launched myself in a rudderless boat upon the vastness of the infinite." The Mother had spoken to me these magical words of Sri Aurobindo. And likewise there were many others which came floating in occasionally. But even then, I did not like the idea of noting them down. Then, one day, I was advised by Nolini-da to put down what the Mother had told me, and I began my work.

However, seven years had passed. It was a work which I would not have ventured even in my dreams to undertake. I could only try to be as docile and receptive an instrument as possible. I then concentrated and what the Mother had told me, began to come back gradually: "Each verse of *Savitri* is like a Mantra which surpasses all that man possesses by way of knowledge and is arranged in such a way that the sonority of the rhythm leads you to



Mona Sarkar. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

the origin of sound which is OM.... It is the most beautiful thing He has left for man, the highest possible." So, slowly, bit by bit, almost the whole of it was written down, in French.

Later on, I read to the Mother this report written from memory. She heard it and gave Her blessings. She intended to work anew on the text and make some changes. She started the work but perhaps the time to reveal everything had not come and the circumstances did not allow Her to finish.

The Mother found this report—'Compte-rendu note de memoire' as She called it—'very useful.' She once wrote to a disciple: "...years ago I have spoken at length about it to Mona Sarkar and he has noted in French what I said. Some time back I have seen what he has written and found it correct on the whole."

[In the following, we give the English translation of Mona-da's report of his conversation with Mother about *Savitri*.]

A report noted from memory

Do you read *Savitri*?

Yes, Mother.

You have read the whole of it?

Yes, Mother, I have read it twice.

Have you understood all that you have read?

Not much, but I like poetry, that is why I read it.

It does not matter if you do not understand *Savitri*, read it always. You will see that every time you read it, something new will be revealed to you. Each time you will get a new glimpse, each time a new experience; things which were not there, things you did not understand arise and suddenly become clear. Always an unexpected vision comes up through the words and the lines. Every time you try to read and understand, you will see that something is added, something which was hidden behind is revealed clearly and vividly. I tell you, the very verses you have read once before, will appear to you in a different light each time you reread them. This is what happens invariably. Always your experience is enriched, it is a revelation at each step.

But you must not read it as you read other books or newspapers. You must read with an empty head, a blank and vacant mind, without there being any other thought; you must concentrate much, remain empty, calm and open; then the words, the rhythms, the vibrations will penetrate directly to this white page, will put their stamp upon the brain, will explain themselves without your making an effort.

Savitri alone is sufficient to make you climb to the highest peaks. If truly one knows how to meditate on *Savitri*, one will receive all the help one needs. For one who wishes to follow this path, it is a visible help, as though the Lord himself were taking you by the hand and leading you to the destined goal. And then, every question, however personal it may be, has its answer here, every difficulty finds here its solution, indeed there is everything that is necessary for doing the Yoga.

He has crammed the whole universe in a single book. It is a marvellous work, magnificent and of an incomparable perfection.

You know, before writing *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo said to me *I am impelled to launch on a new adventure; I was hesitant in the beginning, but now I am decided. Still I do not know how far I shall succeed. I pray for help.* And you know what it was? It was—before beginning, I warn you in advance—it was his way of speaking, so full of humility and divine modesty. He never... *asserted himself.* And the day



he actually began it, he told me: *I have launched myself in a rudderless boat upon the vastness of the Infinite.* And once having started, he wrote page after page without intermission, as though it were a thing already complete up there and he had only to transcribe it in ink down here on these pages.

In truth, the entire form of *Savitri* has descended "en masse" from the highest region and Sri Aurobindo with his genius only arranged the lines—in a superb and magnificent style. Sometimes entire lines were revealed and he has left them intact; he worked hard, untiringly, so that the inspiration could come from the highest possible summit. And what a work he has created! Yes, it is a true creation in itself. It is an unequalled work. Everything is there, and it is put in such a simple, such a clear form; verses perfectly harmonious, limpid and eternally true. My child, I have read so many things, but I have never come across anything which could be compared with *Savitri*. I have studied the best works—in Greek, Latin, English and of course in French literature, also in German and all the great creations of the West and the East, including the great epics; but I repeat it, I have not found anywhere anything like *Savitri*. All these literary works seem to me empty, flat, hollow, without any deep reality—apart from a few rare exceptions, and these too represent only a small fraction of what *Savitri* is. What grandeur, what amplitude, what reality: it is something immortal and eternal he has created. I tell you once again, there is nothing like it in the whole world. Even if one puts aside the vision of the reality, that is, the essential substance which is the heart of the inspiration, and considers only the lines in themselves, one will find them unique, of the highest classical kind. What he has created is something man cannot imagine. For, everything is there, everything.

It may then be said that *Savitri* is a revelation, it is a meditation, it is a quest of the Infinite, of the Eternal. If it is read with this aspiration for Immortality, the reading itself will serve as a guide towards Immortality. To read *Savitri* is indeed to practise Yoga, spiritual concentration; one

can find there all that is needed to realise the Divine. Each step of the Yoga is noted here, including the secret of all other Yogas. Surely, if one follows sincerely what is revealed here in each verse one will finally reach the transformation of the Supramental Yoga. It is truly the infallible guide who never abandons you; its support is always there for him who wants to follow the path. Each verse of *Savitri* is like a revealed Mantra which surpasses all that man possesses by way of knowledge, and I repeat this, the words are expressed and arranged in such a manner that the sonority of the rhythm leads you to the origin of sound, which is OM.

My child, yes, everything is there: mysticism, occultism, philosophy, the history of evolution, the history of man, of the gods, of creation, of Nature; how the universe was created, why, for what purpose, what destiny—all is there. You can find there all the answers to all your questions. Everything is explained, even the future of man and of the evolution, all that nobody yet knows. He has expressed them in beautiful and clear words so that spiritual adventurers who wish to solve the mysteries of the world may understand it more easily. But the mystery is well hidden behind the lines and one must rise to the required level of true consciousness to discover it. All the prophecies, all that is going to happen is presented with a precise and wonderful clarity. Sri Aurobindo gives you here the key to find the Truth, to discover the Consciousness, to solve the problem of what the universe is. He has also indicated how he has opened the door of the Inconscience so that the light may penetrate there to transform it. He has shown the path, how to liberate oneself from the Ignorance to climb up to the superconscience; each stage, each plane of consciousness, how one can scale them, how one can cross the very barrier of death and attain Immortality. You will find the entire route in detail, and as you go forward you can discover things altogether unknown to man. That is what *Savitri* is, and yet much more. It is truly an experience—reading *Savitri*. All the secrets that man possesses, he has revealed

them, as well as all that awaits him in the future; all this is found in the depths of *Savitri*; but one must have the knowledge to discover them,—the experience of the planes of consciousness, the experience of the Supermind, even the experience of the conquest of Death. He has noted all the stages, marked each step needed in order to advance in an integral way in the integral Yoga.

All this is his own experience, and what is most surprising is that it is also my own experience. It is my sadhana which he has described. Each object, each event, each realization, all the descriptions, even the colours are exactly what I saw and the words, the phrases are also exactly what I heard. And all this before having read the book. I read *Savitri* many times afterwards, but earlier, when he was writing he used to read it to me. Every morning I used to hear him read *Savitri*, at night he would write and in the morning read it to me. And I observed something strange, that—day after day, the experiences he read out to me in the morning were those I had had the previous night, word for word. Yes, all the descriptions, the colours, the pictures I had seen, the words I had heard, all, all, I heard it, put by him into poetry, into miraculous poetry. Yes, they were exactly my experiences of the previous night which he read out to me the following morning. And it was not just one day, but for days and days together. And every time I used to compare what he said with my previous experiences and they were always the same. I repeat, it was not that I had told him my experiences and that he had noted them down afterwards, no, he knew already what I had seen. It is my experiences he has presented all along and they were also his experiences. It is, moreover, the picture of our adventure together into the unknown or rather into the Supermind.

These are experiences lived by him, realities, supracosmic truths. He experienced all these as one experiences joy and sorrow in a physical manner. He has walked in the darkness of inconscience, even in the neighbourhood of death, endured the sufferings of perdition, and he has emerged from the mud, the world-misery,



to breathe the sovereign plenitude and enter the supreme Ananda. He has traversed them all, these realms, borne the consequences, suffered and endured physically what one cannot imagine. Nobody till today has suffered like him. He has accepted suffering to transform suffering into the joy of union with the Supreme. It is something unique and incomparable in the history of the world. It is something that has never happened, he is the first to have traced the path in the Unknown so that we may be able to walk with certitude towards the Supermind. He has made the work easy for us. *Savitri* is his whole Yoga of transformation, and this Yoga, it is for the first time that we see it appear in the earth-consciousness.

And I think that man is not yet ready to receive it. It is too high and too vast for him. He cannot understand it, grasp it, for it is not by the mind that one can understand *Savitri*. One needs spiritual experiences in order to understand and assimilate it. The more one advances on the path of Yoga, the more one assimilates and better. No, it is something which will be appreciated only in the future, it is the poetry of tomorrow of which he has spoken in *The Future Poetry*. It is too subtle, too refined,—it is not in the mind or by the mind, it is in meditation that *Savitri* is revealed.

And men have the audacity to compare it and find it inferior in inspiration to that of a Virgil or a Homer. They do not understand, they cannot understand. What do they know? Nothing at all. And it is useless to try to make them understand. It will be known what it is, but in a distant future. It is only the new race with the new consciousness which will be able to understand. I assure you there is nothing under the blue sky to compare with *Savitri*. It is the mystery of mysteries. It is a *super-epic,* it is super-literature, super-poetry, super-vision, it is a super-work even if one considers the number of lines he has written. No, these human words are not adequate to describe *Savitri*. Yes, one needs superlatives, hyperboles to describe it. It is a hyper-epic. No, words express nothing of what *Savitri* is. There are no proper adjectives to describe what *Savitri* is, at

least I do not find them. It is of immense value—spiritual value and all other values; it is eternal in its subject, and infinite in its appeal, miraculous in its mode and power of execution; it is a unique thing, the more you come in contact with it, the higher will you be lifted up. Ah, truly it is something! It is the most beautiful thing he has left for man, the highest possible. What is it? When will man know it? When is he going to lead a life of truth? When is he going to accept this in his life? This yet remains to be known.

My child, everyday you are going to read *Savitri*; read properly, with the right attitude, concentrating a little before opening the pages and trying to keep the mind as empty as possible, absolutely without a thought. The direct road is through that—the heart. I tell you, if you try to really concentrate with this aspiration you can light the flame, the psychic flame, the flame of purification in a very short time, perhaps in a few days. What you cannot do normally, you will do it with the help of *Savitri*. Try and you will see how very different it is, how new, if you read with this attitude, with this something at the back of your consciousness; as though it were an offering to Sri Aurobindo. You know it is charged, fully charged with consciousness; as though *Savitri* were a being, a real Guide. I tell you, whoever wants to practise Yoga, if he tries sincerely and feels the necessity, he will be able to climb with the help of *Savitri* to the highest rung of the ladder of Yoga, will be able to find the secret that *Savitri* represents. And this without the help of a Guru. And he will be able to practise it anywhere. *Savitri* by itself will be his guide, for all that he needs he will find in *Savitri*. If he remains absolutely quiet when he is faced with a difficulty, or when he does not know where to turn in order to go forward and how to overcome obstacles, for all these hesitations and these incertitudes which overwhelm us at every moment, he will have the necessary indications, and the necessary concrete help. If he remains absolutely calm, open, if he aspires sincerely, always he will be as if led by the hand. If he has faith, the will to give himself and the essential sincerity,

he will reach the final goal.

Indeed, *Savitri* is something concrete, living, it is all replete, packed with consciousness, it is the supreme knowledge above all human philosophies, all human religions. It is the spiritual path, it is Yoga, Tapasya, Sadhana, everything, in its single body. *Savitri* has an extraordinary power, it sends out vibrations for him who can receive them, the true vibrations of each stage of consciousness. It is incomparable, it is truth in its plenitude, the Truth Sri Aurobindo brought down on the earth. My child, one must try to find the secret that *Savitri* represents, the prophetic message Sri Aurobindo reveals there for us. This is the work before you, it is hard but it is worth the trouble.

Mother's comments on the text

After having heard the full text, the Mother said:

It is good. Only, I do not remember what I had said. I never remember what I speak. When I speak, it comes down like this (gesture). I speak of things which come down, for the moment, like inspirations and then it is over. When I have spoken once, I do not remember at all. All disappears from my mind. It is so strange that I do not remember the thing that I have spoken just a moment ago. It is like this, my child. When I speak, I say many things which come at that moment, and the next minute—it is gone. That is why I do not remember what I had told you. Well, I do not know. I do not know what I had said. I do not remember anything at all.

But, Mother, how do You find this?

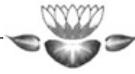
I find it very good. It is all right. Is it you who have written it?

Yes, Mother, I have noted down what You had told me.

Is it your French?

What You had told me, that I have written and then Nolini-da has corrected a bit.

It is good. As an appreciation of *Savitri* it is correct. This is *Savitri*. But I do not remember what I said. That is why, I can say nothing. But all that is said here seems to me correct. It is true. It is good, my child.



Reading *Savitri* for progress and delight

by Shradhdhavan

From a talk given on 18 August 2001 at Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry, and subsequently published in the journal *Invocation*, No. 14, February 2002, pp. 25-35.

Friends, it's a great honor for me to be invited to speak to you about *Savitri* and I would like to invoke the presence of the Mother and the Master to be with us and give their illumination during our time together.

Although I am happy to be here, I face you with some trepidation, because this is actually the first time that I will be addressing a large group of informed Aurobindonians like this. In fact I feel very hesitant to speak about *Savitri* at all. As Ananda mentioned when introducing me, my speciality has been reading, and I am going to cheat a little and spend the last portion of our time together simply reading. The title given for this talk is 'Reading *Savitri* for Progress and Delight' and I hope that together we can make a brief survey of different approaches to reading *Savitri*.

Most of you must be familiar with the words of Mother on this topic. She told Norman Dowsett, here in the Ashram, in the 1960s I believe:

For the opening of the psychic, for the growth of consciousness, and even for the improvement of the English it is good to read one or two pages of *Savitri* each day.

And I am sure that many of you here, like Aurobindonians all over the world, are following that practice of reading one or two pages of *Savitri* every day individually at home, as a meditation for yourselves with the aspiration that it will assist you towards opening of the psychic and the growth of consciousness.



Photo courtesy Shradhdhavan

But while this is a practice for individual concentration, more and more groups are taking up the practice of reading *Savitri* together, whether regularly or on special occasions. This practice has been going on in Auroville since the very early days there. The Mother gave blessings to several different people to read aloud to groups there regularly. One of those was our friend 'Narad'—the Mother gave him that name in 1972—an Aurovilian from America, a singer and poet, and a gardener. He was looking after the Matrimandir Plant Nursery, and in that beautiful garden he used to read from *Savitri* every Sunday morning to a small gathering. Another was Shyam Sunderji, the Mother's Secretary for Auroville. I remember that at a very difficult time in Auroville's history, some of us used to gather at his house at 8:00 every evening and he would read, and what a help and strength that was to us at that time.

It was shortly afterwards that I made a first experiment at the request of a group of friends, of reading *Savitri* with them for the improvement of English. I am continuing that now at Savitri Bhavan with people who feel a deep inner attraction to *Savitri*, but who for various reasons like to have some help with understanding Sri Aurobindo's vocabulary and sentence structure, and with correct English pronunciation. We read about a page each time. I read first to give the pronunciation, then we go through the passage again to look at difficult words, understand the sentence

construction clearly, get an idea of the surface meaning; and then each of the students has a chance to read for improving their pronunciation. I find that my early students from those first classes in the 1980s have amply rewarded my hopes that by learning English through *Savitri* they would gain a mastery of the English language in its richest scope. I remember one of those students in the beginning complaining, "Well, we are reading poetry and Sri Aurobindo, and it's all very inspiring. But for the work that we are doing we need a lot of legal and commercial vocabulary, and how are we going to get that?" It was amusing for us all to see how Sri Aurobindo answered him, because the passage we read that day—I think it was in Canto 4 of Book One—was full of exactly this kind of vocabulary. We find that, just as it is said of the ancient Indian epic that what is not in the Mahabharata is not in the world, the same can be said about *Savitri*. The whole universe with all its planes is there, all human experience is there, and the whole width and depth and richness of the English language is there. But of course this approach, of reading *Savitri* for the improvement of English, benefits people when they have some inner opening, inner response to it. Then what happens is that the lines that we read together and that they read again for themselves sink very, very deep into the consciousness and there they do their work—a work that includes building up connections in the physical brain that enables them at a later stage to gain a spontaneous understanding and mastery of the language. I have seen this process take effect many times, but as I say it works for those in whom there is a soul response to *Savitri*—and that is the theme I will be coming back to again and again this morning.

Another way of reading *Savitri*, which I believe is practised in many groups, particularly perhaps here in India, is as a kind of sacrifice: to read the whole of *Savitri* from beginning to end; this is usually done during a particular period of special days. A practice of continuous reading, sometimes for 24 hours a day, covering the whole of *Savitri*. In Auroville too we have



observed such a practice; for example, during the month of February 2000 which had 29 days. Starting on the first day of that special month, people met regularly, reading for an hour or an hour and a half each day to complete the reading of the whole poem during that one month period. At a normal reading speed it takes about 40 hours to read all the 49 cantos.

I know some individuals who make this their daily practice: starting at the beginning and reading a canto or half a canto every day till they reach the end and then starting at the beginning again, and in that way they have gone through the whole of *Savitri* many times. When this is done in groups there's really no doubt that by this going through the whole soundbody of the epic from beginning to end aloud, there must be built up a very strong force field of vibrations. It is definitely of benefit to the people who participate in it. But again I would say that the effect or benefit of this sacrifice will be richer to the extent that the reading is done with understanding and above all with soul surrender. It shouldn't become a mere ritual. Sri Aurobindo's mantric lines, repeated one after the other, will always have their power; but the power will be much greater if the mind can participate, and the will and the heart.

I have also heard of some groups who select one line that seems to have a particular mantric power and then within the group they chant that line many, many times. They concentrate on that one special line, and try to take its vibrations deep into themselves. Again I am sure that this is very beneficial to those who practice it. In that way the words enter very deeply into the consciousness. There they resonate and do their work, and perhaps not just the surface meaning but the deeper meaning and the deeper vibrations may reveal their full depth to those who undertake this exercise if it is done with self-dedication, with a true aspiration to internalise the heart of the meaning, not just as a mere repetition.

At another end of the spectrum of possible approaches to *Savitri*, we can say there would be the aesthetic approach,

the approach of enjoying it for its poetic beauty. I met a gentleman a couple of months ago, who told me, "We have faith in Sri Aurobindo, but it is so difficult to understand his books. We tried with *The Life Divine*, we tried with *The Synthesis of Yoga* but we found them so difficult. But when we read *Savitri*, even though we don't understand, we get many pictures, many inner experiences, all kinds of inner movements." So this poetic appeal, the beauty and suggestiveness of *Savitri* might be one reason why *Savitri* has overtaken *The Life Divine* as Sri Aurobindo's "bestseller." It used to be that everybody who wanted to make an attempt to come close to Sri Aurobindo would buy *The Life Divine*—perhaps feeling that even if they didn't manage to read it at least they had it, and that maybe one day they will read it. So I'm told that now *Savitri* has taken this position. More and more people are feeling that although *Savitri* is such an immense ocean of mysteries, they can dip their toes in it, even if they can't yet swim and revel in its deeper waves.

Of course, this kind of poetic appreciation will be enhanced by some natural capacity to respond to poetry and by some knowledge about poetry. Sri Aurobindo has provided us, in this one poem, with supreme examples of all the different types of poetry that poetry-lovers relish. There is wonderful nature poetry in *Savitri*. There are wonderful passages of lyrical love poetry in *Savitri*. There is masterly sustained narrative and story-telling in certain sections of *Savitri*. There is supreme philosophical poetry carrying profound knowledge to satisfy our thought capacity. As he has shown in all his poetical output, Sri Aurobindo is the supreme Master of every range of poetic expression. And here in his masterwork, which he spent so many years of his life perfecting, he has enormously expanded the capacities of the English language and created a whole new subtle rhythm to carry all these many different kinds of poetic tones. There is no other poet in English who has the same special music which is characteristic of *Savitri*. This is something that should be appreciated by all lovers of poetry, lovers of English literature.

But we find that the academics in the universities in England, the professional poetry specialists, have not opened up to this. They have not yet accorded Sri Aurobindo the recognition that he deserves as the supreme poet in the English language. This is because he is breaking new ground, using techniques that they are not familiar with, and above all because they lack the soul response that would enable them to enter into that new thing that he is doing. So this particular delight is open to only to those whose souls are touched by Sri Aurobindo and his poetic expression.

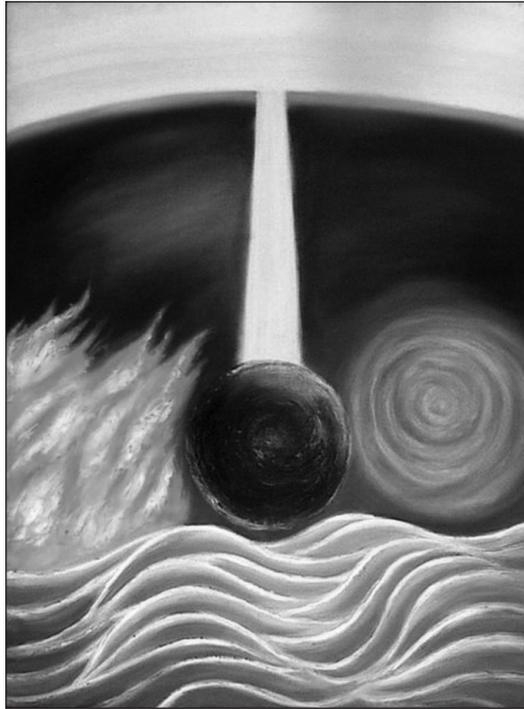
The true role of all art, Sri Aurobindo tells us, is to go beyond the appearances and surfaces of things and to reveal something of their deeper truth and power. The true artist is one who is able to reach the higher levels of his aesthetic being and there gain access to those tracts of glorious beauty and power which have not yet been reached by nature's evolutionary process, which are still lying waiting for us in the future. And one thing that the true artist can do is to go behind the surface into those subtle planes, those higher planes, and bring forms from there closer to our human consciousness. This is so whether he is working with painting, sculpture, music or through words. And when we respond to those artistic creations, we are also participating in that movement of bringing those beings and those possibilities from higher and more beautiful worlds closer to our human world. This is the true role of the artist, and the deepest value of Art.

Perhaps you know about the work that the Mother has done with Huta, of capturing certain images from selected passages of *Savitri* in painting. At that time she told Huta, "These are beings. It is not just paint on canvas." Through this conscious work that they have done together or that the Mother did through Huta's hands, beings and vibrations from those other worlds have been fixed in physical form. This immense work allows a very great enrichment of our understanding and appreciation of *Savitri*, and we feel deeply honoured by the fact that those paintings have now been given into the



care of Savitri Bhavan. At the moment they are in storage with us, but we hope the day will come when we will be able to have them all on permanent exhibition as the Mother had wished. Then not only will they continue to do their work of radiating those subtle levels of consciousness into the human atmosphere, but we will all have permanent access to them. This will be a very, very great enrichment and mark the fulfillment of part of our dream for Savitri Bhavan from the very beginning. We never dared to speak about this dream, but there was the hope that if we could create the proper place perhaps one day they would come to us. And now that they have been given into our care, we look forward to the day when we will have the very special art gallery where they can all be on permanent display in ideal and very secure conditions, to enhance our ever-deeper contact with the marvel that is *Savitri*.

If we move on from the aesthetic aspect, the aspect of artistic beauty and its power, another approach to *Savitri*, and another part of our work at Savitri Bhavan, lies in the realm of study. For there is not only the physical body of this poem with its sound, its rhythms, not only the beautiful images which can delight our sense of aesthetic beauty, it also contains and carries, translated into terms that human minds can access, Supreme Truths. Sri Aurobindo has brought those high truths close to us, in such a way that our minds can get some small touch of those higher truths through the evocative work that he has done with mantric language. This intellectual understanding is not the whole of the story. It will not be possible even to grasp it, unless, as with the other kinds of enjoyment, there is a soul opening. But the intellect, the mind, is the highest level that has so far been established in natural evolution. We human beings carry that power. Sri Aurobindo has emphasized that the mind is not to be left out, in fact it is to be made an instrument of the future development. So reading *Savitri* with as much intellectual understanding as we can manage enables us to enter more deeply



"Earth is the chosen place." (Painting by Shiva Vangara)

into what Sri Aurobindo is saying there; enjoying as fully as possible all the allusions that he makes to different literatures to enrich his poem, or even just having a general understanding of the development of the poem—all this can help us very much. So we make a place for that kind of approach too in our programs at Savitri Bhavan, and we are very grateful to all the guest speakers who have come and shared with us their insights and the fruits of their sacrifice of *Savitri* study. Let us just review these different ways of reading.

Perhaps that first kind, where the emphasis is on faith and devotion rather than understanding, we can call 'bhakta reading.' We concentrate and aspire that illumination shall come, and we get the benefit of the sound values whether we read aloud or silently to ourselves. In this connection two things are important: with all poetry it is true, but it is particularly and specially true with Sri Aurobindo's poetry that the sound values of the words and rhythm are so important in the whole effect that it is advisable to read aloud if possible, even when we are reading alone, to ourselves. And if there are reasons why you can't read

out loud, then at least try to read it word by word at the aloud reading pace, sounding each word in your mind, in order to get as much as possible the value of each word, each line.

I have also heard of people who write out passages from *Savitri* in a similar spirit. I believe our elder brother Madhavji Pandit has advised some people that if their mind is troubled, if they are finding it difficult to concentrate, then to sit down and write out a page or two from *Savitri*. I can personally vouch for the fact that this does produce a special quality of concentration, for we are involving our body in the concentration. I know of one artist who used to come here to Pondicherry—a wonderful artist from Holland. With immense concentration he has written out the whole of *Savitri* on a single large sheet of our Ashram handmade paper, writing and writing again and writing over and over again.

I haven't seen that sheet of paper, but I would like to see it. It must be charged with immense energy. So we could say that this is a kind of 'bhakta approach.'

Then there is this aesthetic approach we spoke of, the enjoyment of beauty at different levels; and thirdly the intellectual level where we study and try to absorb through our minds as best we can, as much as possible of what is Sri Aurobindo is communicating.

There are two other approaches I would like to mention. One perhaps you may know of. The Mother has mentioned that *Savitri* is an ideal book to consult for guidance from our higher and innermost being. We can use it as an "oracle." If we have some problem we want to receive guidance about, we can start by putting our question to the Divine with some concentration. If we like we may write it down, for it is important to formulate our question as clearly as possible. Then we take up the book and, still with concentration, open it. We may do this with closed eyes, and with the left hand to avoid too much interference from our normal active everyday mentality. Then we open our eyes and see the lines before us. In them there



is likely to be some message that comes to us from our own true highest being, a message which our soul can recognize. Perhaps many of you might have had this experience and can confirm it.

In this connection, I would also like to mention the role of translations. I met a lady the other day who told me that from the first time that she opened *Savitri*, she felt that it represented her own soul speaking to her. Now this is a very remarkable experience, considering that she read *Savitri* in a German translation. And ever since then, her contact to *Savitri* has been through this German translation—which informed people consider to be unsatisfactory in many respects. This proves, I think, that what we contact most deeply in *Savitri* is the subtle truth in it, the power behind, and that the words on the page are just a help and a channel for that. You may know that the Mother herself has translated quite large passages of *Savitri* into French, and that she concluded that it is impossible, that *Savitri* cannot be translated. There is no way to do it and she was not at all satisfied with her translation. Nevertheless when people approached her and said, “You know, I really feel the urge to translate *Savitri* into my own language,” normally she encouraged them. Because this was a way for them to bathe in the atmosphere of *Savitri*, to come into contact with it in a very special close relationship. So while I think we have to say that probably all translations cannot but fail to carry the whole of *Savitri*, this is no reason for not attempting them and they may be helpful. Translations have their role to play, both in helping people towards an intellectual understanding and, as we’ve seen in the case of that German lady, some kind of direct soul contact may become possible through the channel of an translation, even though it is imperfect.

But we shouldn't consider any of these translations as definitive, just as we shouldn't consider any of our readings and understandings and interpretations as definitive. There is a passage in *Savitri* where Sri Aurobindo warns us against tying up the sacred book in silken strings of interpretation, saying, “It means this,

it doesn't mean anything else.” Whatever intellectual interpretation we may give to *Savitri*, it still has resonances which lie far beyond our interpretations and which can awaken new understandings in our minds and new movements in our beings. So we should be very careful about this. Now it is still the early days, for the time being perhaps we are not really in danger of this. But there is a possibility that in the future certain interpretations might become fixed and accepted. We should beware of any rigidity of this kind.

All this amounts to saying that behind these various different kinds of approach and response lies the deeper response of our souls. If that is missing, the continuous reading becomes just a ritual, aesthetic appreciation may hardly be possible, study and intellectual understanding runs the risk of becoming stereotyped. What truly attracts us to *Savitri*, what truly prompts us to read this book as a means of progress, is the delight of the soul. Its delight in recognizing, expressed in perfectly appropriate images, rhythms, word-music, its own beauty—the soul's own beauty, its own depth, its own diversity, its own knowledge, its own native atmosphere.

Savitri deserves a type of reading that would give us all these things: the power of the words and the rhythm, the sound power, the mantric effect, the aesthetic delight, the intellectual illumination and the conscious soul thrill. The soul thrill is behind all those other forms of delight, but we would get most delight and most progress if we could come into conscious contact with that soul thrill.

Now it so happens that the Mother has mentioned, in connection with listening to her music, a method that might help us towards that integral kind of reading. She said that when we are listening to her organ music, we shouldn't just be hearing the harmony with our surface ears. We should try to quieten our whole being, making it as still as possible, and then listen to her music from the deepest heart center, in such a way that the movements and notes of her music would seem to be taking place within our own consciousness, as if we ourselves are creating that

music, playing that music. This is a kind of listening through identification. Of course to start with, it will be only an imaginative identification; but this may lead us to a deeper state of identification with the inner movement of the music. This has a resemblance too to the way that Mother said that she and Huta approached the painting work. First they would read the passage, the Mother would read out the passage. If we hear those recordings which Huta made, around which Sunil-da has composed his *Savitri* music, we can notice with what concentration the Mother has read those passages. After the reading they concentrated in silence. Whatever image came up then, the Mother would describe it to Huta, giving her instructions how to paint it; and Huta had to go home and complete the canvas. So, if you like, we can make a kind of experiment together, trying to read and listen to *Savitri* in this way, in this state of inner concentration.

Before we try that, I would like to say that every single one of Sri Aurobindo's books, all his writings, every little letter, is a window onto a vast coherent body of Truth; and because of the process by which he has written, all of them are charged with the plenary power of his consciousness. This is what attracts us to Sri Aurobindo's writings. I recall one friend in Auroville, who described to me how *The Life Divine* came into his hands: he said he couldn't put it down for three weeks. He said he was just totally absorbed in *The Life Divine*. He felt he was swimming in an ocean of delight and consciousness. Other people can tell how a single sentence in a brief letter has been enough to change their lives. Even his books like *The Human Cycle* or *The Ideal of Human Unity*, which are addressed more to the reason and the intelligent will, are carrying an immense charge of soul-electricity from far beyond the mind. This is true of all his writings, but nevertheless the Mother has given a special place among the whole body of Sri Aurobindo's works to *Savitri*, calling it “The supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision.”

So what is this specially illuminating and uniquely delightful quality and power



Essays

Savitri: A brief introduction

by Kailas Jhaveri

This essay was included in Kailas' book, "I am with you," vols. II-III, published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2008, pp. 426-446.

of this work? My answer for myself is that *Savitri* is integral in its appeal to all the different planes of our being, of our capacity of response and appreciation, and it is of course integral in its scope. You know that the Mother has said that "He has packed the entire universe into one book." You also know, I am sure, that Sri Aurobindo spoke of himself as primarily a poet. I think he would have been a remarkable poet even if he had never taken up first politics and revolution, and then yoga. I think we would still have heard his name as a figure in English literature. Having devoted himself to an immense spiritual realization, through *Savitri* he consciously took up the work of giving expression in poetry to whatever higher levels of consciousness he was able to securely achieve. And he went on successively revising as more and more capacity of expression became available to him. In this immense work he has surely succeeded in doing what he said the mantra must do. In *The Future Poetry* he writes :

The Mantra is the word that carries the godhead in it or the power of the godhead, can bring it into the consciousness and fix there it and its workings, awaken there the thrill of the infinite, the force of something absolute, perpetuate the miracle of the supreme utterance. (CSWA 26:313)

This is what he has done in *Savitri*.

That is why I would request you to join me in this little experiment and indulge me in my delight in reading *Savitri*. I would like to read the first four pages of Book One Canto One, "The Symbol Dawn." And I would request you to try to do this quietening of the consciousness, listening from the deepest inmost centre and trying to follow from there, through identification, the movement of dawning which is described in these four pages, the movement from the dark resistance of our normal material consciousness, to the first quiver of aspiration, then the response of the divine light, becoming gradually a beautiful magical dawn and finally the full light of consciousness.

S*avitri* is a magnificent epic poem of over 23,803 lines, covering such a vast range of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual experiences on all the levels of consciousness in the most powerful mantric language that it beautifully evokes the mystic images of these planes of consciousness. I would like to quote these passages, but it is difficult to introduce the subjects in such a short space. This is just an introduction, which I hope will inspire you to read the original which contains not only an inexhaustible treasure of knowledge, but many uplifting passages to fill you with an unsurpassable delight.

The story of *Savitri* and *Satyavan* is a classical legend taken from the *Mahabharata*. Sri Aurobindo turns this legend into a beautiful symbol of His own spiritual experiences, keeping intact the main lines of the development of the story. The legend achieves its most profound significance in the hands of Sri Aurobindo.

The names of the characters of the story have a meaning appropriate to its theme and the role of each character. Here they are not just personified qualities, but emanations of the conscious and active Forces working in the universe. The light of Truth-Consciousness with which Sri Aurobindo has written *Savitri*, lays bare before us all these forces, their play and significance in the evolutionary march towards the divine life upon earth.

Savitri represents an aspect of the Divine Consciousness. The word *Savitri*, being a derivation from *Savitr*, meaning the Sun, symbolises the Truth. She comes



Kailas in 1970. (Photo courtesy Kailas Jhaveri)

down upon earth in response to the aspiration and the call of terrestrial humanity, represented by *Aswapati*, its protagonist and leader, in order not only to help and save mankind, but to lead it so as to transcend the ego-centric divisive and fumbling mental consciousness and reach to the plane of the Truth-Consciousness.

Satyavan is the soul, carrying the divine truth of being within himself, but unconscious of it due to the soul's original descent into the grip of the Inconscient from which it has evolved. He has developed into a fine being, but his is a search for reconciliation between the Self and the world or between Spirit and Matter. It is not by renouncing the world and its forms, but by an active participation in it that he seeks to establish Truth in the very conditions of this terrestrial life. He has tried to realise this but in vain. However, he feels the possibility of this realization in his meeting with *Savitri*.

Aswapati means the Lord of *Tapasya* or Energy. The name literally means the Lord of the Horse, but in spiritual parlance the horse signifies energy. *Aswapati* by his spiritual askesis represents the controlled and concentrated energy of a spiritual endeavour. Sri Aurobindo describes His own spiritual experiences through *Aswapati*.



The epic of *Savitri* consists of twelve books. We must note the title of the first Book, 'The Book of Beginnings', and its first canto, entitled 'The Symbol Dawn'. Dawn, in the Indian spiritual tradition, represents the first radiance of the new light and symbolically it represents the beginning of a cycle of evolution of a new consciousness, to manifest a New Creation.

The first canto is vividly and penetratingly described in symbolic language, introducing the central theme of the epic, which is the work *Savitri* has come to do by confronting Death, Time and Fate to establish a promise and a hope for the light of a New Consciousness in the heart of the earth.

Sri Aurobindo chooses one particular night before 'the day when Satyavan must die' to represent the state of the Inconscient universe before the very beginning of creation. He opens the canto with the most striking line:

It was the hour before the Gods awake.

Sri Aurobindo gives a powerful description of the Night through many symbols and vividly striking images, created out of His own spiritual experience:

Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night,
alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence'
marge.

One must mark the subtle meaning of each chosen word and phrase: 'foreboding mind of Night,' 'unlit temple of eternity,' 'Lay stretched immobile' and 'upon Silence' marge.' There is inertia and unwillingness in the deep darkness of the night to receive the light. The mind of the night is secretly aware of the coming event, but dreads this since it would disturb the peace of its sleep. The earth which is the self-chosen temple of a great Divinity was still unlit, because the foreboding mind of night lay there stretched out immobile in torpor on the brink of Silence.

It is the most powerful description of

the Night to make us aware of the state of the rock of Inconscient Matter whose deep darkness refuses any ray of light to enter. As Sri Aurobindo says, 'one who is lost in that Night does not think of the other half of the earth as full of light; to him all is night and the earth a forsaken wanderer in an enduring darkness.' We are poignantly enlightened by the intensity of His spiritual experience and power of creative faculty which are maintained throughout the epic.

Besides the images seen in His own vision, Sri Aurobindo uses universal symbols as well as those images peculiar to the Indian mystics which are often present in the Vedas. These images are authentic experiences of Sri Aurobindo and therefore effective in transmitting the force of His experience. He is the *drista* (seer) who sees the vision by the power of His consciousness and he is also the *kavi* (poet) who expresses his spiritual experiences in an inspired flow of verse, charged with mantric force carrying all the subtle and deep vibrations of His experience.

As Sri Aurobindo explains: 'A symbol expresses not a play of abstract things or ideas put into imaged form, but a living Truth or inward vision or experience of things, so inward, so subtle, so little belonging to the domain of intellectual abstraction and precision that it cannot be brought out except through symbolic images.'

One must read *Savitri* again and again with one-pointed concentration and in silence to feel the impact of 'the abyss of the unbodied Infinite' when 'a fathomless zero occupied the world.' It was a bottomless, unfathomable emptiness or an abyss of the infinite Zero. But this is not the zero of the Buddhists—*shunya* or *Nihil*. It is the Zero that contains all in its silent bosom.

In the very beginning the movement of Nature is blind and mechanical—'eyeless'—not knowing the purpose of existence or its goal and without any conscious control over it. It does its work like a somnambulist who is unconscious of his acts while in sleep. But this is a creative slumber—'eyeless muse'. Yet one wonders, out of these seemingly mechanical orbit-

ings of the earth what can emerge in the heavy stupor of Nescience?

Earth wheeled abandoned in the
hollow gulfs
Forgetful of her spirit and her fate.
The impassive skies were neutral,
empty, still.

But the Supreme Consciousness is there involved in its extreme opposite state of Nescience, secretly waiting to evolve as a tree waits in its seed. So,

Something that wished but knew not
how to be
Teased the Inconscient to wake
Ignorance....
And a blank Prescience yearned
towards distant change....
Insensibly somewhere a breach
began....

The goddess Dawn sends out a scout of reconnaissance to find out if there is a place on earth to receive her, meaning any opening in the rock of the Inconscient. Sri Aurobindo gives us a vision of the beginning of creation out of inconscient Matter and its gradual evolution by the slow penetration of a ray of the light of consciousness through a slight crack in Matter, an opening, revealing its willingness to receive it. And we begin to see the emergence of the goddess Dawn in her full glory and splendour, representing a promise and a hope for the Supramental Light, which is the work *Savitri* has come to fulfil on earth. Thus 'Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues' and left her message of grandeur and greatness on earth.

Its message crept through the reluctant hush
Calling the adventure of consciousness and joy....
All can be done if the God-touch is there....
The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.



In the second canto, entitled 'The Issue', Sri Aurobindo begins with its central theme, which is the destined death of Satyavan that Savitri has come to solve by staying the wheels of destiny. He puts in bold perspective this issue. Sri Aurobindo describes in powerful terms the character of Savitri who has come with the Consciousness-Force of the great World-Mother to press back the hands of Karmic Necessity presented by Fate and win back Satyavan from Death.

Sri Aurobindo introduces the heroine of the epic by the most magnificently sublime description of Savitri as an emanation of the Divine Mother on earth. It is so powerful in its mantric effect that when read with absolute silence and profound receptivity, one is filled with the power of Savitri's character. As a matter of fact, all knowledge and powers are within oneself, but in order to realise them, one must first silence the mind, its narrow, half-lit knowledge and beliefs, doubts and questionings and reach the profound depths of one's being, where the true individual godhead lies hidden.

After introducing the theme of Savitri, Sri Aurobindo takes us back to review in retrospect the necessity which compels the birth of Savitri through the Yoga of Aswapati—Book II—which describes Sri Aurobindo's own spiritual experiences. Aswapati travels from the world of subtle Matter, Life and Mind in their lower and higher planes of consciousness, meets the godheads or the powers of these typical worlds and describes their influence on the beings of this world. He shows the path of the Integral Yoga one must follow for the evolution of consciousness to transform our egocentric personality to a being of truth by the light of the Supramental Consciousness.

We travel with Aswapati, the protagonist and forerunner of humanity, through the typical worlds of Consciousness. We descend with him into the abyss of Night and enter into the region of the Inconscient and Ignorance. We see there the world of Falsehood, meet the Mother of Evil and the sons of Darkness. As Sri Aurobindo writes: 'None can reach heaven who has

not passed through hell.' But He reminds us again and again:

A deathbound littleness is not all we are:
Immortal our forgotten vastnesses
Await discovery in our summit selves;
Unmeasured breadths and depths of
being are ours.

It is the story of the evolutionary march of man from the Inconscient Matter to the Superconscient Spirit. And as we journey with this world traveller Aswapati, the leader of humanity, to the highest region of Consciousness, presided over by the Divine Mother, we discover the significance of our birth in Time and find the key to our magnificent evolutionary destiny. Through this journey of Aswapati, Sri Aurobindo lets us know that this world is neither a chance, nor a whim, nor an illusion or Maya. There is a purpose and a plan in human birth and its struggles which finally lead man to the divine manifestation on earth. Till then, '... never can the mighty traveller rest.... And never can the mystic voyage cease.'

He stood fulfilled on the world's highest line
Awaiting the ascent beyond the world,
Awaiting the Descent the world to save....
Infinity swallowed him into shoreless
trance:
As one who sets his sail towards
mysteried shores
Driven through huge oceans by the
breath of God,
The fathomless below, the unknown
around,
His soul abandoned the blind star-
field, Space.

For Aswapati this was not the end of his search. He had travelled to find an answer to the problems of the earth and to build the kingdom of heaven on earth. He awaits the Word that is born from the supreme Silence.

Towards the end of Aswapati's journey, in Book III, Sri Aurobindo gives us the most poignantly luminous and inspired revelation of the Divine Mother. Here,

Aswapati partakes of the Truth, Beauty and Bliss of this highest plane, but he feels himself powerless to help his brethren below on earth. He therefore appeals to the Divine Mother to send down upon earth a ray of Her consciousness embodied in a human form. A Voice speaks to him:

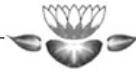
O son of strength who climbst
creation's peaks...
...but ask no more....
All things shall change in God's
transfiguring hour....
I ask thee not to merge thy heart of
flame
In the Immobile's wide uncaring bliss...
Aloof from beings, lost in the Alone.
Thy soul was born to share the laden
Force;
Obey thy nature and fulfil thy fate....

The Divine Mother tells him that man is not yet ready for such an event: 'Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight. Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.... All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour.' Aswapati boldly replies:

'I know that thy creation cannot fail'
But 'How shall I rest content with
mortal days[?]
How long shall our spirits battle with
the Night[?] ...
Where in the greyness is thy coming's
ray?
Where is the thunder of thy victory's
wings? ...

He pleads earnestly with a powerful cry from his heart:

O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the
universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,
Linger not long with thy transmuting
hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of
Time,
As if Time dare not open its heart to
God....
Incarnate the white passion of thy
force,



Mission to earth some living form of thee....
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate.

The Mother hears his ardent prayer and grants him this boon:

One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature's doom by the lone Spirit's power....
A sweet and violent heart of ardent calms
Moved by the passions of the gods shall come....
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.

Savitri, a portion of the Divine Mother, is born as Aswapati's daughter. We go through the period of her growth and youth. She searches for a partner equal to herself among her companions, but in vain:

They could not keep up with her tireless step;...
For even the close partners of her thoughts
Who could have walked the nearest to her ray,
Worshipped the power and light they felt in her
But could not match the measure of her soul....
Her greater self lived sole, unclaimed, within.

Then, her father, Aswapati, king of Madra, sends her out to different countries to find her soul-mate. Finally, she finds Satyavan cutting wood in the forest. The meeting of Satyavan and Savitri is described beautifully with a short discourse on love.

Erect and lofty like a spear of God
His figure led the splendour of the morn....
The joy of life was on his open face.

His look was a wide daybreak of the gods,
His head was a youthful Rishi's touched with light,
His body was a lover's and a king's....
...the god touched in time her conscious soul....
Her soul flung wide its doors to this new sun....

He turned to the vision like a sea to the moon....
He met in her regard his future's gaze,
A promise and a presence and a fire,
Saw an embodiment of aeonic dreams....
A spell to bring the Immortal's bliss on earth....

To live, to love are signs of infinite things,
Love is a glory from eternity's spheres....
He is still the Godhead by which all can change....
The mist was torn that lay between two lives;
Her heart unveiled and his to find her turned; ...
A moment passed that was eternity's ray,
An hour began, the matrix of new Time."

When she returns home radiant and happy, the heavenly sage Narad is present. Savitri reveals her choice to her father who asks Narad for his blessings. Narad praises Satyavan but when pressed, reveals that he is destined to die at the end of twelve months of their marriage. The queen, perturbed by this revelation, asks Savitri to choose once more. Irrevocably, Savitri replies:

Once my heart chose and chooses not again....
My heart has sealed its troth to Satyavan...
Its seal not Fate nor Death nor Time dissolve....
Let Fate do with me what she will or can;
I am stronger than death and greater than my fate....

Fate's law may change, but not my spirit's will.

The queen tries to reason with Savitri:

Only the gods can speak what now thou speakest.
Thou who art human, think not like a god....

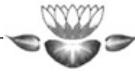
But Savitri replied with steadfast eyes:

My will is part of the eternal will,
My fate is what my spirit's strength can make,
My fate is what my spirit's strength can bear;
My strength is not the titan's, it is God's....

Only now for my soul in Satyavan
I treasure the rich occasion of my birth:..
I have seen God smile at me in Satyavan;
I have seen the Eternal in a human face.

Here in the 'Book of Fate' Sri Aurobindo gives us, through the discussion that takes place between the Queen, Aswapati and Narad, an excellent insight into the problem of Fate and how it can be resolved. Through Narad's words of wisdom to the queen who feels herself to be 'a wanderer in this beautiful sorrowful world', where everything seems to her 'Illusion's reign', the soul 'only a dream' and 'Eternal self a fiction sensed in trance', we receive Sri Aurobindo's insight:

Was then the sun a dream because there is night?
Hidden in the mortal's heart the Eternal lives:..
O queen, thy thought is a light of the Ignorance,
Its brilliant curtain hides from thee God's face....
Thy mind's light hides from thee the Eternal's thought,
Thy heart's hopes hide from thee the Eternal's will,
Earth's joys shut from thee the Immortal's bliss....



Pain is the hammer of the gods to
break
A dead resistance in the mortal's heart,
His slow inertia as of living stone.
If the heart were not forced to want
and weep,
The soul would have laid down,
content, at ease.
And never thought to exceed the
human start
And never learned to climb towards
the Sun....
Pain is the hand of Nature sculpturing
men
To greatness: an inspired labour
chisels
With heavenly cruelty an unwilling
mould....
O mortal who complainst of death
and fate...
Thou art thyself the author of thy pain.

Narad continues his discourse on Fate,
answering Aswapati's query whether the
Power Savitri is born with is not 'the high
compeer of Fate':

A greatness in thy daughter's soul
resides
That can transform herself and all
around,
But must cross on stones of suffering
to its goal....
O King, thy fate is a transaction done
At every hour between Nature and
thy soul
With God for its foreseeing arbiter....
Sometimes one life is charged with
earth's destiny,
It cries not for succour from the time-
bound powers.
Alone she is equal to her mighty task....
O queen, stand back from that stu-
pendous scene....
God-given her strength can battle
against doom....
Intrude not twixt her spirit and its
force
But leave her to her mighty self and
Fate.

Then Narad leaves, chanting in 'a high
and far imperishable voice... the anthem

of eternal love'

Finally, Savitri is married to Satyavan
and goes to live in the simple dwelling
with Satyavan, son of Dyumatsena, the
blind and exiled king. The word Dyumat-
sena literally means a "master of light" and
"lord of the shining hosts." Here signifi-
cantly, his luminous mind, encased in the
ignorant mental consciousness of man,
has lost the vision of the celestial kingdom.

Savitri performs all her duties grace-
fully and lovingly, keeping the knowledge
of her fate secret to herself and happily
spends her days with Satyavan, inwardly
preparing to meet her destined fate.

Still veiled from her was the silent
Being within
Who sees life's drama pass with
unmoved eyes,
Supports the sorrow of the mind and
heart
And bears in human breasts the world
and fate.
A glimpse or flashes came, the Pres-
ence was hid.

First, she thinks that if Satyavan dies,
she too will die with him. What need is left
for her to live? The human part of Savitri
was still unaware of her inner strength.

And when she is sitting silent, a Voice
touches her and her body becomes a 'rigid
golden statue of motionless trance, a stone
of God lit by an amethyst soul.' It is as if the
spirit seated within questions her:

"Why camest thou to this dumb
deathbound earth...
Tied like a sacrifice on the altar of
Time,
O spirit, O immortal energy,
If 'twas to nurse grief in a helpless
heart
Or with hard tearless eyes await thy
doom?
Arise, O soul, and vanquish Time and
Death."

Savitri answers like any ordinary woman:

"My strength is taken from me and
given to Death,

Why should I lift my hands to the
shut heavens,
Or struggle with mute inevitable Fate
Or hope in vain to uplift an ignorant
race
Who hug their lot and mock the
saviour Light...."

Savitri is ready to forget man and life,
forget even Eternity's call, and forget God.
The Voice questions her:

"Is this enough, O spirit?
And what shall thy soul say when it
wakes and knows
The work was left undone for which it
came? ...
Cam' st thou not down to open the
doors of Fate,
The iron doors that seemed forever
closed,
And lead man to truth's wide and
golden road
That runs through finite things to
eternity?"

She is awakened to the power within
which answers to the still voice:

"I am thy portion here charged with
thy work,
As thou myself seated forever above,
Speak to my depths, O great and
deathless Voice,
Command, for I am here to do thy
will."

A silent communion takes place within
her. She hears the command of the Voice:

"Remember why thou cam'st:
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy
depths,
Then mortal nature change to the
divine.
Open God's door, enter into his trance.
Cast Thought from thee, that nimble
ape of Light:
In his tremendous hush stilling thy
brain
His vast Truth wake within and know
and see.



Cast from thee sense that
 veils thy spirit's sight:
 In the enormous emptiness of
 thy mind
 Thou shalt see the Eternal's
 body in the world,
 Know him in every voice
 heard by thy soul:...
 All things shall fold thee
 into his embrace.
 Conquer thy heart's throbs,
 let thy heart beat in God:
 Thy nature shall be the
 engine of his works,
 Thy voice shall house the
 mightiness of his Word:
 Then shalt thou harbour
 my force and conquer
 Death."

She looked into herself and
 sought for her soul....
 There are greatnesses within
 in our unseen parts
 That wait their hour to step
 into life's front:
 We feel an aid from deep
 indwelling Gods:
 One speaks within, Light
 comes to us from above.



First creation. (Painting by Shiva Vangara)

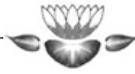
Then, we move with Savitri
 discovering the inner countries of
 sense life, life force and the mental region,
 'the home of cosmic certainty'. Savitri sees
 the enormous powers of the mind. But she
 presses forward crying out to the powers
 to reveal to her 'the birthplace of the oc-
 cult Fire'. One of the powers answered her:
 'Follow the world's winding highway to its
 source. There in the silence...thou shalt see
 the Fire burning...and the deep cavern of
 thy secret soul.'

Savitri meets the triple soul-forces of
 Sympathy, Pity and Love, Might or Power
 and Light, who give a temporary relief to
 the problems which besiege humanity, but
 cannot resolve them permanently. Savitri
 recognises them as parts of herself, though
 incomplete. She promises that one day she
 would return with the perfect force of
 consciousness to help them.

Onward she passed seeking the soul's
 mystic cave.
 At first she stepped into a night of
 God.
 The light was quenched that helps the
 labouring world,
 The power that struggles and
 stumbles in our life;
 This inefficient mind gave up its
 thoughts,
 The striving heart its unavailing
 hopes....
 In a simple purity of emptiness
 Her mind knelt down before the
 unknowable....
 Her self was nothing, God alone was
 all,
 Yet God she knew not but only knew
 he was....
 At last a change approached, the
 emptiness broke...

There was no step of breathing
 men, no sound,
 Only the living nearness of the
 soul.
 Yet all the worlds and God
 himself were there...
 She felt herself made one with
 all she saw.
 A sealed identity within her
 woke;
 She knew herself the Beloved
 of the Supreme:
 These Gods and Goddesses
 were he and she:
 The Mother was she of Beauty
 and Delight...
 Then through a tunnel dug in
 the last rock
 She came out where there
 shone a deathless sun.
 A house was there all made of
 flame and light
 And crossing a wall of doorless
 living fire
 Then suddenly she met her
 secret soul.
 A being stood immortal in
 transience...
 The Spirit's conscious repre-
 sentative,
 God's delegate in our humanity,
 Comrade of the universe, the
 Transcendent's ray,
 She had come into the mortal body's
 room
 To play at ball with Time and Cir-
 cumstance....
 There was no wall severing the soul
 and mind,
 No mystic fence guarding from the
 claims of life.
 In its deep lotus home her being sat
 As if on concentration's marble seat,
 Calling the mighty Mother of the
 worlds
 To make this earthly tenement her
 house.

A transformation of her being was
 achieved by which 'every act of Savitri
 became an act of God'. Thus her body be-
 came a firm ground for the descending
 light and bliss of God. And the mind cries



out victoriously: 'A camp of God is pitched in human time.'

Then, once when she was trying to make her joy a bridge between earth and heaven, suddenly she experienced an abyss beneath her heart, saying: 'I am Death... I am Kali...I am Maya...'. This was the voice of the Abyss. Then, she hears a greater voice from the heights:

But not for self alone the self is won...
Adventure all to make the whole
world thine...
Thou hast come down into a struggling world
To aid a blind and suffering mortal
race...
The day-bringer must walk in darkest
night...

'...be God's void...And the miraculous world he has become... Annul thyself that only God may be.' Then only can the transformation of Matter be achieved.

Savitri passes through the experience of Nirvana. Most of the spiritual realizations stop here. Forsaking the world and its struggles, one desires to live in the peace of this union and opts for Nirvana or the merging of the soul in the divine Source. But for Savitri, who has come upon earth to bring God into the lives of men in order to lead the earth from Darkness to Light, from Falsehood to Truth, from Death to Immortality, the choice is different. Savitri therefore decides to pass through the black Void and journeys in an Eternal Night, unafraid of the voice of the Darkness. As she finds her soul and the strength within, she is fully prepared to meet her adversary, Death.

Now we must bear in mind that the Book of Death was not revised by Sri Aurobindo. It is reported by Amal from the conversation that took place between Nirod-da and Sri Aurobindo when He was recasting Savitri to bring it to the state of perfection in the light of His consciousness: "Some months before passing, Sri Aurobindo as if in foreknowledge of the event, said: 'I want to finish Savitri soon.' There seemed a race with time." After revising the second canto of the Book of

Fate, when He inquired what remained to be looked into, He was told about the Book of Death, the Epilogue and The Return to Earth. He simply remarked: 'Oh that? We shall see about that afterwards.'

On the day when Satyavan is to die, she takes the permission of her mother-in-law to accompany Satyavan to the forest. Satyavan happily shows her the wonders of this green kingdom, unaware of his fate. Then, suddenly she sees him flinging away his axe like an instrument of pain. She came to him. He cried to Her:

"Such agony rends me as the tree
must feel
When it is sundered and must lose
its life.
Awhile let me lay my head upon thy lap
And guard me with thy hands from
evil fate:
Perhaps because thou touchest, death
may pass."

Savitri rests his head on her lap. She knows that Death is inevitable and is prepared, griefless and strong. Suddenly, 'an awful hush had fallen upon the place.' She knew that visible Death was standing to take away the soul of Satyavan. Yama asks her to release him from her grasp, but Savitri is determined to follow him wherever Yama takes him.

There follows a long, detailed and enlightening dialogue between Yama and Savitri in the Canto entitled: 'The Debate between Love and Death', which one must read. One finds all the arguments of the worldly-wise and of those who cannot see beyond the frontiers of their mind by which Death tests the strength of Savitri. It is a sheer delight to read Savitri's answer to them:

Thou speakest Truth but Truth that
slays,
I answer to thee with the Truth that
saves.

Yama questions her motives, calls her love transitory, beguiles her in many ways, and forces her to fight the great battle with the inborn strength of her awakened Spirit.

Savitri outwits all the stratagems of her adversary and finally Death is dissolved into the Light by the power of Her Truth-Consciousness.

Savitri is now given the supreme choice to return to the eternal peace and bliss of life in the Supreme. But she chooses to return to earth with Satyavan and says:

I climb not to thy everlasting Day,
Even as I have shunned thy eternal
Night...
Earth is the chosen place of mightiest
souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
The forge where the Arch-mason
shapes his works.
Thy servitudes on earth are greater,
king,
Than all the glorious liberties of
heaven.

Then, the godhead of Death persuades this 'too compassionate and eager Dawn' to abandon the task of raising the earthly race to a greater Light. For,

Heaven's call is rare, rarer the heart
that heeds;
The doors of light are sealed to common mind...
O miracle where thou beganst there
cease...
Cast off the ambiguous myth of
earth's desire,
O immortal, to felicity arise.

It is the most captivating dialogue that follows, filled with the power of Truth and the indomitable will of Savitri to win back Satyavan from Death. She answers with courage and conviction all the arguments of Death that come in the guise of truth which looks at an unfinished world. Sri Aurobindo makes it so convincing and powerful that one is filled with her invincible courage, beauty of true love and the delight of the battle. The text is full of memorable lines and must be read in full to be filled with its power of beauty and truth.

Savitri asks for that peace, oneness and bliss in the midst of the heroic battle on earth and power to fulfil God in life



by invading mortality with the immortal beatitude of Sat-Chit-Ananda and thus become a luminous centre of its conscious expression in the world to build a bridge between earth and heaven, harmonising Matter and Spirit.

This yearning of Savitri is beautifully described in the concluding stanza of her soul's choice:

Thy embrace which rends the living
knot of pain,
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures
breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
Thy sweetness give to me for earth
and men.

The epic *Savitri* is a spiritual adventure, revealing mystery after mystery of the creation of the universe, its purpose and its glorious destiny. The Mother once said to Mona Sarkar that to read *Savitri* is to find help and guidance in one's yoga. For, it is the description of Sri Aurobindo's own experiences revealed with the mantric force of His most clear, lucid and powerful language. *Savitri* is replete with all philosophies, knowledge of occultism and descriptions of the hidden realities of forces in all the typical worlds of different planes of Consciousness which influence us.

There is a seeking in each aspiring soul for absolute and perfect love, for infallible light of Truth and everlasting Bliss. Blindly we search for the invariable bliss of existence. But trivial amusements distract man and waste the energy given to him to grow and transcend his egoistic consciousness. When can we realise this? Sri Aurobindo warns us in clear terms:

In moments when the inner lamps
are lit
And the life's cherished guests are left
outside,
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its
gulfs.
A wider consciousness opens then its
doors...

It is when the Fire of aspiration, the inner Flame is lit and we offer in oblation all that we are and all that we have to the Supreme, invoking the Divine Grace to lift us out of the Darkness of Ignorance to the Light of Knowledge or the Light of the supreme Truth, that we can transcend the egoistic consciousness and realise the unalloyed, invariable bliss of existence.

"A mystic is one who sings of the sunrise in the darkness of the night." And Sri Aurobindo heralds a Dawn of the New Creation with a new consciousness transcending the mental consciousness, when the earth is tired of making its rounds, spinning in vain and refuses to receive even a ray of light. For, man must rise to a higher consciousness if he is to solve the bewildering problems by which he is gripped and lost in utter confusion and chaos.

The epic *Savitri* is a spiritual adventure, revealing mystery after mystery of the creation of the universe, its purpose and its glorious destiny.

In *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo gives us the key to find the truth of our being and live according to the Truth, helping us all the way on the path to liberate ourselves from falsehood and ignorance. He shows us how to cross the different planes of consciousness in order finally to climb to the superconscious heights and bring down its truth, power, love, beauty and bliss into our life. One has to read *Savitri* again and again to imbibe its light of wisdom in every sphere of life, its thoughts, feelings and activities so as to remould oneself in the image of its perfection. What I have said is nothing compared to what Sri Aurobindo offers in *Savitri*. He transports us to another world of Love, Light and Bliss to such an extent that we no longer want to belong to any inferior existence.

Sri Aurobindo gives us an insight into the evolution of our consciousness to the next stage:

The Spirit's tops and Nature's base
shall draw

Near to the secret of their separate
truth

And know each other as one deity.
The Spirit shall look out through
Matter's gaze

And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's
face....

A divine force shall flow through
tissue and cell

And take the charge of breath and
speech and act

And all the thoughts shall be a glow
of suns

And every feeling a celestial thrill....

The spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life
divine.

Sri Aurobindo ends the twelfth Book with an Epilogue, which describes 'The Return to Earth' of Savitri with Satyavan. Savitri tells Satyavan:

Our love has grown
greater by that mighty
touch
And learned its heav-

enly significance,

Yet nothing is lost of mortal love's
delight.

Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not
our earth...

The king Dyumatsena gets back his sight as well as his kingdom and comes to the woods with the queen and the royal entourage, looking for Savitri and Satyavan. And finding them radiantly luminous and full of bliss, they wondered what has brought about this change. Then, one among them who 'seemed a priest and sage' asks:

O woman soul, what light, what
power revealed,

Working the rapid marvels of this day
Opens for us by thee a happier age?

To this Savitri replied:

Awakened to the meaning of my heart
That to feel love and oneness is to live



And this the magic of our golden
change
Is all the truth I know or seek, O sage.

Savitri is the most potent expression of the poetic genius of Sri Aurobindo with a rhythm and revelation of his own, expressed in a language of symbols, embodying the spiritual wisdom natural to the mystics. It is the most perfect example of the poetry of the future.

Savitri begins with a magnificent description of Dawn which rises after the impenetrable dense darkness of the inconscient Night and ends with the promise of a greater Dawn after the 'Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven' described in the last canto of *Savitri*:

Night, splendid with the moon
dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous
reign.
She brooded through her stillness on
a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of
light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater
dawn.

There is a significant difference between the night in the first canto of the First Book and that of the last canto of the Twelfth Book. The night before the fateful day when Satyavan must die is opaque with the huge foreboding mind unwilling to receive the light—a mind that is ignorant and obscure, not ready to receive the spiritual light. But the night after *Savitri* brings back Satyavan is 'splendid with the moon.'

The moon is the symbol of spiritual realization and hence Night is dreaming peacefully of a greater light. The splendour of the moonlit night is all-pervasive. It represents a spiritually awakened and enlightened mind which meditates in the stillness of its luminous depths and foresees the Dawn of the divine manifestation which will destroy all darkness and obscurity in a mind ready to abdicate the reign of the ego and ready to receive the light of the Supramental Dawn."

Two biographies and an autobiography

by Mangesh Nadkarni

From a talk at Savitri Bhavan on 5 March 2003, published in Invocation, No. 19, April 2003. A new title has been given by the editor.

We don't realize sufficiently that the goals Sri Aurobindo defined for his yoga were not only revolutionary for his own times, they remain revolutionary even today, since even today very few thinkers dare set such high goals for man's future on earth. Traditionally, spiritual paths have had two kinds of goals: finding one's place in some Vaikuntha or some Kailash, or some special heaven or paradise where you will be waited on by eight damsels, where you will have all the comforts of life and no inconveniences and imperfections, where you will never grow old or fall ill. One is supposed to earn this kind of fulfilment for oneself by doing the right kinds of things and living the right kind of life while one lives one's life here on earth.

Although this goal has received some attention in the Indian spirituality as well, the Indian tradition has shown its preference for another kind of goal, which is merging into Nirvana, getting out of the cycle of death and birth. Almost all the religious and spiritual traditions swear by this goal. If you ask any Indian, whether he is learned or an ignoramus, if you catch him in a spiritual kind of mood and ask him "What is your life's greatest ambition?" he will say, "My life's greatest ambition is to get out of this cycle of birth and death." He hasn't thought about it, but by virtue of being Indian it is in his bloodstream, he is supposed to say it and he says it. This whole attitude is one of negation of life. By implication it means that once you become spiritual you have to regard this life as an error made by God and it is your responsibility to correct him by seeking to withdraw totally into some kind of nameless and featureless existence beyond.



Photo courtesy Anie Nunnally

Sri Aurobindo brought the revolutionary idea that spirituality is not a way to abrogate life, to cancel life, but to bring fulfilment to life. And he defined his spirituality in these terms. He said that spirituality should bring fulfilment not only for man's spirit, but also for the instruments of man's spirit, that is, for the mind, the vital and the body. He defined it as clearly as possible. And secondly he maintains that his aim is not to bring perfection which is limited to an individual or to a few individuals. His aim is to make this perfection accessible to the whole of humanity. What we want is a new consciousness that settles down here and becomes accessible to the whole of humanity. This is something new. This collective aspect is the demand of the Time Spirit. If anything is great and good, you cannot get it just for yourself—if it is good and it is great you must also make sure that everybody else can participate in it. Sri Aurobindo was ahead of his times. And even in those days he kept saying, "I don't want the supramental consciousness as an individual attainment only. It has to be the gain of the whole earth-consciousness." This was his definition of the aims of his yoga. And his great epic, *Savitri*, is a story of the pursuit of these aims.

In *Savitri*, as you know, there are two biographies and one autobiography. It contains a description of Sri Aurobindo's yoga, which is Aswapati's yoga, so it has a first part that is autobiographical. It is also a spiritual biography of the Mother. So



there are many passages in *Savitri* which remind us of the Mother, and the Mother herself in her *Agenda* and other places has said that much of *Savitri* is a narration of her own personal experiences. Some of these experiences, she says, she had even 30 years before she came to Pondicherry. She never mentioned these experiences to Sri Aurobindo. Yet Sri Aurobindo was able to depict these experiences, write about these experiences in *Savitri*. Then there is a third biography here, and it pertains to you and me—it is our biography, telling us how we got here, from where and through what stages, and where we are supposed to go from here. At this stage, why is our life in such a mess, and after man, who? And what will ensure our passage to the next stage? Sri Aurobindo deals with all such questions in his epic.

To start at the beginning, we find that already in the second canto of Book I, Sri Aurobindo very beautifully summarizes the central issue in *Savitri*'s life:

For this she had accepted mortal breath;
To wrestle with the Shadow she had
 come
And must confront the riddle of man's
 birth
And life's brief struggle in dumb Mat-
 ter's night.
Whether to bear with Ignorance and
 death
Or hew the ways of Immortality,
To win or lose the godlike game for
 man.
Was her soul's issue thrown with
 Destiny's dice.
But not to submit and suffer was she
 born;
To lead, to deliver was her glorious
part. (p. 17)

This was the issue of her life: "Whether to bear with Ignorance and death." We humans have always made compromises with ignorance and death. We have said to ignorance and death, "All right, give me some relief from your onslaught while I am here on earth, however temporary it may turn out to be. Let this world belong to you, you can reign here as long as you

like." So we have always sought escape from this world, we have always refused to confront the problem of ignorance and death. We have said, "This cannot be changed, this is the ultimate dispensation of God here for man and for earth, who are you and I to challenge this?" But *Savitri* has come precisely to challenge this. This is what these lines tell us.

Then in the following canto, we get the beginning of Aswapati's story. Aswapati's yoga, as you know, takes up about 320 pages, about 12,000 lines. No one can write about anyone else's life or yoga in so much detail. It is very clear that here Sri Aurobindo is writing about his own yoga. In a letter of 1946 he has given us some indications of what this yoga was about and what are the different stages we have to look for in this yoga. In Cantos Three to Five of Book One, Aswapati is shown achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as an individual, and this part of his development consists of two yogic movements, first a psycho-spiritual transformation and then a greater spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power.

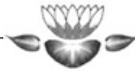
In Book Two we are shown how Aswapati undertakes an exploration of all the worlds and planes of consciousness, right from the subtle physical, the vital, through the mental and then through the spiritual worlds. He is in search of the creative principle which will help him or show him how to transform the nature of life, how to bring perfection to life. In spite of all this exploration which is contained in the fifteen cantos of Book Two, nearly 200 pages of spiritual experiences in the various worlds, he is unable to find the secret he was looking for. The very dynamics of this upward journey he has undertaken bring him to the doorstep of the Nirvanic experience. This climactic moment is described in Canto Two of Book Three. And this is, I think, a very great moment in the spiritual history of mankind and particularly of India. This is the moment when Aswapati is on the verge of entering Nirvana but something in him says that there is another, a more glorious destiny possible for man.

This moment is in some sense comparable to a similar moment in Amitabha

Buddha's life. Legend has it that when the Buddha was about to enter Nirvana, he stopped and looked back on life and saw the whole of humanity immersed in ignorance and suffering. He decided to turn back to help humanity to liberate itself from ignorance and suffering. Buddha, of course, had great compassion and love for humanity. But I do not think that he had any particular remedy to correct the problems of life. He only thought "I do not want Nirvana only for myself. I would like to take with me as many people as possible." So the only way he had of saving mankind was to try to save each human individual separately, make him realize that this world is transitory and full of suffering and then persuade him to join him in the pursuit of Nirvana. Very laudable indeed, and we must praise him for that, and he has been rightly declared an Avatar for that by the Indian tradition. But how many people can you save like this? Besides, ultimately what is it that you are trying to teach them? You are trying to teach them how to escape from this life. You are not teaching them anything about how to bring perfection to this life.

That is something new about Sri Aurobindo. Like Amitabha Buddha, his compassion for mankind too was boundless but he had something more than compassion. It is not enough to have compassion and love because by themselves they do not go very far. You need something more, you need a power strong enough to transform human consciousness and through it human nature. And Sri Aurobindo had discovered this power. He has written about it in *Savitri* and in his other books such as *The Life Divine*. In *Savitri*, Aswapati finds that this power is not available in any of the realized worlds, so he goes into the transcendental world, where the past, the present and the future are one, and there he experiences a world of perfection that is waiting to come down. In Book Three we have a wonderful description of this world of perfection which is called the supramental world:

A Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-
white Love



Caught all into a sole immense
embrace;
Existence found its truth on Oneness'
breast
And each became the self and space
of all.
The great world-rhythms were heart-
beats of one Soul,
To feel was a flame-discovery of God,
All mind was a single harp of many
strings,
All life a song of many meeting lives;
For worlds were many, but the Self
was one.
This knowledge now was made a
cosmos' seed:
This seed was cased in the safety of
the Light,
It needed not a sheath of Ignorance.
Then from the trance of that tremen-
dous clasp
And from the throbbings of that
single Heart
And from the naked Spirit's victory
A new and marvellous creation rose.
Incalculable outflowing infinitudes
Laughing out an unmeasured happiness
Lived their innumerable unity;
Worlds where the being is unbound
and wide
Bodied unthinkably the egoless Self;
Rapture of beatific energies
Joined Time to the Timeless, poles of
a single joy;
White vasts were seen where all is
wrapped in all.
There were no contraries, no sundered
parts,
All by spiritual links were joined to all
And bound indissolubly to the One:
Each was unique, but took all lives as
his own,
And, following out these tones of the
Infinite,
Recognised in himself the universe.
(p. 322)

Even in the midst of experiencing the
glories of this supramental world, Aswa-
pati is still concerned about the earth.
Even in that new world waiting to be
born, he is aware of the need of the earth.
Even when he is experiencing this blissful

future he is concerned about you and
me, and says, "How do I make this world
accessible to mankind?" At the same time
he sees his own small, pitiable little fragile
body, lying at the edge of the world and
says "What about that body? That is also
part of me. Here, the spirit is all fulfilled,
it has bliss, it has oneness, it has perfec-
tion, but shouldn't my body also be par-
ticipating in this perfection? How can I
make this possible?" These are Aswapati's
concerns because they are the concerns of
Sri Aurobindo's yoga. And finally, since he
cannot figure out any way of bringing this
world down himself, he approaches the
Supreme Divine Mother, the Adishtatri
of this world and of all the worlds, and
prays to her. In the next canto we see what
Aswapati has to do to bring this world on
earth.

When he sees the Supreme Mother,
the first thing that she tells him is that
man is exactly where he is now because
he belongs there: "Don't try to accelerate
the progress, because man is not yet ready
to say goodbye to ignorance. He likes to
wallow in ignorance. Let him have a long
enough innings—some day he will begin
to look for this perfection, but not yet."

But Aswapati, being Aswapati, says

"How shall I rest content with mortal
days

And the dull measure of terrestrial
things,

I who have seen behind the cosmic
mask

The glory and the beauty of thy face?
Hard is the doom to which thou
bindst thy sons!

How long shall our spirits battle with
the Night

And bear defeat and the brute yoke of
Death,

We who are vessels of a deathless Force
And builders of the godhead of the
race?

Ever the centuries and millenniums
pass.

Where in the greyness is thy coming's
ray?

Where is the thunder of thy victory's
wings?

Only we hear the feet of passing
gods." (p. 341)

We are all ready to receive gods, we
have kept everything ready; but we hear
only shuffling footsteps, and then some-
body comes and tells us that the gods have
gone away, we must wait for the next time.
Man is reduced to despair and hopeless-
ness. And if you trust his judgment he will
be for ever lost in the labyrinthine mental
consciousness which he has woven around
himself. The only solution to this, O Di-
vine Mother, is for You to come down and
take on the responsibility of bringing this
new consciousness down. Human effort,
human power and strength are inadequate
to do this. Only an Avatar can do this. So
he prays to the Divine Mother:

"Omnipotence, girdle with the power
of God

Movements and moments of a mortal
will,

Pack with the eternal might one human
hour

And with one gesture change all
future time.

Let a great word be spoken from the
heights

And one great act unlock the doors of
Fate." (p. 345)

The Mother listens to this prayer and
agrees to send an emanation, an Avatar
of hers.

"O strong forerunner, I have heard
thy cry.

One shall descend and break the iron
Law,

Change Nature's doom by the lone
spirit's power.

A limitless Mind that can contain the
world.

A sweet and violent heart of ardent
calms

Moved by the passions of the gods
shall come.

All mights and greatnesses shall join
in her;

Beauty shall walk celestial on the
earth,



Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of
her hair,
And in her body as on his homing tree
Immortal Love shall beat his glorious
wings.
A music of griefless things shall
weave her charm;
The harps of the Perfect shall attune
her voice,
The streams of Heaven shall murmur
in her laugh,
Her lips shall be the honeycombs of
God,
Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy.
Her breasts the rapture-flowers of
Paradise.
She shall bear Wisdom in her voice-
less bosom,
Strength shall be with her like a
conqueror's sword
And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss
shall gaze.
A seed shall be sown in Death's
tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to
human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchang-
ing will." (p. 346)

This is the promise made by the Supreme Divine Mother.

As you know, in Vyasa's legend of Savitri and Satyavan, Savitri is an exceptionally gifted young woman but there is no reference to her being an Avatar. Recent work by Richard Hartz and others has shown that somewhere around the mid 1920s, Sri Aurobindo realized who Mirra Richard really was. His recognition of her as the Mother, as an Avatar of the Supreme Divine Creatrix, became the seed for the revision that Sri Aurobindo undertook on *Savitri* after 1926 or 1928. He clearly saw that it was the Mother's mission in life to bring down the new consciousness. If we look at the description of the birth of Savitri that Sri Aurobindo has given, there can be no doubt at all that Sri Aurobindo means to present her as an Avatar. As we are told in the pages of the *Essays on the Gita*, an Avatar comes down particularly when there is an impasse, some kind of a blockage to

the progress of evolution and only an Avatar can clear this; so the Avatar is needed; but it looks to me that this time we had to have twin Avatars—Sri Aurobindo came as an Avatar, and the Mother also came as an Avatar. I wonder whether there have been any feminine Avatars in the past, although the consciousness of the Mother has been present on earth in some form whenever a breakthrough in evolution was about to take place. But this time the Supreme Divine Mother herself has come down as an Avatar. This is probably because the change now contemplated, the transformation anticipated now, is going to be so radical, so unheard-of in the history of evolution. The work to be undertaken this time is not an ordinary one. The magnitude of the issues involved is such that two Avatars had to come. You should realize that this doesn't happen very often in the history of evolution. Those of us lived in the last century had the enormous good fortune of being contemporaries of the first feminine Avatar on earth. That is something to celebrate, and I thought I should mention this because we are this year celebrating the 125th birth anniversary of the Mother.

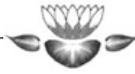
This marks the culmination of Aswapati's quest, and from then onwards in the poem it is basically Savitri's story, starting with her birth. It is very clear from the way Sri Aurobindo describes Savitri's birth that he saw her as an Avatar. Consider the following lines:

In this high signal moment of the gods
Answering earth's yearning and her
cry for bliss,
A greatness from our other countries
came.
A silence in the noise of earthly things
Immutably revealed the secret Word,
A mightier influx filled the oblivious
clay:
A lamp was lit, a sacred image made.
A mediating ray had touched the earth
Bridging the gulf between man's mind
and God's;
Its brightness linked our transience to
the Unknown.
A spirit of its celestial source aware
Translating heaven into a human shape

Descended into earth's imperfect mould
And wept not fallen to mortality.
But looked on all with large and
tranquil eyes.
One had returned from the trans-
cendent planes
And bore anew the load of mortal
breath,
Who had striven of old with our
darkness and our pain;
She took again her divine unfinished
task:
Survivor of death and the aeonic years,
Once more with her fathomless heart
she fronted Time. (p. 353)

There are also a number of passages further on in Book Four—if you read them, those of you who were in the Ashram in the 50s and 60s might even begin to hear the footsteps of the Mother, they are so closely modelled after the Mother. We can immediately see that this is the person Sri Aurobindo is describing in these lines. Take these lines, for example,

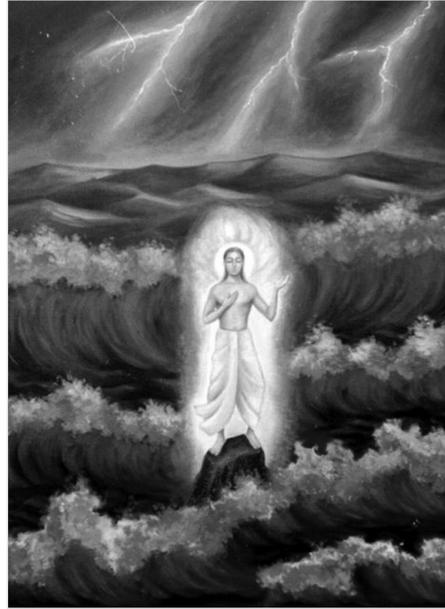
A friend and yet too great wholly to
know,
She walked in their front towards a
greater light,
Their leader and queen over their
hearts and souls,
One close to their bosoms, yet divine
and far.
Admiring and amazed they saw her
stride
Attempting with a godlike rush and
leap
Heights for their human stature too
remote
Or with a slow great many-sided toil
Pushing towards aims they hardly
could conceive;
Yet forced to be the satellites of her sun
They moved unable to forego her light,
Desiring they clutched at her with
outstretched hands
Or followed stumbling in the paths
she made. . . .
Some felt her with their souls and
thrilled with her,
A greatness felt near yet beyond
mind's grasp;



To see her was a summons to adore,
 To be near her drew a high commun-
 ion's force.
 So men worship a god too great to
 know,
 Too high, too vast to wear a limiting
 shape;
 They feel a Presence and obey a
 might.
 Adore a love whose rapture invades
 their breasts;
 To a divine ardour quickening the
 heart-beats,
 A law they follow greatening heart
 and life. (pp. 363-64)

Some turned to her against their
 nature's bent;
 Divided between wonder and revolt,
 Drawn by her charm and mastered by
 her will,
 Possessed by her, her striving to
 possess,
 Impatient subjects, their tied longing
 hearts
 Hugging the bonds close of which
 they most complained,
 Murmured at a yoke they would have
 wept to lose,
 The splendid yoke of her beauty and
 her love:
 Others pursued her with life's blind
 desires
 And claiming all of her as their lonely
 own,
 Hastened to engross her sweetness
 meant for all. (pp. 364-65)

After this "Book of Birth and Quest," we come to Book Five, "The Book of Love." I think that this book belongs primarily to the legend of Satyavan and Savitri. It is not directly connected either with the Mother's life or her yoga. Sri Aurobindo develops this into a very beautiful book and I have said in many places that if Sri Aurobindo had written nothing else but The Book of Love he would have still left an indelible mark on English literature. Nowhere else in the world's literature do we find such beautiful poetry based on love fulfilled. We have great poetry on love frustrated, but love fulfilled is hardly



"Happiest who stand on faith as on a rock."
 (Painting by Shiva Vangara)

regarded as a fit subject for poetry, but in Book Five there is wonderful poetry. We have to move on just now because it does not immediately concern our present frame of reference.

Book Six, the "Book of Fate," is also a very important book and is a testimony to Sri Aurobindo's great gifts as a poet and a thinker. But we need not pause here to take a closer look at this book since, like Book Five, it does not address the central issue we are pursuing here.

We move on to Book Seven, the Book of Yoga. As you know, in the original legend Savitri performs a *vrata*, a vow, a *trirathra vrata*, for three days and nights, close to the day on which that Satyavan is destined to die. Sri Aurobindo has taken this event and transformed it into Savitri's yoga. Just as Aswapati's *yagna* becomes Aswapati's yoga, and gets an expansion of about 12,000 lines—what Vyasa describes in ten lines, Sri Aurobindo describes in 12,000 lines—similarly here the austerities practised by Savitri in the Mahabharata legend get converted into Savitri's yoga. And the description of this yoga, while reminding us in some of its general features of the Integral Yoga developed by Sri Aurobindo, also brings to our mind many of the special features of the Mother's

"psychic approach." Aswapati's yoga is the yoga of a scientist. Very leisurely, very impersonal, he has all the time at his disposal and he observes unmoved whatever is presented to his view, whether he is in the vital worlds of the gods or in the world of darkness and falsehood. His job is to report, his job is to observe, and that is what he does. And he goes like a cone of fire ascending from one level to another level, one level to another level. Savitri's yoga has a different kind of tempo. Hers is a more impassioned, more dynamic, more direct approach. She goes through her psychic being. Through her psychic she makes her way into the supramental realm. The other difference between the two yogas is that in Aswapati's yoga you have a description of the psycho-spiritual transformation of Aswapati—a psychic transformation, and also a spiritual transformation; there is no description of Aswapati undergoing the supramental transformation. But in my view in Savitri's yoga we have a description not only of the psychic and the spiritual transformation of Savitri, but also of her supramental transformation. And this is to my mind described or indicated in Canto Five of Book Seven, "The Finding of the Soul."

This is my hypothesis, and I won't mind being proved wrong on this. Instead of being evasive, it is good to formulate a hypothesis and leave it for other scholars to contend with and improve upon. I can't believe that Savitri was ready to take on the God of Death as she does in Books Nine, Ten and Eleven without having acquired the supramental consciousness and its powers, that is my first point. The second is that our psychic being, when it meets the soul, meets the *jivatman*. But for Savitri's psychic being, the *jivatman* is the Supreme Mother herself. So when Savitri's psychic being meets the *jivatman*, the soul, it must be merging with the Supreme Divine Mother. And once you merge with the Supreme Divine Mother, your consciousness merges with the supramental because the Supreme Divine Mother stands for the supramental. And the descriptions given in this canto suggest this extraordinary happening. I will just read a little bit to illustrate what I have just now said:



At last a change approached, the
emptiness broke;
A wave rippled within, the world had
stirred;
Once more her inner self became her
space.
There was felt a blissful nearness to
the goal;
Heaven leaned low to kiss the sacred
hill,
The air trembled with passion and
delight.
A rose of splendour on a tree of dreams,
The face of Dawn out of mooned
twilight grew.
Day came, priest of a sacrifice of joy
Into the worshipping silence of her
world;
He carried immortal lustre as his robe,
Trailed heaven like a purple scarf and
wore
As his vermilion caste-mark a red
sun. (p. 523)

Another passage which describes this
scene is equally suggestive:
A sealed identity within her woke;
She knew herself the Beloved of the
Supreme:
These Gods and Goddesses were he
and she:
The Mother was she of Beauty and
Delight,
The Word in Brahma's vast creating
clasp,
The World-Puissance on almighty
Shiva's lap,—
The Master and the Mother of all lives
Watching the worlds their twin regard
had made,
And Krishna and Radha for ever
entwined in bliss,
The Adorer and Adored self-lost and
one.
In the last chamber on a golden seat
One sat whose shape no vision could
define;
Only one felt the world's unattainable
fount,
A Power of which she was a straying
Force,
An invisible Beauty, goal of the
world's desire,

A Sun of which all knowledge is a
beam,
A Greatness without whom no life
could be. (p. 525)

There are other descriptions here
which are extraordinary in their impli-
cations. At the end of this canto, we are
shown the mahakundalini descending
into Savitri, and opening up each of her
chakras. This descent of the mahakun-
dalini is the descent of the supramental
Force into Savitri—that is how I under-
stand these lines.

There is one more thing I would like
to mention about Savitri's yoga, and that
pertains to the most interesting Canto
Four, where Savitri is met by three ma-
donnas—the Madonna of Compassion
and Love, the Madonna of Might, and
the Madonna of Wisdom. Each of these
madonnas comes to Savitri and says that
she is her soul. What is interesting is that
after each madonna finishes whatever she
has to say to Savitri, an egoistic perva-
sion of each madonna complains to Savitri
about how the world has ill-treated that
particular being. Now it seems to me that
these madonnas, who are godheads like
Durga and Lakshmi and Kali and so on,
are overmental godheads. And if Savitri
after meeting these godheads goes beyond
them, it can only be into the supramental
realm.

The other interesting implication of
this is equally important. The overmen-
tal gods and goddesses have been with us
for a very long time. To these gods and
goddesses we have been praying, we have
been offering our adoration and worship.
Yet these gods and goddesses have proved,
by and large, ineffectual in remedying the
basic inadequacies of human conscious-
ness. They have been able to give to their
chosen devotees money, fame, success,
long life, health, progeny, etc.; that is why
they are honored as gods. But I don't think
that these overmental godheads have been
effective in cleansing the human heart of
things which have darkened human exist-
ence here—namely, jealousy, greed, lust,
pride, hatred, and egoism of all kinds that
have made our world such a miserable

place. For that to happen, we need stronger
gods, more powerful gods. Sri Aurobindo
says in one place that the battle between
the asuras and the devas has always been
taking place in the quivering theatre of
the human consciousness. Since the hu-
man consciousness has emerged from the
inconscious it still has on it a large stamp
of the unconscious. It is in the arena of this
consciousness that gods and divine influ-
ences, as well as the hostiles and asuric
forces descend and a struggle has been
going on for the control of the human
consciousness. In spite of our mental al-
legiance to the gods, it seems that most
often it is the asuras who are winning. As
a result, our world is in such a big mess in
spite of the gods we worship. Either there
must be something lacking in the gods
we worship, or there must be something
wrong in the way we receive these gods
within us. It doesn't matter which gods
we worship, what is important is which
gods we incarnate in our own life. And
so a time has now come, not to discard
the overmental gods, but to invoke more
powerful gods. Somebody once asked the
Mother, "Mother, once we are in this new
yoga, should we still be worshipping old
gods?" And the Mother gave a reply which
is simple and yet very subtle. She said,
"Once you are in this yoga and you start
getting the real experiences of this yoga,
you will never be satisfied by worshipping
all the old gods, either individually or all
of them put together." So a time has now
come for us to focus on new gods, because
we need a new consciousness to come
down. And ultimately the gods will not
be able to destroy the asuras around us.
We have to do it ourselves and the godly
forces that we receive now are too weak to
accomplish this task.

The Mother makes a very interesting
comment in one place. She says, "Durga,
Mahishasuramardini, comes down and
slays the demon Mahishasura. But then
she has to come again the following year to
do the same thing. She has to come down
and do this every year." Why does she have
to come every year? Once she comes and
destroys the demon, we get busy; after she
has destroyed it, we ourselves recreate or



resuscitate the demon. It is something in us that feeds these asuric propensities. And that is why the Buddha once said that when a vibration of evil comes to the human heart, the human consciousness does not have the capacity to convert it into its opposite.

It only strengthens it and sends it back. Buddha did not know how to avoid doing this; the remedy he suggested was that we should sever all relationship with the world. Then only will we be safe. But we don't want to do that. Our aim is to continue to live in this world and to bring perfection to life here. So all this indicates that a time has come for us to take a new step if we want to ward off all the asuric and hostile forces that manifest themselves in Hitlers or Stalins, or Idi Amins or in Osama Bin Ladens. They are all fed on the life-blood of our own consciousness, we are all responsible for them in some sense. It is no use thinking "I am very pure, I am very holy, I have nothing to do with them." We are all connected from within. And if we really want to get rid of them, we need to be able to receive the new gods, we need to receive into our consciousness the victorious power of the supramental consciousness. That is what I see as the message of this particular canto, Canto Four of Book Seven, "The Triple Soul Forces."

Savitri has then, after Canto Five, still a long journey ahead of her. She is asked to go through an experience of emptying herself. Savitri is reminded that she has not come down on earth to manifest the supramental consciousness only in herself, but to become a channel through which this new force, its light and power can flow and spread through the whole world. For this Savitri had to undergo the discipline of emptying herself. This is described in Canto Six and the word Nirvana in the title of this canto refers to this process of emptying oneself, of surrendering one's siddhis to the Divine. There are two kinds of Nirvana. One is the Nirvana of the Advaitic and Buddhist kind, but in Sri Aurobindo's yoga there is a Nirvana where after reaching a particular siddhi you offer this siddhi to the Divine and empty yourself. Otherwise, as I said jocularly, as we

see around us, our spiritual track is all full of frozen yogis; there are as it were frozen yogis all over, who don't want to move, who don't want to stir because they are all big with their own siddhis. But at every stage, once you have acquired a siddhi, you have to learn to offer it back to the Divine so that there is space in you for a further siddhi. Savitri therefore goes through this process of emptying herself and finally attains what is called the Cosmic Consciousness, and then she becomes an effective channel through which the higher force begins to come down on earth.

This completes the description of Savitri's yoga. Then comes Book Eight where we meet the god of Death, and after that, there are Books Nine, Ten and Eleven. These Books describe the confrontation between the God of Death and Savitri. We studied these three books in some detail in the study camps held during in recent years, so I do not wish to deal with them here except very briefly.

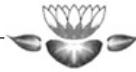
Somewhere there is a reference in the writings of the Mother to these three books as the collective yoga of the Mother. Death is not just the negation or disintegration of physical existence. Death comes to us in many forms. Very often death comes to us in the glorified form of temporarily captivating intellectual philosophies which hold us spellbound and do not let us move into the higher regions. They blind us with the light they bring with them, and as a result we can't see beyond them. They say, "You have reached here, you are high enough." The intellect has a way of fascinating the human mind because man is primarily *manomaya*, a mental being. When the intellectual solution comes we feel thrilled. We do not even ask what purpose such solutions serve. So there are various philosophies: idealism, pragmatism, realism, nihilism and so on. And then we see in Savitri that Death can profess any philosophy to badger Savitri with—Buddhist philosophy, Advaita philosophy, etc. None of the philosophies he professes is completely false, but each one of them is incomplete. And Savitri completes each of the philosophies he professes. The integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, as you know,

does not negate or ignore any of the other philosophies. Take for example Marxism. Sri Aurobindo says that Marxism is not all wrong, the only problem with Marxism is that it is incomplete. Similarly Freud's psychology—it is not wrong but it is incomplete. Similarly Darwin's biology and all the theories based on it—they are not wrong, but they are one-sided and therefore suffocatingly incomplete. This is the stance of Sri Aurobindo: that every one of these philosophies contains a kernel of truth, but that there is a tendency to exaggerate things. And for each one Sri Aurobindo brings the completion for it. The same thing Savitri does again and again with the arguments of Death until finally all his philosophies are exhausted.

There are many wonderful passages in this part of the epic poem, and if I begin to read those passages the organizers will begin to feel jittery and start thinking "Oh dear, probably all these people will stay on for dinner tonight, and we haven't organized any dinner!" I won't go that far. But one or two passages must be read. Otherwise it would be an injustice to a book like this in a place like this.

One of the favorite debating points the god of Death uses is the fickleness and physicality of much that goes in the name of human love. He says that love is just a glandular disorder, it is a physical attraction embellished with imagination. Savitri does not deny this at all. But she says that it is only partly true. Love has other more refined, sublime, and less physical expressions. In one of these passages, she asserts the great value of love in these words:

For Love must soar beyond the very
heavens
And find its secret sense ineffable;
It must change its human ways to
ways divine,
Yet keep its sovereignty of earthly bliss.
O Death, not for my heart's sweet
poignancy
Nor for my happy body's bliss alone
I have claimed from thee the living
Satyavan,
But for his work and mine, our sacred
charge.



Our lives are God's messengers
beneath the stars;
To dwell under death's shadow they
have come
Tempting God's light to earth for the
ignorant race,
His love to fill the hollow in men's
hearts,
His bliss to heal the unhappiness of
the world.
For I, the woman, am the force of
God,
He the Eternal's delegate soul in man.
My will is greater than thy law, O
Death;
My love is stronger than the bonds of
Fate:
Our love is the heavenly seal of the
Supreme.
I guard that seal against thy rending
hands.
Love must not cease to live upon the
earth;
For Love is the bright link twixt earth
and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent's angel
here;
Love is man's lien on the Absolute.
(p. 633)

I don't think that even Shakespeare has comparable lines on love although he is supposed to be a great poet of love.

There is another equally wonderful passage. Often people ask, "How do you know that the supramental will come? So far it has not come." That's a very profound argument isn't it? "So far it hasn't come, so how do you know that it will come in future? How do you know?" Death is asking that question, and Savitri's answer is very simple.

How sayst thou Truth can never light
the human mind
And Bliss can never invade the
mortal's heart
Or God descend into the world he
made?
If in the meaningless Void creation rose,
If from a bodiless Force Matter was
born,
If Life could climb in the unconscious
tree,

Its green delight break into emerald
leaves
And its laughter of beauty blossom in
the flower,
If sense could wake in tissue, nerve
and cell
And Thought seize the grey matter of
the brain,
And soul peep from its secrecy
through the flesh,
How shall the nameless Light not leap
on men,
And unknown powers emerge from
Nature's sleep?
Even now hints of a luminous Truth
like stars
Arise in the mind-mooned splendour
of Ignorance;
Even now the deathless Lover's touch
we feel:
If the chamber's door is even a little
ajar,
What then can hinder God from
stealing in
Or who forbid his kiss on the sleeping
soul? (pp. 648-49)

Finally, Death is vanquished. At this point something very significant happens. Savitri does not conquer her own death. Savitri conquers death for Satyavan. Who is Satyavan? We have been told by Sri Aurobindo that Satyavan is the Earth-Soul, Man's soul in evolution. So in granting Satyavan freedom from death what Savitri has done is to grant to the whole of mankind the potential for immortality. We have all been rendered potentially immortal by this great gift of Savitri.

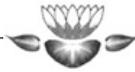
Well, we have now reached the final stage of this drama. The god of Death is vanquished, but he comes back as the Supreme Divine himself, and once again tests Savitri, offering her a special world, a special heaven of peace and bliss to live in with Satyavan. Savitri rejects that offer saying "I have come down with Satyavan to help mankind reach perfection. I don't want any solitary happiness for just the two of us." When Savitri passes this last test as well, the Supreme Lord is very pleased with Savitri and says to her, "Savitri, you have fulfilled all my expecta-

tions of you." He predicts that because of what she has done, one day everything will change, a new world will be born, and this life will turn into the life divine. Savitri then returns to earth with Satyavan's soul clutched to her heart.

All then shall change, a magic order
come
Overtopping this mechanical universe.
A mightier race shall inhabit the
mortal's world.
On Nature's luminous tops, on the
Spirit's ground,
The superman shall reign as king of
life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer
of heaven,
And lead towards God and truth
man's ignorant heart
And lift towards godhead his mortality,
A power released from circumscribing
bounds,
Its height pushed up beyond death's
hungry reach,
Life's top shall flame with the Immor-
tal's thoughts,
Light shall invade the darkness of its
base.
Then in the process of evolving Time
All shall be drawn into a single plan,
A divine harmony shall be earth's law,
Beauty and joy remould her way to
live;
Even the body shall remember God.
(pp. 706-707)

Nature shall live to manifest secret
God,
The Spirit shall take up the human
play.
This earthly life become the life
divine. (p. 710)

It is extremely difficult to summarize this immense and magnificent epic in 50 minutes, but I have been foolish enough to try it. I hope I have achieved what I set out to do in some small measure. Hasn't it been said of the Divine's Grace that it can make the dumb eloquent and the lame scale the top of a mountain? Thank you very much.



'A god come down and greater by the fall'

by Arabinda Basu

Based on the talk given at Savitri Bhavan on 9 August 1998, and published in *Invocation*, No. 2, February 1999.

Children of the Mother, this morning I would like to talk about one single line. This line occurs in the canto entitled "The Vision and the Boon". The passage runs:

This strange irrational product of the mire,
This compromise between the beast and god,
Is not the crown of thy miraculous world.
I know there shall inform the inconscient cells,
At one with Nature and at height with heaven,
A spirit vast as the containing sky
And swept with ecstasy from invisible founts,
A god come down and greater by the fall. (p. 343)

This last line is a very very significant one, which seems to me to turn the whole history of spirituality upside down. The ideal of spiritual pursuit that is expressed in this particular line has never been expressed before. This morning I will attempt to explain this startlingly original idea: "A god come down and greater by the fall."

The entire history of spirituality has asserted that as a human being you are a fallen creature, whatever explanation may be given for the fall, and that you have to get back to where you came from.... whether from God or Brahman or whatever. You have to regain union with your source. All spirituality has aimed at getting back to the source from which we came.

But here Sri Aurobindo speaks of "A god come down." It seems to me that this

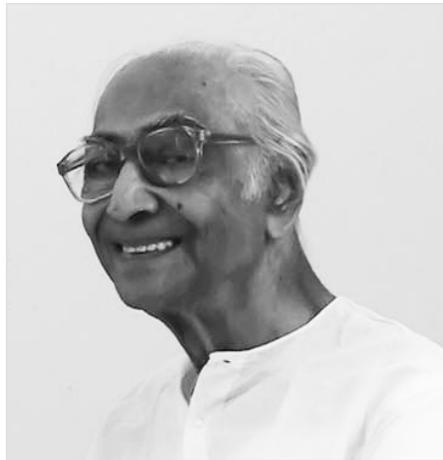


Photo courtesy Savitri Bhavan

phrase indicates a deliberate choice. This suggests that we have voluntarily exiled ourselves from our true Self, deliberately, by choice. Why? And how is it that we are greater by the fall? Sri Aurobindo seems to say that because you have fallen you have become greater, at least potentially. So the question is not about getting back to where you came from, but of doing something here. This is absolutely fresh and original. Our greatness consists not in rebecoming what we were before we fell, but in doing something here, on this earth. As far as I know, this does not exist in any other spiritual discipline or philosophy or yoga.

This idea occurs already in the first canto of *Savitri*, where Sri Aurobindo speaks of "The godhead greater by a human fate." Here also he uses the word "greater," and in connection with "a human fate." So a god has become greater, or perhaps potentially greater, by becoming human.

And yet all yoga insists upon the human not remaining forever human; its aim is to become more than human, superhuman, superman. How do we combine these two ideas? Sri Aurobindo insists that unless you know the Self which is one in all, you cannot attain to the Supermind. And if you cannot attain to the Supermind, you cannot transform life here on earth. So all these ideas have to be combined together.

Nevertheless, this line suggests that eventually we will become greater by the

fall, because in the fall itself there is a significance, a meaning, a purpose, which is not there in the higher worlds, not even in the highest. This is a very challenging statement.

The sentence where this line occurs says: "I know there shall inform the inconscient cells,..." Not in the supramental world, if there is such a thing, but "in the inconscient cells," here on the earth, in the body, the material physical frame. "At one with Nature and at height with Heaven"—implying: Don't abandon Nature, don't renounce Heaven, but bring the two together in the inconscient cells, making them superconscient.

Sri Aurobindo also says that "We live self-exiled from our heavenlier home." (p. 262) The normal idea is that man has fallen because he has disobeyed God's command. Or in Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism we find the idea that one has karma from previous lives, and has come down to exhaust that karma. Judaism doesn't insist so much on the idea of the original sin, but Christianity does. And because of this original sin of pride, hubris, disobedience towards God, we have fallen. But here there is no such idea at all: We are "self-exiled"—we have come down deliberately, voluntarily. There must be some purpose in this, for nobody would by choice come down to a life which, as Sri Aurobindo says, is condemned to an imperfect body and mind, living in the inconscient with all the indignities of the physical life. Yes, there is indignity, there is dishonor, there is a lack of bliss, even of pleasure: we are all born into a world of division and discord, ambition and frustration, failure and futility; of knowledge ringed by ignorance, and pleasure by pain. This is our life. How can it be greater than the existence that we had before we fell? We will find the answer in the poem itself.

Can God be incomplete? The Upanishad tells us that he is full there and here, and that if we subtract fullness from that fullness, what remains is still full. So God in himself is complete, full, fulfilled. And yet Sri Aurobindo dares to say: "A god come down and greater by the fall." We shall see that this is because God has a

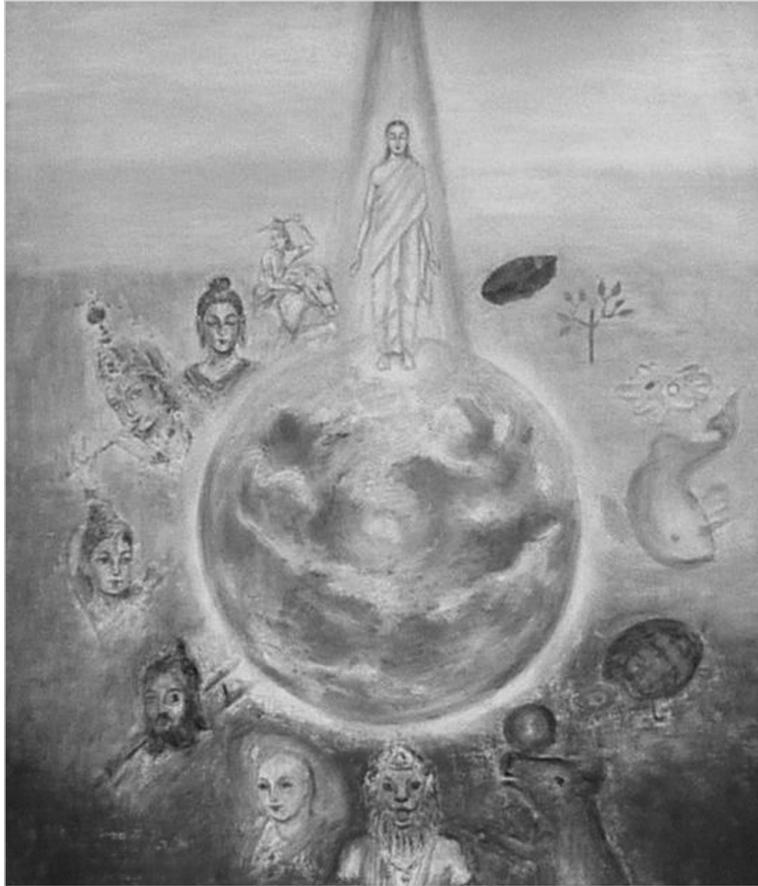


definite purpose in descending into matter.

This means that in the light of what Sri Aurobindo says, the ancient Indian concept of Maya appears to be an incomplete knowledge. Taking his terms from Indian spiritual thought Sri Aurobindo says that we can look at creation from three points of view: as Prakriti, Maya and Lila. Prakriti, in the Sankhya philosophy, refers to inconscient Nature, a creative power without any trace of consciousness in it at all. There is Purusha, or pure consciousness, which is static, and there is Prakriti who is unconscious but dynamic. You can see the world as the evolution of Prakriti—which it is, to a very great extent. Then there is the concept of Maya, which says that the world isn't really there—it only seems to be there. According to this philosophy, Brahman is purely static, it

has no creative power, no quality, no feature, no nothing as Americans would say. So the world is Maya, the world doesn't exist, it only seems to exist. This too is a truth of a certain plane of experience—even for those who are trying to practice Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo says that every integral yogin must go through this experience sooner or later. At some time in your sadhana, you must know that the world is nothing, absolutely nothing. Only when you know that the world is nothing at all, can you be utterly and completely free of attachment.

But this is not a complete experience. Because later you find that where you felt there was nothing, the Divine pours into every atom. This was Sri Aurobindo's Vasudeva vision in the jail. The Gita says "*Vasudeva sarvam iti.*" Vasudeva means all-pervasive, ubiquitous, omnipresent—that is the meaning of the word *vasu*. One



Evolution. (Painting by Shiva Vangara)

who knows Vasudeva as all, such a great soul is very very very rare. And Sri Aurobindo in the jail became one of those very very rare great souls because he was seeing the divine reality everywhere. This was after his experience of Nirvana, please remember—Nirvana which showed him, in his own language, that everything was materialised shadows: no essence, no reality, just floating material shadows. Those material shadows became instinct, informed with reality in each core of them.

In this view, the universe is called Lila—a play. It is a free act. God is not compelled to create, he is not compelled to manifest himself. He does it as a free act, as a play of delight and bliss. The Bhagavata Purana says it is the dance of a child who just dances because he sees his own shadow. It is a shadow, but a shadow of a reality, a shadow of a light.

Sri Aurobindo adds to this idea of Lila: he says that this play has a purpose.

Yes, you have to become liberated, for you are like a prisoner, so you must come out of the prison, and you go out into the open market or the open field and you say, "Yes! I am free—what a lovely life now!" But what about the prison? You have left it in the lurch, you have condemned all the other prisoners to the conditions they live in, which are less than human. What if I take the mission of becoming free, in order to go back into the prison and make it into a palace? This is god's mission in the world.

The canto called "The Pursuit of the Unknowable" shows Ashwapati shooting vertically up to the Absolute. Life is too much with him, the world is too imperfect, life is not worth living in the world. He wants his self, the Self in all, and the Absolute. So he tries to realize the Absolute, forgetting the world, renouncing it, abandoning it. There is a magnificent description of the outcome of this pursuit:

Thought falls from us, we cease from joy and grief,
The ego is dead; we are freed from being and care,
We have done with birth and death and work and fate. (p. 310)

Thought falls from us, we cease from joy and grief,
The ego is dead; we are freed from being and care,
We have done with birth and death and work and fate. (p. 310)

But the Mother accosts him, asks him, "What are you doing? where are you going?" There are other things to do which Ashwapati does not know about. She tells him:

O soul, it is too early to rejoice!
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;



But where hast thou thrown Self's
mission and Self's power? (p. 310)

So the Self has a mission. And that
mission can be accomplished by a very
special kind of power,

But where hast thou thrown Self's
mission and Self's power?

On what dead bank on the Eternal's
road?

One was within thee who was self and
world,

What hast thou done for his purpose
in the stars? (p. 310)

There is a purpose in the stars. The
constellations were not created without
any purpose. So this is the Mother's scold-
ing, if you like: "Where are you going?
What are you doing? Losing yourself in
the Absolute? What about the purpose of
God in the world? Who will accomplish
it? I have not sent you down here just to
go back to where you came from, to lose
yourself in the Absolute, forgetting your
own individuality, your potentiality, your
possibility of divine life. You can't do that."

Escape brings not the victory nor the
crown! (p. 310)

This is an escape—escape from the
obligation, the responsibility, the duty of
"a god come down." So Ashwapati is asked
to turn back to the world, and he accepts
the mission with the Mother's command;
and he is the one who is debating with the
Mother in the Canto of "The Vision and
the Boon." And please note the end of the
name of the Canto—the Boon. The Boon
is: "One will descend, to break the iron
law"—the iron law of subjection to Death.

A high and blank negation is not all,
A huge extinction is not God's last word,
Life's ultimate sense, the close of be-
ing's course,
The meaning of this great mysterious
world. (p. 311)

There is a meaning of this great mys-
terious world. It is not without signifi-

cance, without meaning. It is meaningful,
full of significance, full of possibility and
potentiality because the Divine himself
has a purpose in the world. We have to
understand this meaning and to make it
manifest. This is the mission the Supreme
Mother gives to Ashwapati. What is this
meaning? What is God's purpose?

In absolute silence sleeps an absolute
Power

Awaking, it can wake the trance-
bound soul

And in the ray reveal the parent sun:
It can make the world a vessel of
Spirit's force,

It can fashion in the clay God's perfect
shape.

To free the self is but one radiant
pace; (pp. 311-12)

Yes, you have to realise the Self, it is an
absolute necessity, it is one radiant pace,
but what else is there?

Here to fulfil himself was God's
desire. (p. 312)

To fulfil himself. We think of God be-
ing fulfilled in his own scheme of existence
eternally, but how does he fulfil himself
in the world, what does that mean? God
also has a desire: not that every creature,
every child of his will find salvation or lib-
eration or moksha or whatever you call it.
No. Each child will become God. This is
his mission and that is his purpose in the
world. And he wants it to happen here on
earth, not on the highest plane of heaven.

Recently I read a sentence where Sri
Aurobindo says that we certainly have to
realize God and embrace Him, but what
is far more important is to become that
reality. And although that can be achieved,
and has been achieved, even by numerous
devotees and yogis and saints and mystics,
on the plane of God, nobody has yet done
it on this plane, where God has become
matter—deliberately, by choice, in order
to fulfil his mission and purpose.

Those who will fulfil this desire of God
will do it here on earth, not somewhere
else, they are the gods who have come

down, and they are "greater by the fall."

Now this fall: Why is it a fall? It is a fall
in the sense that we have lost our native
spiritual status in God. We are no longer
united with him. Nevertheless, Sri Auro-
bindo says, very daringly, "No more exist-
ence seemed an aimless fall." There is an
aim, a purpose, a goal.

No more existence seemed an aimless
fall

Extinction was no more the sole
release.

The hidden Word was found, the
long-sought clue,
Revealed was the meaning of our
spirit's birth. (p. 313)

Again we come across the words
'meaning' and 'purpose'. "Revealed was
the meaning of our spirit's birth." At pre-
sent, because of assuming birth in the
world, the spirit is:

Condemned to an imperfect body
and mind

In the inconscience of material things
And the indignity of mortal life.
(p. 313)

The body is subject to disease and ul-
timately to death, the mind is ignorant,
seeking after knowledge and hardly ever
reaching it. This is what the Spirit is born
into. But this is not the last chapter of the
drama, the last act. The curtain hasn't
fallen yet. Creation is not yet a finished
product. It still goes on. This ongoing pro-
cess is the one by which God's desire will
be fulfilled.

When earth was built in the uncon-
scious Void

And nothing was save a material
scene,

Identified with sea and sky and stone
Her young gods yearned for the
release of souls

Asleep in objects, vague, inanimate.
They cried to Life to invade the sense-
less mould

And in brute forms awake divinity.
(p. 129)



What does it really mean in practical terms—“In brute forms awake Divinity”? Don’t abandon the forms in order to get back to Divinity. No—awake Divinity in the forms, where it is concealed, sleeping, dormant, involved. That is where we have to awake divinity. Not only to achieve divinity in soul and space, but even externally, superficially, on the surface, in brute forms we have to awake divinity. This is one of Sri Aurobindo’s favorite ideas and it comes in many places. For example on page 121, in the same Canto:

Our human ignorance moves towards
the Truth
That Nescience may become omni-
scient...

The spiritual attempt has always been to leave ignorance and get knowledge. Here we have a new idea. Nescience will become omniscient. And this is possible because nescience is nothing but a formation of the omniscient. The lowest is nothing but a formation of the highest. What Sri Aurobindo is now trying to do is to make the lowest into the highest. This is the challenge.

Our human ignorance moves towards
the Truth
That Nescience may become omni-
scient
Transmuted instincts shape to divine
thoughts
Thoughts house infallible immortal sight
And Nature climb towards God’s
identity. (p. 121)

Don’t leave Nature in the lurch: make it divine—because Nature is concealed divinity.

We would expect a fall to be debasing, but the poet says: “No fall debased the godhead of her steps.” (p. 128) Where is our share in this? In a brilliant line, Sri Aurobindo says: “In her gold liberty of divinity all had a share.” As we take to Savitri as a refuge, we will share in her golden-coloured splendour. “No fall debased the godhead of her steps”—the godhead has come down to what is fallen, but it is not

itself fallen. It always keeps its nature of spirituality and divinity, and yet it has assumed, deliberately, all the limitations of the material physical life. How is this possible?

In her nature housing the Immortal’s
power
In her bosom bearing the eternal
Will. (p. 128)

This tells us how. And it means that it is possible for the creature to house the immortal’s power and bear the eternal will. Each of us can do it, through Savitri’s work in the world. Through the unsparing distribution of her grace. Through them we can receive it. The Grace is here, it is doing its work, but we don’t pay any heed to it. We are so busy getting our salvation that we have forgotten about God’s mission in the stars.

A spirit ignorant of the world it made,
Obscured by Matter, travestied by Life
Struggles to emerge, to be free, to
know and reign; (p. 329)

To reign over what? This world, this physical life, which is at the moment most awful. Therefore we want to escape. We want to escape for our own benefit, to get out of this trouble, this tribulation. But who listens to God? What does he want us to do? Am I ready to give what He wants? Because Sri Aurobindo tells us, “A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme.” (p. 67) God has assumed humanity, it is humanity’s obligation to assume divinity. We must become as he is, as perfect as he is. This is the mutual debt.

He has not assumed humanity without a purpose, just as a joke—no. He has done it with a very serious purpose—a joyful, blissful one, but nevertheless a very serious purpose. He means business, says a colloquial phrase, and God’s business in assuming humanity was to make humanity divine. And humanity is here on earth, not in heaven. In this mutual interchange between God and man, God descending, man ascending, the meeting point is a new creation, a marvellous new world.

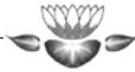
Elsewhere he tells us that we can’t leave unfulfilled the world’s miraculous fate. The world has a fate. It is going to be a new creation, something marvellous that has never happened before.

As yet thought some high spirit’s
dream,
Or a vexed illusion in man’s toiling
mind
A new creation from the old shall
rise... (p. 330)

Here, on this earth. This is the creation. In God there is no creation. Sri Aurobindo tells us over and over again that in God there is no progression. But then where is progression, where is evolution, where is movement? Where God has limited himself.

As you know, philosophically speaking, this world is a result of God limiting himself. If the Absolute remained Absolute always, there would be no relative. If God did not give up his unity, there would be no Many. If the Divine did not renounce his divinity there would be no humanity. So this is the holocaust of the soul, the Supreme Soul, a self-sacrifice that is made for the sake of a result and a fruit. And that fruit is the world becoming a new world, the creation assuming a novelty, a freshness, a spiritual fulfilment.

Merged into the Unknowable’s
mystery
Lay unfulfilled the world’s miraculous
fate.
As yet thought only some high spirit’s
dream
Or a vexed illusion in man’s toiling
mind
A new creation from the old shall rise,
A Knowledge inarticulate find speech,
Beauty suppressed burst into paradise
bloom
Pleasure and pain dive into absolute
bliss.
A tongueless oracle shall speak at last
The Superconscient conscious grow
on earth
The Eternal’s wonders join the dance
of Time. (p. 330)



The earthly creature is not supposed to become superconscient where the Superconscience is, on the superconscient planes... no, it will grow superconscient here on earth, in matter, through the new creation.

The Divine Mother gives Aswapati the vision of the birth of that new creation:

The great world-rhythms were heart-beats of one Soul,
To feel was a flame-discovery of God,
All mind was a single harp of many strings,
All life a song of many meeting lives;
For worlds were many, but the Self was one.
This knowledge now was made a cosmos' seed...

A new cosmos is being created. This knowledge, that worlds are many but the Self is one, is being made the seed of a new cosmos. And:

This seed was cased in the safety of the Light,
It needed not a sheath of Ignorance.
Then from the trance of that tremendous clasp
And from the throbbings of that single Heart
And from the naked Spirit's victory
A new and marvellous creation rose.
(p. 323)

Meanwhile evolution is still going on. Evolution still has to continue because God has not yet fulfilled himself. As Sri Aurobindo says somewhere else, only half God's cosmic work is done. Creation is not a finished product, it is an on-going process. But if, in Sri Aurobindo's vision, only half God's cosmic work is done, it is bound to be done. This is certain because:

The master of existence lurks in us
And plays at hide-and-peek with his own Force;
In Nature's instrument loiters secret God. (p. 66)

In all your instruments, your powers and

abilities, in all of them God's power lurks. But it is hidden, it needs to be brought out, manifested, expressed. In one sense we can say that evolution is really the emergence of the hidden powers of the Divine in man. There is the evolution of the soul, but there is also, parallel to it, the evolution of nature, and nature means all the physical, vital, mental powers and abilities or potentialities.

All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,
Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;
Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time,
Immortal, dallies with mortality.
The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance
The All-Blissful bore to be insensible.
Incarnate in a world of strife and pain,
He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe
And drinks experience like a strengthening wine. (pp. 66-67)

All experience can be turned into this strengthening wine, if we know the magic of it.

He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts
Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths
A luminous individual Power, alone.
(p. 67)

Where is he? In our subliminal depths. In order to bring him out, express him, manifest him for all to see, all experience is there to be endured and enjoyed. This is a magnificent passage and one can keep reading it over and over again.

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,
One who is in us as our secret self
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,
He has made this tenement of flesh his own,
His image in the human measure cast
(p. 67)

Why?

That to his divine measure we might rise;
This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God, and must be even as he;
His human portion, we must grow divine. (pp. 66-67)

He has become human, we humans must become divine. This is the Secret Knowledge.

Then he talks of the seeker:

Late will he know, opening the mystic script,
Whether to a blank port in the Unseen
He goes or, armed with her fiat, to discover
A new mind and body in the city of God.... (p. 72)

Earlier on we read that he is condemned to an imperfect body and mind. But here we have a transfiguration. What will happen to the body and mind? He goes on to discover a new mind and body in the city of God. So we will have a new mind and a new body, to embody the divine here on earth—

And enshrine the Immortal in his glory's house
And make the finite one with Infinity.
(p. 72)

Again the emphasis is on the finite becoming one with infinity—not leaving the finite to go into infinity. The finite itself has to put on infinity. Therefore, since this is God's own vision and purpose, the seeker cannot rest. He has no refuge until he finds his goal.

And never can the mighty Traveller rest



And never can the mystic voyage
 cease
 Till the nescient dusk is lifted from
 man's soul
 And the morns of God have over-
 taken his night.
 As long as Nature lasts, he too is there,
 For this is sure that he and she are
 one; (p. 72)

(That is, the Divine and his force are one.)

Even when he sleeps, he keeps her on
 his breast:
 Whoever leaves her, he will not
 depart...

For there is a deep purpose in all this:

There is a plan in the Mother's deep
 world-whim,
 A purpose in her vast and random
 game.
 This ever she meant since the first
 dawn of life,
 This constant will she covered with
 her sport,...

Right from the beginning, when he
 first thought of creation, of expressing
 himself, there was this intention:

To evoke a Person in the impersonal
 Void,
 With the Truth-Light strike earth's
 massive roots of trance,
 Wake a dumb self in the inconscient
 depths
 And raise a lost Power from its python
 sleep
 That the eyes of the Timeless might
 look out from Time
 And the world manifest the unveiled
 Divine.
 For this he left his white infinity
 And laid on the spirit the burden of
 the flesh,
 That Godhead's seed might flower in
 mindless Space. (pp. 72-73)

This is the mission of God.

I will end by reading from a letter of
 Sri Aurobindo where he states in very



*Aditi—the Divine Consciousness. (Photo
 courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

clear and unambiguous words all that I
 have been talking about rather vaguely and
 imperfectly. He is talking of the different
 planes and worlds, from the subtle phys-
 ical up to the highest. He says that each of
 them has its own distinctive character-
 istics, so that there are qualities in those
 worlds which are not here, and which can't
 be reproduced here. He says in the letter
 that there is an idea in God's mind, that is
 in the Supermind, the world of real ideas
 that is rooted in Reality; and that is a real
 idea which God wants to express, to mani-
 fest, and in and through it ultimately to
 manifest himself, and he gives the example
 of the subtle physical plane, which is clos-
 est to the physical and most like it, but still
 has a lot of things that this world of ours,
 the physical world, has not: He says it has:
 "a freedom, plasticity, intensity, colour,
 wide and manifold play... of which, as yet,
 we have no possibility on earth. And yet
 there is something here, a potentiality of
 the Divine which the other, in spite of its
 greater liberties, has not, something which
 makes creation more difficult, but in the
 last result justifies the labour." That is what
 makes the creation worthwhile. That is
 what he says. He talks about a supramental
 creation, and asks, rhetorically so to speak:
 "What would be the utility of a supramen-
 tal creation on earth if it were just the same
 thing as a supramental creation on the
 supramental plane? It is that in principle,
 but yet something else, a triumphant new

self-discovery of the Divine in conditions
 that are not elsewhere." (*Letters on Yoga*,
 pp. 254-55) When all God's cosmic work is
 done, that will be the result of his mission
 and desire being fulfilled: a triumphant
 new self-discovery of the Divine, in condi-
 tions which are here and nowhere else.

Please note the phrase "a self-discov-
 ery of the Divine." This is not a matter of
 man discovering the Divine. It is a self-
 discovery of the Divine, the Divine dis-
 covering himself. And where? In matter.
 In the physical being. In the Inconscience.
 The Superconscient grows aware in the
 inconscient.

All of these concepts come together
 in one. Each is a facet of the one central
 notion. It means that God is trying to do
 something here on the earth, in the phys-
 ical being, in the inconscience: a self-dis-
 covery. On the divine plane where he is,
 he doesn't know that he is material. This
 is why Sri Aurobindo speaks in another
 place of God knowing himself as the ma-
 terial divine. God still has something to
 discover, to know: another facet of his
 own being, his own power, his personality;
 and what is that? It is the material divine.
 The Divine that is in matter. Not trying to
 get out of matter and back to where it be-
 gan, where it was divine... No. Discovering
 himself as the material divine in matter.

This cannot be done unless matter is
 spiritualized, supramentalized, divinized.
 How is this to be done? The answer to this
 is the main theme of the whole epic, of the
 legend and the symbol which is *Savitri*,
 and it can be summed up in a few lines
 from page 314:

A burning Love from white spiritual
 founts
 Annulled the sorrow of the ignorant
 depths;
 Suffering was lost in her immortal
 smile.
 A Life from beyond grew conqueror
 here of death;

This conquering Life and this burning
 spiritual Love that can achieve the trans-
 formation of the material world is *Savitri*
 incarnate.