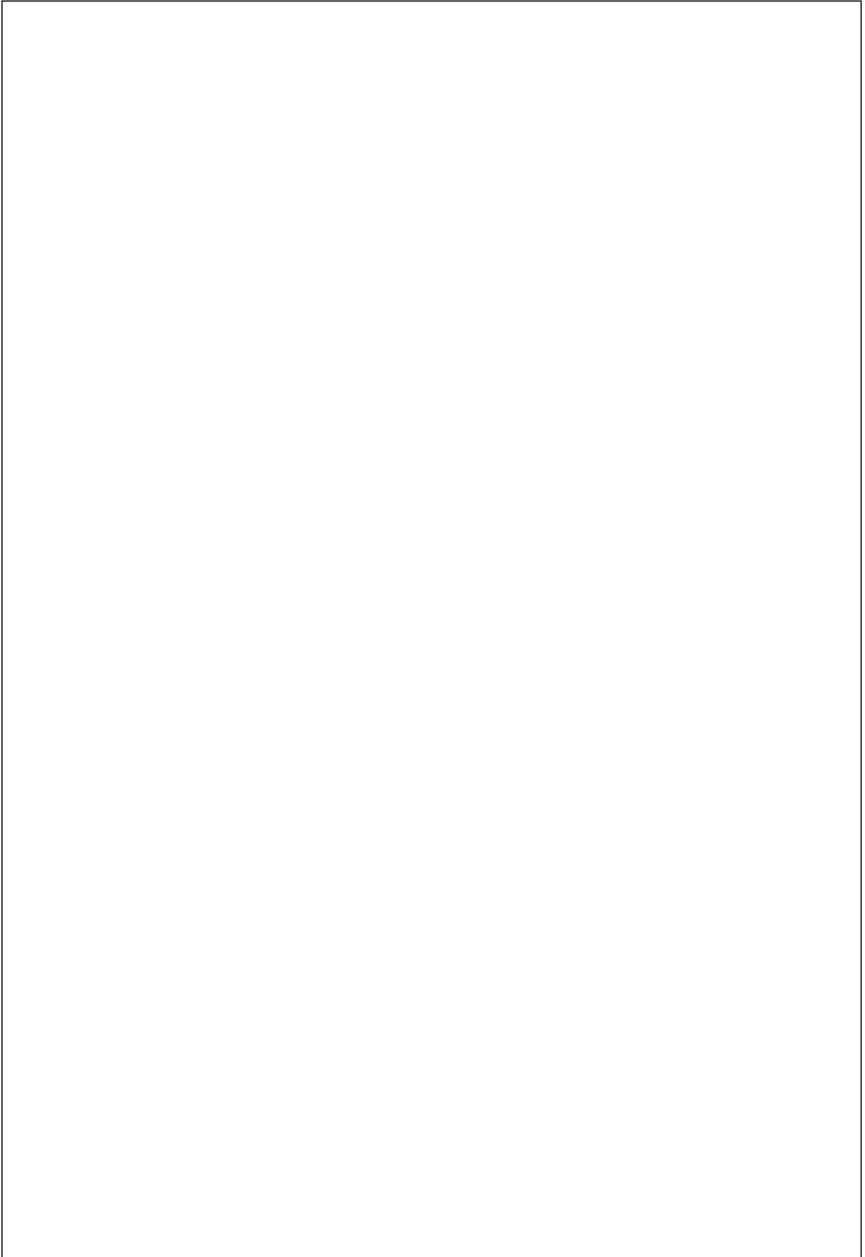


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Seer deep-hearted

*Seer deep-hearted, divine King of the secrecies,
Occult fountain of love sprung from the heart of God,
Ways thou knewest no feet ever in time had trod.
Words leaped shining, the flame-billows of wisdom's seas,
Vast in thy soul was a tide washing the coasts of heaven,
Thoughts broke burning and bare crossing the human night,
White star-scripts of the gods born from the presses of Light
Page by page to the dim children of earth were given.*

(SABCL 5 : 602)

Invocation

Udar Pinto's visit to Savitri Bhavan

on April 18, 1999

I've been in this Ashram for 62 years, so I'm an old soul - nothing new about it. I'll go back to the very early days of the Ashram, even before I heard the name of Savitri: Mother used to give me a rose every morning, she used to put a rose in my buttonhole - I still wear one. One day, in addition to the rose she gave me a small white flower. I took it from her without asking why. The second day again she gave me the white flower, and again I took it without asking why. On the third day she said, "Don't you want to know why I'm giving you this?" I said, "Mother, when you give me something, I take it, I don't know what the reason is, but anyway ...". She said, "The meaning of this flower is 'Gift of Expression', and one day you will know why I give this to you."

So if I am able to recite *Savitri*, it is purely a gift of the Mother. It's nothing to do with me. I am not a poet, I am not a classical scholar, I'm an engineer, I'm comfortable with pliers and screwdriver and hammer - not with poetry. But Mother gave me a gift, and I have to use it. That's just as a beginning.

After some time, the Mother gave me the opportunity of working in Sri Aurobindo's room. She asked me to make the furniture for Sri Aurobindo's room, and after it was all made she took me there and said, "Now Udar, I asked Sri Aurobindo if Udar can look after the furniture and he said all right." So I was allowed to go and work there. I used to be there mostly at the time when Sri Aurobindo was dictating *Savitri* to Nirod. I was a listener there. Of course I didn't know anything about *Savitri*, but it was very beautiful to hear Sri Aurobindo's voice. He had a beautiful voice - a typical English accent, what I would call a Cambridge accent, and a beautiful voice. But he was dictating, he was not reciting. There is a difference between dictation and reciting. So I can't say that I can copy him, because it would have no meaning.

For a long time Mother never told me anything about *Savitri*. But one day much later on, she spoke to me very very strongly. She never mollycoddled me - she always used to speak to me sternly, and I liked that. She said, "Udar, *Savitri* is a mantra for the transformation of the world, and I want you to make *Savitri*

your life.” That’s all. From that day I got involved in *Savitri*, and now I am completely involved in it. So I’ve come here as part of my life, to talk to you about *Savitri*.

What is going to come

I would suggest that we start with the very early part of *Savitri*, where Sri Aurobindo gives an idea of what is going to come. He starts like this:

*Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne.
When darkness deepens strangling the earth’s breast
And man’s corporeal mind is the only lamp,
As a thief’s in the night shall be the covert tread
Of one who steps unseen into his house.
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
A Power into mind’s inner chamber steal,
A charm and sweetness open life’s closed doors
And beauty conquer the resisting world,
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.
In Matter shall be lit the spirit’s glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal’s power;
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.* (p. 55)

After that comes the description of his Raja Yoga. He calls it ‘The Yoga of the King’. ‘The Yoga of the King’ has two meanings here: it is supposed to be the yoga of King Aswapati. Now Sri Aurobindo says that *Savitri* is ‘A Legend and a Symbol’. Sri Aurobindo himself is symbolised in King Aswapati, the father of Savitri - that is Sri Aurobindo himself, but he writes of him in the third person. And Savitri is the Mother. These two things you must keep

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in mind: when we talk of Savitri, we talk of the Mother, when we talk of King Aswapati, it's Sri Aurobindo himself.

How will Sri Aurobindo and the Mother come back?

I asked the Mother one day, "Mother, how will Sri Aurobindo come back? Will he be born?" Because I can't imagine Sri Aurobindo coming as a baby, I told Mother. She said, "No Udar, he will not be born, he will not come as a baby. He will come ready-made, projected into the world." Ready-made: that is, a complete being, that will remain like that: it will not grow older, it will remain constantly the same being. And in *Savitri* come these lines, in the canto called "The House of the Spirit and the New Creation":

*In these new worlds projected he became
A portion of the universal gaze,
A station of the all-inhabiting light,
A ripple on a single sea of peace.* (p. 325)

So in *Savitri* itself it is confirmed that Sri Aurobindo will come back in quite a different way, what Mother called "the supramental way". And Mother herself said, "If I leave my body, I will also come back in a supramental way." And that is given in a passage that comes later:

*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 unchanging will.* (p. 346)

Sri Aurobindo's yoga

There is another passage that I would like to recite, because Mother told me that Sri Aurobindo was not born an avatar, he became an avatar. Some avatars were born, and some became. Jesus Christ and Krishna were born avatars. Buddha and others became avatars. And Mother said that becoming an avatar is a very very tremendous physical strain. She said it is impossible for us to realise how much Sri Aurobindo suffered physically, to pass through that stage. He had to overcome all the recalcitrant parts of our being and go beyond. And he writes of "anguish":

*In anguish we labour that from us may rise
A larger-seeing man with nobler heart,
A golden vessel of the incarnate Truth,
The executor of the divine attempt
Equipped to wear the earthly body of God,
Communicant and prophet and lover and king. (p. 342)*

Sri Aurobindo went through all of the Raja Yoga, and came to the final goal of all yoga. The final goal of yoga is what they call *moksha*. Moksha is when you realise the self of your own being, and you realise that that self and the Divine are the same, so that there is merging, a union of the Divine and the self. And that is the end of all endeavour. Once you come to God, you don't need to go any further. And up to now this has been the goal of all spiritual effort, I would even say all true religion has the goal of going to God. And once you reach God, you don't need anything else. Up to now that has been the accepted goal. Now, for the first time in the history of the world, somebody has said it is not enough - and that is Sri Aurobindo. It is not enough to go to God. We must bring God down here on this earth and make him work here, not just in heaven! This is Sri Aurobindo, and this is what I like about him. I find this wonderful. We must find God and make him work here, not go off into some heaven. He calls that an escape. Here are the lines:

*O soul, it is too early to rejoice!
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,
Thou has leaped into a glad divine abyss;
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?
Escape brings not the victory and the crown!
Something thou can't do from the Unknown,
But nothing is finished and the world goes on
Because only half God's cosmic work is done.
Only the everlasting No has neared
And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart:
But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes,
And immortality in the secret heart,*

Invocation

*The voice that chants to the creator Fire,
The symbolled Om, the great assenting Word,
The bridge between the rapture and the calm,
The passion and the beauty of the Bride,
The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss,
The smile that saves, the golden peak of things?
This too is Truth at the mystic fount of Life.
A black veil has been lifted; we have seen
The mighty shadow of the omniscient Lord;
But who has lifted up the veil of light
And who has seen the body of the King?* (p.310-311)

This is what he wants, the body of the King.

As I say, this is the first time in the history of the world that somebody has said that going to God is not enough. And for this reason you must understand that this is a yoga that is not at all like other yogas. Many people, even in the Ashram, don't realise that. They think that Sri Aurobindo is a great yogi, a maharishi, and they come to him for blessings and all that. But you can go to so many yogis and get blessings from them - Sri Aurobindo is something completely different.

So Sri Aurobindo is doing his yoga. The Divine Mother addresses him as "Son of Strength".

*"O Son of Strength who climbst creation's peaks,
No soul is thy companion in the light;
Alone thou standest at the eternal doors.
What thou hast won is thine, but ask no more.
O Spirit aspiring in an ignorant frame,
O Voice arisen from the Inconscient's world,
How shalt thou speak for men whose hearts are dumb,
Make purblind earth the soul's seer-vision's home
Or lighten the mystery of the senseless globe?
I am the Mystery beyond reach of mind,
I am the goal of the travail of the suns;
My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.
But too immense my danger and my joy.
Awake not the immeasurable descent,*

*Speak not my secret name to hostile Time;
Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight.
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.
Leave the all-seeing Power to hew its way:
In thy single vast achievement reign apart
Helping the world with thy great lonely days.* (p. 335)

This 'great lonely days' is something that touches me very well, because as I told you, I used to be working in Sri Aurobindo's room, and I would see him ... of course sometimes he would be dictating *Savitri*, but at other times he would be just sitting there looking into eternity, just like that. And these words, 'great lonely days' bring back to me the picture of Sri Aurobindo just sitting and looking, not a word, not a movement - a wonderful sight.

And there is another line in *Savitri*:

Lonely his days and splendid like the sun's. (p. 45)

That is the picture of Sri Aurobindo to me.

How did man come on Earth?

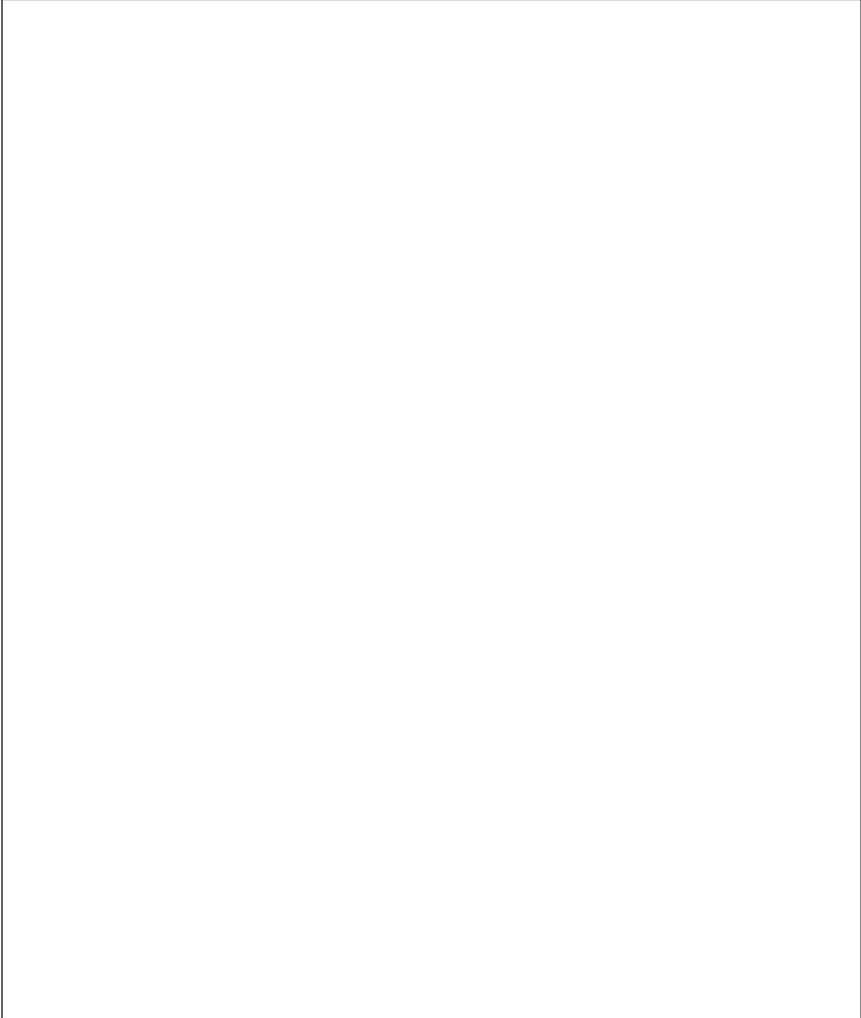
Now we come to the question of how Man came to the earth. Of course the scientists say that man evolved out of the ape. Sri Aurobindo does not accept that. The ape certainly went to a certain extent, but there was not a change from ape to man. Man came completely differently. He describes it here:

*A lightning from the heights that think and plan,
Ploughing the air of life with vanishing trails,
Man, sole awake in an unconscious world,
Aspires in vain to change the cosmic dream.
Arrived from some half-luminous Beyond
He is a stranger in the mindless vasts;
A traveller in his oft-shifting home
Amid the tread of many infinities,
He has pitched a tent of life in desert Space.
Heaven's fixed regard beholds him from above,
In the house of Nature a perturbing guest,
A voyager twixt Thought's inconstant shores,
A hunter of unknown and beautiful Powers,*

Invocation

*A nomad of the far mysterious Light,
In the wide ways a little spark of God.* (p. 336)

That is man. He has not come from the apes. So there are things like that, that must be understood, and all these things are given in *Savitri*.



Udar at Savitri Bhavan

The Mother's blessings

*My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.
Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart,
Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.
Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand;
Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.
Above blind fate and the antagonist powers
Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;
To its omnipotence leave thy work's result.
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour. (p.340-341)*

Now here there is one very important line that I want you to note:

Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand.

The Mother told me, "People come and ask me for blessings, for so many things, they want to pass their examinations, they want to get a job, they're going on a journey, this thing, that thing, for so many things they come and ask my blessings - I give blessings, but for only one thing: that is, the growth of the spirit." To greaten the spirit - this is the only boon we should demand. She said: "That's the only thing that interests me in anybody - the growth of the spirit." And she said, "Sometimes it's a bit dangerous to ask blessings for a marriage." She said, "Sometimes my blessings can break up a marriage, so be careful when you ask me for blessings for marriages." Mother had quite a good sense of humour you know - both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

What we need

The next thing I'll tell you about: Sri Aurobindo makes a complaint to the Divine:

*"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*

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*And builders of the godhead of the race?
Or if it is thy work I do below
Amid the error and waste of human life
In the vague light of man's half-conscious mind,
Why breaks not in some distant gleam of thee?
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)

That's all - it's a very sad thing. They all come, stay awhile and go: Krishna came, Christ came, everybody came, but they just stay for some time and then they go away. Nobody stayed on, ever. And Sri Aurobindo has come and Mother has come and they have gone away. We need somebody who can come and stay here, that's what we need. So this is the cry.

And then comes the answer:

*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 might 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 voiceless 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 steep;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will." (p. 346)*

The flaming pioneers

Now this is very important:

*A giant dance of Shiva tore the past;
There was a thunder as of worlds that fall;
Earth was o'errun with fire and the roar of Death
Clamouring to slay a world his hunger had made;
There was a clangour of Destruction's wings:
The Titan's battle-cry was in my ears,
Alarm and rumour shook the armoured Night.
I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude,
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.
I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.
Into the fallen human sphere they came,
Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,
Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,*

Invocation

*Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,
Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways
And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth
And justify the light on Nature's face.* (p.343-344)

How much do we really appreciate the light on Nature's face? Such a beautiful light we get, but we take it for granted. What have we done to deserve that wonderful gift? Has anybody ever stopped to think of it? And so these people are going to justify the light that comes to us.

The Divine Mother has told me that these Omnipotent's flaming pioneers have started coming down. They are souls that have waited for thousands of years for the right time to take rebirth and come down to prepare the world for the Transformation. The Mother asked me to inform this to all, so that any one of her disciples who is expecting a child could consciously aspire for one of these souls to come into the expected child. This has to be done before the third month of pregnancy, as the soul enters the foetus in the third month. The Mother also asked me to warn the expectant mothers who called down such a soul that the child born would not be as other children and would not behave in the way other children behave, and so they might have trouble with them. They would have to be patient and understand that the child has a great soul and give it every opportunity to develop.

Mantra

As I told you, Mother says *Savitri* is a mantra for the transformation of the world. And there is one portion of *Savitri* which is the most powerful for this work. But In the first place, when we say mantra ... what is mantra? it would be good to know what Sri Aurobindo himself said about mantra in *Savitri*. He describes mantra very beautifully.

*As when the mantra sinks in yoga's ear
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words*

*And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unutterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change;
He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:
Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech (p.375)*

This is Sri Aurobindo's beautiful description of mantra. But Mother is down to earth, very very practical in everything she does. She has given another aspect of mantra, which I'll tell you about.

Once we were having a very very serious drought situation in Pondicherry, a long time back; we had had no rain since I don't know how long, and everything was hot and sticky, so after a game of tennis I asked the Mother, "Mother can't you bring us some rain?" She said, "You want rain?" I said, "Mother, we haven't had rain for months and months." "Ooh," Mother said, "I didn't know. Come along." So we went to the Playground, she brought a stick and made a kind of occult pattern, which she drew on the ground. There were about six of us there. She said, "I want the six of you to link your hands and walk around that symbol and recite a mantra." I asked Mother, "What mantra?" Mother said "It doesn't matter what the mantra is, but it must be given to you by your guru. I give you a mantra: We want rain, give us rain." That's a very simple mantra, isn't it? So we chanted "We want rain, give us rain, give us rain ..." And within half an hour we got it. The mantra worked. I don't know where the clouds came from. The clouds came and the rain came - it actually worked. So that's the Mother's view of mantra.

A few years later, after Mother had left, again there was a bad drought situation in the south of India and the Government tried everything, but they didn't succeed. They also thought of using mantra. So they arranged a very

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big yagna, a sacrifice, on the bed of a dried lake, they called all the Shankaracharyas from all around and made a big fire and had a big puja, and they recited all kinds of mantras for three days - and nothing happened. Nothing happened, no rain came. Why didn't it come? There we come to the point that Mother said: the mantra must be given to you by your guru. That is the most important point of mantra. And for me, Mother has given the mantra of Savitri. So if anything's going to work, I'm going to work it! That's part of my job. I'm telling you this, because that's why I am reciting. I'm not a poet, I'm nothing, but Mother has made me take up *Savitri*, and that's why I'm telling you all these things.

So now I come to the last passage. I start where Savitri makes the prayer to the Divine, to the Lord:

*“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.”*

[Udar then recited the whole of the following passage on pages 697 to 702, ending:]

*O Mind, grow full of the eternal peace;
O Word, cry out the immortal litany:
Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.*

What Savitri is

Our reader P.M. Vaishnav of Rajkot writes:

To find a definite aim, purpose and the inner Truth of *Savitri* is difficult. But to remove our bewilderment, Sri Aurobindo tells us in most beautiful words, in *Savitri* itself, what *Savitri* is:

*O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word,
The face of Truth upon the roads of Time
Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God.*

(p.703)



Amal Kiran has written in the back of his copy of *Savitri*:

*If this poem becomes a part of your life,
it will make you a part of the Poet whose heights
have sent this call to our lowlands.*

(17.8.1993)

Sri Aurobindo in Savitri

extracts from a talk by Georges Van Vreckhem
at Savitri Bhavan on January 10, 1999

I would like to see this as a kind of shared reflection on *Savitri*, because I am sure that all of you who are here know something about it, otherwise you wouldn't be here. I also know that people who have come here to give talks before me are very much qualified. I have not published anything on *Savitri*, so I feel a little timid, and that is why I have written down all my items and points, so that I don't make a mess of it!

If you consider *Savitri* as a whole - and it is quite some whole! - then I would like to ask you a question: how much time does it take for this whole story to be acted out? 700-odd pages, almost twenty-four thousand lines ... how much time does it take for this whole story to be acted out? Have you ever thought about that? One day! And it starts when *Savitri* wakes up: you have the Symbol Dawn and then Sri Aurobindo switches over to the dawn of that day, and the first canto ends with that famous line, so simple - everyday language that has become the highest poetry:

This was the day when Satyavan must die.

And then where do we go? We go to page 349, halfway through the epic, halfway through the book. There Sri Aurobindo picks up the legend again, and then it is acted out: *Savitri* goes into the forest with her husband, he dies, she waits and has that incredible battle with death, and they come back; nobody knows what has happened, but just that day messengers have come to invite Satyavan's father to return as the King of the kingdom from which he was expelled because of his blindness, happy day, happy ending - one day.

But from the end of Canto 1 on page 10 all the way to page 349 - this is half of the poem - that must mean something!

Now if we think about the fact that the poem *Savitri* is of course about *Savitri* - she is the protagonist, the main person in the story - who are the other protagonists, the other main characters? Satyavan, of course. But it is curious that Satyavan is not written about in detail as a spiritual figure. We

are given the whole story of Savitri: how she comes on earth, how beautiful she is inwardly and outwardly, as a child with that white dragon-bird drifting above her; her youth and her quest, and then her yoga, chakra after chakra, everything is described in detail ... so much so that the Mother has said that sometimes she told Sri Aurobindo, "Lord, you are writing all my secrets!" And that is exactly what has happened, because as we know they were one consciousness. Savitri is completely worked out - but what about Satyavan? We know he is the son of a king, and that he's a very nice fellow and they fall in love, but nothing is analysed of his inner life. Who was Satyavan? He was the Soul of the Earth. If you take it like that you can say, "Yes, it is written about, because Sri Aurobindo, along with so many other things in Savitri, gives the whole story of evolution, starting from the Big Bang and before." But this is not Satyavan as a person.

Who is the other protagonist? This is exactly the point I want to talk to you about today. You say Aswapati, all the authorities I am reading say Aswapati: the Yoga of the King - Aswapati; the Traveller of the Worlds - Aswapati. But - a very simple question: If this is true, why does Sri Aurobindo never use his name? Why does the name Aswapati not appear in the first half of the epic? I'll tell you where it comes for the first time: the name Aswapati is used for the first time on page 341, for the second time on page 369. Sri Aurobindo didn't forget to use that name. Sri Aurobindo didn't forget such things - he would change a comma five times, according to Nirodbaran who was his amanuensis, who noted down whole parts of the poem. Aswapati is not there. Why do all the authorities write Aswapati, Aswapati, starting from Purani, and followed by everyone who has written about it? I must ask that question. Sri Aurobindo could not have forgotten that name, because he is the second - or the third, it depends on the way you consider it - most important figure in this incredible book. He couldn't have forgotten that! So let us see what he writes about this supposed Aswapati.

One in the front of the immemorial quest. This is the protagonist, I will use that word, from the third canto onwards, from the first pages of the epic. Somebody who is a pioneer, the being leading the immemorial quest of mankind. He is addressed as: *O strong forerunner ...*; and it is said that *One soul's ambition lifted up the race.* One soul's ambition took everything

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that is developing with such difficulty in mankind, lifted it up and took it farther. He is referred to as *The eternal seeker in the aeonic field*. And we are told that *This knowledge first he had of time-born men*. ... That is the Secret Knowledge - Canto Four is called 'The Secret Knowledge' and then the next one begins: *This knowledge first he had of time-born men*.

This is who it is: the forerunner, the soul in the front that leads humanity on its way to a new step in development - supposedly Aswapati.

A second very important qualification of this being is: *A thinker and toiler in the Ideal's air*. A toiler, a thinker - one who works not only with the ordinary mind, but with the mind above in all its layers. And Sri Aurobindo repeats that, for a little further on he says *The toiling thinker*; and further on again he says *A single thinker* has done all that; and yet further he says *The Thinker* with a capital letter. This being is always qualified as the Thinker.

And then we have the third, so little realised, qualification of that being: it is the Warrior. Nowadays we all know about warriors, because of Carlos Castaneda, and because of the shamans; and I have heard an Aurovillian saying one day, "I am a warrior!" But here - who would you imagine is that being, who is the leader in front, the thinker, and also the warrior?

Let's keep that in mind, and see what Aswapati was like according to the legend in the Mahabharata. Here is a quotation from a book by R.Y. Deshpande, who has written a lot on this topic and who is now the editor of *Mother India*.

"Long ago in Madra ruled a noble king, an ardent follower of the dharma. He was of a devout nature and was firmly established in truth. He was respectful to the seers and sages, and was kind to the citizens of the country. His name was Aswapati - performer of yagnas, presiding over charities, skilful in work, one who had conquered the senses, he was loved by the people of his kingdom and he himself loved them. Aswapati's single concern was always the welfare of everybody and toward that end he spared no effort, but he was issueless, and he made the sacrifices, and then Savitri, Daughter of the Sun, or the Sun herself, granted him to have a daughter."

A great yogi - yes, absolutely; master of his senses, performing so many

yagnas ... good to his people. But how does that match with what we have seen? *The One in front of the immemorial quest, A thinker and toiler in the Ideal's air*; who is leading the earth on? And let us see what else Sri Aurobindo says about him:

*One in the front of the immemorial quest,
 Protagonist of the mysterious play
 In which the Unknown pursues himself through forms
 And limits his eternity by the hours
 And the blind Void struggles to live and see,
 A thinker and toiler in the ideal's air
 Brought down to earth's dumb need her radiant power.
 His was a spirit that stooped from larger spheres
 Into our province of ephemeral sight,
 A colonist from immortality.
 A pointing beam on earth's uncertain roads,
 His birth held up a symbol and a sign;
 His human self, like a translucent cloak
 Covered the All-Wise who leads the unseeing world.*

This is not a yogi, however great; this is an avatar. And the avatar is of course Sri Aurobindo. So if we take this jump in time in the one-day story, from the beginning up to page 349, everything in between, the whole First Part of *Savitri*, is the autobiography, the spiritual autobiography, of Sri Aurobindo.

He doesn't mention his name. You know how the cantos go: the first canto is the morning, the awakening, the symbol dawn; the second canto tells about Savitri, she's presented in essence. And then the third canto starts with the line, *A world's desire compelled her mortal birth*. The desire of a world forced the Divine to take mortal birth. And then comes this line, *One in the front of the immemorial quest ...* Please see that delicacy: that superhuman delicacy, of starting this canto with a line that is not directly pointing to himself, *A world's desire compelled her mortal birth*, And then he begins the story about himself .

You know the Mother has said one day: "*La spiritualité, c'est le bon goût suprême*" - le bon goût; and Sri Aurobindo says, "*Spirituality is the highest*

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refinement". It is the art of life - the highest refinement. Here you can see that, that self effacement, that delicacy.

And if you take this, and think who Sri Aurobindo is for you, how you see him in his photos, the way you approach him - do you ever have the feeling of this warrior? In almost all the accounts by people who saw him they tell how, when they went to him for darshan, as they neared, approached, touched his feet, they all sank into a kind of sublime softness. There was this Love incarnated there, that contacted every soul who approached him. But there was also that warrior who in the meantime had done and was doing this incredible work of piercing through towards a new future.

He was not tall, he was as tall as me - not very tall, if you saw him. But there are so many accounts from the early years describing him as a rather dark Bengali, till he turned around and looked at them - and then they felt this power in the eyes: the warrior who has written that incredible poem, one of the most beautiful in any literature, "A God's Labour". With such simplicity and melody, there he writes about his fights - and of course he does it in *Savitri* also.

So this is a very important point: out with Aswapati, finished Aswapati! And it is very important, my friends - because if you keep the name Aswapati, and some picture of the father of Savitri in Madra and so on, you misread this book. You make it smaller. Then it is only the legend. Here is the symbol.

Sri Aurobindo has written about Savitri and everybody knows that she is the Mother. In his delicacy he has never said, "I am the thinker and toiler, I am the warrior, I am the one in front", but we know that he was. When we put all these qualifications together, with all respect for Aswapati as a great yogi and the father of Savitri, it points to the fact that this is Sri Aurobindo's own story.

When we see it like this, the structure of the poem becomes very different. The first thing is that we have this whole development where Sri Aurobindo writes his whole autobiography. And Nirodbaran testifies to the fact that this autobiography kept growing and growing and growing. For instance the Book of the Traveller of the Worlds has grown to immense dimensions. This is really the highest occultism one can find and have to access to anywhere - it is not fantasised, it is a written from experience.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have always said, “We only speak from experience.” And when Sri Aurobindo wrote an introductory article to the *Arya*, he wrote, “If we had not had the experience we would have no right to write what is here in the *Arya*.” Everything was based on experience, and here we have this incredible experience of the World-Stair: all the worlds, starting from our own. And in addition he always relates it to our own experience, pointing out that this point is here on earth, this point is part of the structure of earth, this point ... so that we get a whole analysis of the world in which we are living, plus many other things.

If you do not realise that, if you do not even know that this is Sri Aurobindo writing about his own experience, you will miss one of the most important realisations and aspects of the work he has done for us and for the earth.

I will read you part of that. It comes when he had gone down into Hell. You know that he wrote, “*None can reach Heaven who has not passed through Hell.*” I think all of us have at least one leg, and maybe one and a half, in Hell - in the complete absurdity of the world and our own impossibilities. And when he had gone through all that, he reached the base.

I think that this is an indication towards some understanding of why he chose to go through Death. For he had the supramentalisation of the mental since 1920. And then he said to the Mother - the much underestimated Mother - “When it is in the mind like that, everything has to be done again and again and again.” And she says, “Then I told him, we should descend.” And they descended into the vital. Sri Aurobindo stopped writing the *Arya*, because he had descended to another level, fighting. The supramental realisation of the mental was there, and when it came down into the vital it changed both of them completely, in their outer form. There are many testimonies: people came to Sri Aurobindo and found his appearance had completely changed. Before he was darkish, and now his skin was creamy and golden, people said. The Mother changed completely - she went back to the form she had when she was eighteen. Pearson, who had been close to her for years in Japan, came to Pondicherry and didn’t even recognise her! She was with Sri Aurobindo when he talked with Tagore, and Tagore didn’t recognise her, although he had asked her to take over Shanti Niketan, and although he had given her a typewriter which is still in the Ashram. They

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changed. And then they went deeper still, during 1930, 1932, into matter, and the whole yoga of their disciples also came down to those levels, without their knowing it. It was as if they entered into that hell - where we are, which we have to explore, down there in the cellar, in the many cellars - because without this, one can never understand humanity. Humanity as it is consciously, is only like a water-lily leaf floating on the subconscious and the inconscient. From there arise the acts of humanity, from there arises what you read about in the newspapers, what you see on TV, the horrors, the absurdities, the lies, the ugliness. And Sri Aurobindo says, "Be careful, whatever you have realised, be attentive." The Mother has said, "Yoga is a matter of attention." Be attentive because there may always be an earthquake of the soul, where everything that you have built up, all vital and mental constructions, may be shattered, and a monster from below may rise up. Those monsters are there, aren't they? You see them on the cinema screens. You see them in everything that is happening, the monsters from below.

The Mother has said that the whole of this 20th century is one war. And they were in the front of it, those warriors - she of course always with "L'épée de la Vérité, l'épée de lumière" - the Sword of Truth, the Sword of Light, and at the end of her life the Sword of Certitude.

If you don't see the first part of *Savitri* as the autobiography of Sri Aurobindo, how can you understand the following, these important pages, where Sri Aurobindo describes how he changed the programming in the inconscient? He had gone through everything, and this is where *He drank the poison draughts till none was left*. We all know about Shiva with the blue throat. Sri Aurobindo drank the poison draughts till none was left. *The ordeal he suffered of Evil's absolute reign*. And we only have to go inside ourselves to see that. And then he describes what happened when he reached the very bottom.

He saw the secret key of Nature's change.

...

*He saw in Night the Eternal's shadowy veil,
Knew death for a cellar of the house of life
In destruction felt creation's hasty pace,
Knew loss as the price of a celestial gain*

*And hell as a short cut to Heaven's gates.
Then in Illusion's occult factory
And in the Inconscient's magic printing-house
Torn were the formats of the primal Night
And shattered the stereotypes of Ignorance.
Alive, breathing a deep spiritual breath,
Nature expunged her stiff mechanic code
And the articles of the bound soul's contract.* (p. 231)

Here I have written in the margin of my copy of *Savitri*: "THIS WAS DONE"! He went to the bottom of Hell, and did that. Sri Aurobindo went down into the depths, and changed the programming of evolution.

*Nature expunged her stiff mechanical code
And the articles of the bound soul's contract,
Falsehood gave back to Truth her tortured shape.
Annulled were the tables of the law of Pain,
...
Arousing consciousness in things inert,
He imposed upon dark atom and dumb mass
The diamond script of the imperishable.
Inscribed on the dim heart of fallen things
A paean-song of the free Infinite
And the Name, foundation of eternity
...
Hell split across its huge abrupt facade
....
Healed were all things that Time's torn heart had made
And sorrow could live no more in Nature's breast:
Division ceased to be, for God was there.
The soul lit the conscious body with its ray,
Matter and spirit mingled and were one.* (p. 232)

Sri Aurobindo did that. He had come for that. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. If you read it as Aswapati doing all this, what will you understand? But if you realise that this is the autobiography of Sri Aurobindo, many things he has not told about elsewhere are recorded here. And of course many other

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things that he did are not recorded anywhere, he just did them, and the rest will work itself out.

If you read “The Yoga of the King”, the first part is The Yoga of the Soul’s Release. In The Yoga of the King, Second Part, you see what Sri Aurobindo was becoming. He has the secret knowledge - *This knowledge first he had of time-born men*. Then comes the second part, The Yoga of the Spirit’s Freedom and Greatness. And then he describes the whole exploration, not only of the world but of the worlds, in Book Two, The Traveller of the Worlds. And then comes the Book of the Divine Mother. All this forms one beautiful curve, to the point where he has the vision and asks for the boon, asks the Mother to come and incarnate on earth, and the boon is granted that will make the further evolution possible.

Now here there is something very strange: the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had a problem.

When Sri Aurobindo was present, the Mother always used to sit very low in his presence, on a stool or even on the floor at his feet. So everybody says - and this is a problem with many people, I know it from experience - Oh, Sri Aurobindo yes!; and when they see Sri Aurobindo’s picture, they recognise him as a Master, a Guru. But when they see a picture of the Mother, they find it strange: Mother at that time of her life, Mother dressed like that, Mother made-up like that, and looking like that ... I am talking about people who are not devotees, but it may also be somewhere in the heads of many people who are devotees. And Mother would always sit at Sri Aurobindo’s feet. You also know that famous anecdote told by Nolini: When Barin, Sri Aurobindo’s brother, asked him, “What was your first impression of the Mother?” Sri Aurobindo answered, “I never saw such a complete surrender.” Nothing held back! So everybody takes it that the Mother was Sri Aurobindo’s disciple, the Mother was subordinate to him ...

Sorry. Either they were the same essential being and consciousness, or they were not. And you see it is impossible to talk about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother unless you go to that extreme. In my view it is impossible to write about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother if you don’t take this as the truth, as they have told it, and as we can experience it, if you don’t take that as the basis. I cannot write about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from a materialistic standpoint. I cannot write on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as a positivist

historian who has to put everything into question. I have not yet written the book I'm working on now, the Mother's autobiography, but I have already written the introduction, and there I have said, "It is not for me to be a critic. I base myself on what they have said and consider them to be *bona fide*."

After passing through all the worlds, Sri Aurobindo meets the Divine Mother. And at a certain moment he says, *He fell down at her feet, unconscious, prone*. He arrives the feet of the Divine Mother, in this incredible ecstasy. She was at his feet, but he was at her feet.

It is very nice to see the parallels in the lives of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The parallels in their lives are astonishing. Parents who wanted both of them to be the best! Both starting with the Gita, and so on and so on.

There is also a kind of perfect timing: just when Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry, Paul Richard came there too ... and so many other things also happened just at the right time.

But if here in *Savitri*, it is Sri Aurobindo who asks the Mother to incarnate, how do we interpret that? And I must say I don't know, because the Mother was supposed to have been incarnated while he was doing his yoga. But there is one solution I would suggest, and that is that the whole of evolution is there somewhere present in a timeless *trikaladrishti* level - and there the Divine decides to send that aspect of himself, the male aspect, and this aspect of himself, the female aspect, and everything works out in time - perfectly, but beyond our understanding.

All things are global, the Divine is global, evolution is global, man is global and every single act, and every atom is global because the divine is in it. All aspects are there, all possibilities are there - that is the foundation of the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

And now if you ask me, "What, to you, is *Savitri*?", I would say, "It is the Book of Promise ... from somebody who knew, who had gone very far, much farther than people normally assume, and who wrote this promise for mankind."

You all know that famous text on page 55:

Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne ...

up to

*For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.*

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Now this work is being done. What was the intention of Sri Aurobindo's effort as such? To bring the Supermind down into the earth, into the invisible body of the earth. He couldn't effect the breakthrough while in his body. And that is the reason he has gone through death. Only six years later, the Supermind manifested. Only six years later. There Sri Aurobindo's effort ends. Concretely, as an avatar, it ends there. He never wanted to talk about things beyond that. He has written about the gnostic community and all that, how it might be. But when one asked him about Supermankind, about how the Superman would be, he said, "The Supermind will take care of that. Do not put projections on it. By these human projections you limit it."

But there the timing comes in: the Mother was here, in a human body. You know her father was so strong that he could make a horse kneel by just pressing its flank. Her mother was so concretely practical and materialistic that Mother has compared her to an iron rod. She said, "These are the bodies I chose for my parents." And Sri Aurobindo told her, "Your body is much better than mine, you have to go on." And she did it. 23 years of sadhana every minute. With a divine consciousness, a divine mind, a divine vital, and more and more a divine physical.

This wonderful book, *Savitri*, is full of such things. And something that has made a big impression on me is the discovery that all the talking and all the philosophy and all the discussions and all the misunderstandings and friction come from the fact that we do not have the spiritual realisation. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have always stressed that we must first have the spiritual realisation, then we can talk. So I apologise to anyone here who has spiritual realisation, but in a general way one can say that this is what we are lacking. And we are people of good will - otherwise we wouldn't be here. We are turned towards that light, and we read *Savitri*, even with a kind of veneration and devotion, and it gives us a great deal. But just think how wonderful all this will become, once we can share in its realisation! So we have some work to do, a whole programme to work out, and we all share in the promise of which this Book of Promise is full. But I wouldn't trust the authorities too much, except as something to consult, to read, to think about, and then you go on with your own discoveries. And all the other writings of Sri Aurobindo are also so very beautiful, we have a very rich literature, we have a long way to go - so we know what to do for the rest of our lives. Happy travels!

News of Savitri Bhavan

February - June 1999

The “Birthday Week”, from the Mother’s birthday on February 21 to Auroville’s birthday on February 28, is always a special time in Auroville - a period when old friends and new are visiting and many special events take place. At Savitri Bhavan this year we held an exhibition under the trees on our site of *About Savitri* - the Mother’s explanations of *Savitri* Book One, Canto One, accompanied by reproductions of some paintings done by Huta according to the Mother’s instructions and inspiration. These texts and pictures were published in book form in 1972, but are now long out of print and quite unknown to many people. We were also able to play the recordings of these talks of the Mother in three evening sessions of about one hour each, at the same time showing the slides of Huta’s paintings. These sessions were so much appreciated that although we could not repeat the slide-shows we did replay the recordings in three weekly sessions during March.

Around this time too we were very happy to receive visits from representatives of some of the Sri Aurobindo centres in south Gujarat who had assisted us during our fund-raising drive there last May. Shri Hanskumar Mankad from Baroda, with his wife and party; Dilipbhai Patel from Ma Pragati Kendra in Navsari, along with Mohanbhai Patel of Chhota-Udepur, Arunbhai Mistry from Amalsad and other friends, as well as our member Dr. Beena Naik with her mother Dr. Madhuben Naik of Navsari, without whose help and support the Navsari event could not have taken place. Shortly afterwards we were also happy to welcome Professor Mangesh Nadkarni with his wife and party.

Also during February, Dr. Gerd Kissel, a music professor from Hamburg, Germany, who is an accomplished performer of the Indian *surbahar*, gave a recital of “music for consciousness” by candlelight under the trees on the Savitri Bhavan site, creating a magical atmosphere of deep peace and contemplation.

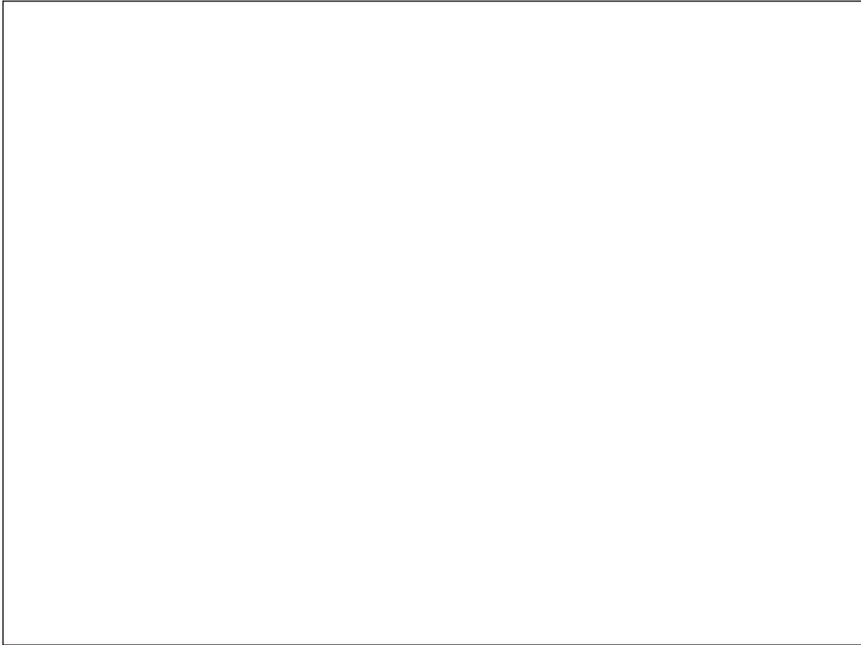
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Guest Speakers

After Dr. Ananda Reddy's talk at Savitri Bhavan last December, a number of Aurovilians requested him to come and give regular classes here. As a result, from March onwards he has been giving a weekly class on *The Life Divine*, which is well attended and very much appreciated.

On the morning of Sunday April 18th, just a few days before his 93rd birthday, Udar Pinto fulfilled our wish for a visit, delighting a good-sized audience with his anecdotes and *Savitri* recitations. The text of his talk appear in this issue.

As it happened, on this same day Kireet Joshi, recently appointed Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, was in Auroville for the first time after many years. Informed that Udar was at Savitri Bhavan, Kireet made space in his busy programme and passed by for a few minutes to meet him, making April 18th a doubly special occasion for us.



After R.Y. Deshpande's talk in the temporary shelter, December 1998

Background Courses

In addition to Dr. Reddy's course on *The Life Divine*, regular classes of Sanskrit and of English based on *Savitri*, along with a new series of weekly group-study sessions on *Essays on the Gita* started in April as well as our Sunday morning study-circle gatherings, mean that activities are going on daily in the temporary shelter on the Savitri Bhavan site.

Every Tuesday evening during April, May and June the series of 12 video films of *Meditations on Savitri* were shown in Pitanga Hall; presenting the Mother's recitations and her own organ music, along with the paintings done by Huta according to her instructions, these films are made by Michel Klostermann with the Mother's special blessings.

And of course, the preparation of this quarterly journal *Invocation* continues - the issues that have already come out have won much appreciation, and our mailing-list is expanding rapidly.

Construction

A very important facet of our activities during this period has been the on-going construction of the first permanent structure of our complex. After the first-brick ceremony held on December 13 1998, work has been proceeding at a good pace, and as we go to Press at the end of June, finishing works are being executed: joinery, flooring and painting. So we feel confident of fulfilling our target of an inauguration during August, Sri Aurobindo's birthday month, this year. Of course in this final stage a lot of bills are coming in, and financial help would be especially welcome just now to enable us to finish everything properly and in time, and to equip the new building to be fully functional as soon as possible.

About Savitri Bhavan

We dream of an environment in Auroville

that will breathe the atmosphere of Savitri

that will welcome Savitri lovers from every corner of the world

that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

that will house all kinds of materials and activities to enrich our understanding and enjoyment of Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic

that will be the abode of Savitri, the Truth that has come from the Sun

We welcome support from everyone who feels that the vibration of Savitri will help to manifest a better tomorrow.

Savitri Bhavan is a project of SAIER (Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research). Donations by cheque or draft may be made payable to 'SAIER' and sent with a covering note specifying that the amount is meant for Savitri Bhavan. You may also specify whether you would prefer your donation to be used for construction or activities.

Indian donors will receive 100% tax exemption under Sec. 35(1) (iii) of the I.T. Act. Contributions from within Auroville may be made through the Auroville Financial Service, account no. 230247.

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Savitri
is a Mantra
for the transformation
of the world

The Mother