# **SAIIER Annual Report - Sub-unit**

**Reporting period: 2015-2016**

This form is for reporting on the activities of a **SAIIER Sub-unit** (in contrast to a separately sponsored **Project**) over the last financial year. Please use as much space as you need for the report.

Please submit this report to SAIIER by **May 7, 2016**. For any questions or clarifications, please send an email to saiier@auroville.org.in.

**1. Name of sub-unit:** SAVITRI BHAVAN

**2. Sub-unit executives:** Management Team: Antim Singhi, G. Dhanalakshmi, D. Murugan, Shraddhavan; Project Coordinator: Shraddhavan

**3. Report writer:** Shraddhavan

**4. Introduction:** Savitri Bhavan was founded in November1995, as a place to gather all kinds of materials and activities that would support a deeper understanding of Sri Aurobindo’s mantric epic *Savitri – a legend and a symbol*, which the Mother has called ‘the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision’. It was felt that since Auroville has been created to realise Sri Aurobindo’s vision of a new kind of society based on a higher consciousness it is important for us to understand what his vision is, and how to achieve the higher consciousness he expected from us. The first permanent building was opened in August 1999. Since then Savitri Bhavan has grown into an educational centre that is open to the interested general public 7 days a week throughout the year, run by a team of 14 Aurovilians and 7 employees. The aim is to foster the values on which a true human unity can be manifested, and the aims and ideals of Auroville be realised, through spiritual education based on the vision and work and writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

**5. Activities of the year:** The activities of Savitri Bhavan can be grouped under four main headings: ‘Outreach Activities’, ‘Learning Materials’, ‘Research Projects’ and ‘Publications’. During 2015-16, growth was experienced in all these four areas.

**Outreach:** The number of regular weekly classes and other activities on offer increased from 10 to 16, while at the same time there was a noticeable increase of attendance for many of them. Three of these classes are held in Tamil. In addition, 20 workshops and orientation sessions were held for groups, and 19 groups of students, totalling 581 in all, were received. 6 performances took place, 8 exhibitions and 3 guest lectures, as well as the one month UHU programme hosted from 14 January 2016 to 20 February 2016, consisting of 30 talks and a musical performance. For more information see the attached annexure A.

**Learning Materials:** Under this heading Savitri Bhavan maintains 5 collections of materials for the support of students and researchers. While all of these were maintained, expanded and used throughout the year, the Huta D. Hindocha collection of paintings and related materials deserves special mention. As usual, paintings from the *Meditations on Savitri* series prepared by Huta under the guidance of the Mother were on display in the Picture Gallery throughout the year. In addition to the regular conservation work, which was enhanced during this period by the valuable participation of Newcomer Maggie Point, another volunteer, Ruben Berlanga, worked on cleaning the Mother’s original audio recordings of her recitations from *Savitri* and comments on some passages. Tatyana Tasheva assisted in the preparation of two books by Huta for publication: a second edition of an old favourite – *Victory of the Truth*, and a new one, which Huta was working on at the time of her passing in 2011 – *My Savitri Work with the Mother*. Meanwhile Dhanalakshmi, who edits our Tamil journal *Prarthana*, did a careful revision of the Tamil translation of Huta’s much-loved compilation of letters send to her by the Mother – *White Roses*; the next time that this book is reprinted, her emendations will be included. She also translated into Tamil and prepared for publication Huta’s book *Mother You Said So …* which contains Huta’s notes of talks to her by the Mother, corrected and approved by the Mother herself. It is anticipated that all these four books will be published by Huta’s Havyavahana Trust in the course of 2016. Apart from all this, an exhibition of 45 visionary paintings by Huta, dating from 1956, when the Mother first started to teach her oil-painting, up to 1983, were exhibited at Savitri Bhavan from February 14 to March 3 2016, along with the titles given to them by the Mother and her comments on them.

**Research Projects:** Seven main research projects were carried on during the course of the year. One unusual example was the line by line comparison carried out between Sri Aurobindo’s first known draft of *Savitri* which dates from the autumn of 1916 and the final version which he left us with his passing in 1950. Sri Aurobindo is known to have worked on the poem intensively over the intervening years. The aim of this research project was to compare the two versions for differences and correspondences. The findings of this study have been published in two instalments in the Bhavan’s journal *Invocation*, in the issues no. 43 of November 2015 and no. 44 of April 2016. In addition to these seven main projects, requests for compilations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the specific topics of Death, Suicide, and the significance of Birthdays were received; these were responded to by Martin S. Other compilations and a suggested reading list were prepared for Dr. Marie-Helene Gorisse, who is leading a course on Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy at the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University, sponsored by the Sri Aurobindo Trust of London. Assistance was also given to a young research scholar from Bengal for her project on *Savitri* sponsored by the University Grants Commission.

**Publications:** While the Bhavan’s regular twice-yearly journals in English and Tamil, *Invocation* and *Prarthana* were prepared and brought out as usual in April, August and November 2015 and February 2016, it was gratifying to be able to also publish another book in February 2016. This is the second volume of the *English of Savitri* series, based on the weekly class of the same name, which covers Book Three of the poem, The Book of the Divine Mother, and consists of extensively revised and enlarged transcripts of study sessions held from December 2012 to June 2013. Like the first volume in the series, this too was published both as a hard bound book and as an e-book.

**Construction**: A highlight of this year was the launching of the long-planned “Sangam Hall”, almost the last element of the Savitri Bhavan Master Plan awaiting completion. Like the rest of the complex, the design has been prepared by our architect Helmut, and is being carried out under the supervision of Vijay. It consists of a circular air-conditioned hall, accessible from ground floor and first floor levels, with seating for at least 200 people. It is intended to house the regular *Savitri* study gatherings which are the core activity of Savitri Bhavan, as well as OM Choir sessions and guest presentations and lectures, such as the annual Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lectures. Multimedia facilities will also be provided. A ‘first-brick’ ceremony was held on November 24, 2015 – the 20th anniversary of the Founding of Savitri Bhavan itself by Dr. Nirodbaran in 1915. Construction was started in December and is proceeding at a good pace. Phase 1 (raw structure) is expected to be complete by November 2016, to be followed by Phase 2 (finishing works) in 2017

**6. Outcomes:** Through all these activities and events, awareness of the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and of the aims and ideals of Auroville has spread not only amongst Aurovilians and students of Auroville and Outreach schools, but also amongst the general public, including those who visited the Bhavan during the year and viewed the two semi-permanent exhibitions on display in the circulation areas: *Sri Auobindo – a life-sketch in photographs*, and *Glimpses of the Mother*, as well as thosereceived the publications of Savitri Bhavan all over India and in at least 45 countries around the world.

**7. Conclusion:** We look forward to an ever-growing continuation of this process over the coming years, with gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and all the well-wishers and supporters who are giving their assistance in many ways.

**8. Links and attachments:** Some outputs of Savitri Bhavan activities can be found on [www.savitribhavan.org](http://www.savitribhavan.org). Six photos are being provided as separate files in compressed format; originals can be supplied if required – captions as follows:

01 : *Savitri* students from Arul Vazhi School on a visit to Savitri Bhavan

02 : Celebrating World Yoga Day on the roof at sunrise

03 : New Information Desk in the Entrance Hall

04 : Savitri Study Circle, December 2015

05 : Opening of the exhibition *From Some Invisible Fire* by Ashram artist Priti Ghosh

06 : *Douze Prières et Méditations de la Mère* – a dramatised recitation by Céline Devaux, celebrating the anniversary of the Mother’s first arrival in Pondicherry