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Savitri - sketch by the Mother

When the Mother was working with Huta on the Meditations on Savitri paintings, she gave her this sketch for guidance when preparing picture 17 of Book One, Canto One.

**And Savitri too awoke among these tribes
That hastened to join the brilliant Summoner's chant ...
A narrow movement on Time's deep abysm,
Life's fragile littleness denied the power,
The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss
She had brought with her into the human form,
The calm delight that weds one soul to all,
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy.**

Savitri Book One, Canto One

Savitri

The supreme revelation of
Sri Aurobindo's
vision.



The Mother gave this message for "About Savitri" – her explanations of *Savitri*, illustrated by paintings done according to her instructions by Huta.

About Savitri

Introduction by Huta

On the morning of 20th December 1967 the Mother saw me in her music-cum-interview room. She asked me:

“Have you brought anything to show me ?”

I replied, “Yes Mother. Here is the file of the four hundred and sixty-five passages from *Savitri* which you recited and which were put below the Savitri paintings when they were exhibited in February 1967 under the title you had given, *Meditations on Savitri*. Mother, will you please explain these passages to me and allow me to take down your explanations of them on my tape-recorder as I did with your recitations of the passages? Then surely people will be able to understand the Savitri paintings more easily.”

She concentrated for a moment or two, then replied enthusiastically:

“If I have to explain these passages, I would prefer to start from the very beginning and give a full explanation of the whole of Savitri.”

In fact this had been planned in the Mother’s vision long before. Amal Kiran has reported how, soon after the first one-volume edition of *Savitri* was published in 1954, the Mother revealed to a small group of sadhaks:

“Savitri is occult knowledge and spiritual experience. Some part of it can be understood mentally, but much of it needs the same knowledge and experience for understanding it. Nobody

Invocation

here except myself can explain Savitri. One day I hope to explain it in its true sense."

On the morning of January 18, 1968 the Mother and I commenced our new work on Savitri, and on January 28 the Mother gave it the name "About Savitri". I may indicate how we proceeded. The Mother read out the passages from *Savitri* and then after a deep contemplation gave her comments, which I tape-recorded and later transcribed. I also prepared paintings inspired by the passages, according to her instructions.

One day the Mother revealed:

The work is really very good, I like it. When I concentrate and go back to the Origin of the Creation, I see things as a whole in their reality and then I speak.

You see, each time when I speak, Sri Aurobindo comes here. And I speak exactly what he wants me to speak. It is the inner hidden truth of Savitri that he wants me to reveal.

Each time he comes, a wonderful atmosphere is created. I have read Savitri before, but it was nothing compared to this reading.

The Mother arranged for her explanations of Book One Canto One to be published in February 1972, along with the paintings corresponding to each passage which I had made according to her instructions and inspiration. For this book she gave the message which appears opposite the preceding page:

"Savitri The Supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision"

My profound gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother for their Grace and Love.

Hunta

About Savitri :

Book One, Canto One, second part

*And Savitri too awoke among these tribes
That hastened to join the brilliant Summoner's chant
And, lured by the beauty of the apparent ways,
Acclaimed their portion of ephemeral joy.
Akin to the eternity whence she came,
No part she took in this small happiness;
A mighty stranger in the human field,
The embodied Guest within made no response.
The call that wakes the leap of human mind,
Its chequered eager motion of pursuit,
Its fluttering-hued illusion of desire,
Visited her heart like a sweet alien note.
Time's message of brief light was not for her.*

Here there is nothing to say. It is a description of Savitri's nature. She came from above and did not share in the smallness of humanity. That is all.

*

*In her there was the anguish of the gods
Imprisoned in our transient human mould,
The deathless conquered by the death of things.
A vaster Nature's joy had once been hers,
But long could keep not its gold heavenly hue
Or stand upon this brittle earthly base.
A narrow movement on Time's deep abysm,
Life's fragile littleness denied the power,
The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss
She had brought with her into the human form,
The calm delight that weds one soul to all,
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy.*

Invocation

*Earth's grain that needs the sap of pleasure and tears
Rejected the undying rapture's boon:
Offered to the daughter of infinity
Her passion-flower of love and doom she gave.*

She came to transform the world and make it fit to receive the Higher Light and Power. But in order to transform this world, one must come upon earth, accept it, and then accept at the same time its insincerity, its weakness, its incapacity to live this Higher Consciousness.

That gives me the impression, a strong impression, of what has been for ages and centuries, but it is not the final destiny of the earth. Life is expected to transform itself in order to be able to express the divine things – the Divine Consciousness. And that is why She has come upon earth to prepare it.

*

*In vain now seemed the splendid sacrifice.
A prodigal of her rich divinity,
Herself and all she was she had lent to men,
Hoping her greater being to implant
That heaven might native grow on mortal soil.
Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change;
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:
It fears the pure divine intolerance
Of that assault of ether and of fire;
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,
Almost with hate repels the light it brings;
It trembles at its naked power of Truth
And the might and sweetness of its absolute Voice.*

This is the exact description of the condition of the earth in general. Only, little by little, the number of people who are accepting this Truth increases; that is why the Divine knows that with patience, repeating the effort, one day it will bring its result. In fact, it is by many repeated attempts and apparent failures that the work is done. And it is the symbolic representation of this repeated effort that is given in *Savitri*. It is a symbolic work, not the telling

of a story of something that happened; it is the illustration in a condensed and imaged form of this effort of the Divine to divinise the material creation. Actions that in appearance may seem failures are steps – and definite steps – towards Realisation. This is one of the things that have been expressed and represented in *Savitri*.

*

*Inflicting on the heights the abyss's law,
It sullies with its mire heaven's messengers:
Its thorns of fallen nature are the defence
It turns against the saviour hands of Grace;
It meets the sons of God with death and pain.
A glory of lightnings traversing the earth-scene,
Their sun-thoughts fading, darkened by ignorant minds,
Their work betrayed, their good to evil turned,
The cross their payment for the crown they gave,
Only they leave behind a splendid Name.*

That is the history of human life upon earth: each time that help has been sent to hasten the evolution, it has been received in that way. But each time the effort and the help are bigger, higher, truer; and each time a little work, some result, is achieved; and step by step, the world grows towards its Realisation.

The whole story has been shown under a symbolic form, in a symbolic story, and it is that that Sri Aurobindo gives in *Savitri*.

*

*A fire has come and touched men's hearts and gone;
A few have caught flame and risen to greater life.
Too unlike the world she came to help and save,
Her greatness weighed upon its ignorant breast,
And from its deep chasms welled a dire return,
A portion of its sorrow, struggle, fall.
To live with grief, to confront death on her road, -*

Invocation

*The mortal's lot became the Immortal's share.
Thus trapped in the gin of earthly destinies,
Awaiting her ordeal's hour abode,
Outcast from her inborn felicity,
Accepting life's obscure terrestrial robe,
Hiding herself even from those she loved,
The godhead greater by a human fate.*

This is to make humanity understand that a greater Purity, a greater Force, a greater Knowledge and a greater Ananda can be acquired through struggle and pain, suffering and difficulty, than through an easy and smooth life.

It is not the cause of difficulties, but it is the result. That is to say, it would be a mistake to believe that these difficulties have been *created* in order to bring this marvellous result. It is not so. But, according to the action of the Grace, the difficulties *having occurred*, the Grace can change them into means of greater progress. That is the attitude to be taken towards life as it is, and it will allow the Grace to give Its maximum of help with the maximum result.

That is why we can always say, "From the worst the best will arise". Not that we must *purposefully* bring or attract the worst. But, when we are faced by it, we must keep this faith and go on without hesitation, without fear, never losing an absolute quiet and a sure faith.

*

*A dark foreknowledge separated her
From all of whom she was the star and stay;
Too great to impart the peril and the pain,
In her torn depths she kept the grief to come.
As one who watching over men left blind
Takes up the load of an unwitting race,
Harbouring a foe whom with her heart she must feed,
Unknown her act, unknown the doom she faced,
Unhelped she must foresee and dread and dare.
The long-foreknown and fatal morn was here
Bringing a noon that seemed like every noon.
For Nature walks upon her mighty way*

*Unheeding when she breaks a soul, a life;
Leaving her slain behind she travels on:
Man only marks and God's all-seeing eyes.*

In the story this is because Savitri knows one year in advance what will be the fate of her companion; but like the rest of the story it is a symbol.

To know in advance what will be the circumstances of life, one ought to have the strength of a God. It is a Supreme Grace for man that the future is not revealed to him; because most men would not have the courage to live their life, if they knew what it would be. The all-embracing Divine Consciousness is needed to have the knowledge and live in the present condition of the world and, at the same time, do what one is expected to do and act according to the Divine's Will. When the consciousness of man becomes wide, strong and pure enough to know, or rather, to share the knowledge of the Divine, then this knowledge comes along with the consciousness.

A Supreme Wisdom governs all the world and each and every detail of this world. It is only through identification with the Supreme Consciousness that man acquires at once the power to know and the power to bear and the power to do.

*

*Even in this moment of her soul's despair,
In its grim rendezvous with death and fear,
No cry broke from her lips, no call for aid;
She told the secret of her woe to none:
Calm was her face and courage kept her mute.
Yet only her outward self suffered and strove;
Even her humanity was half divine:
Her spirit opened to the Spirit in all,
Her nature felt all Nature as its own.
Apart, living within, all lives she bore;
Aloof, she carried in herself the world:
Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,
Her strength was founded on the cosmic might;
The universal Mother's love was hers.*

Invocation

*Against the evil at life's afflicted roots,
Her own calamity its private sign,
Of her pangs she made a mystic poignant sword.
A solitary mind, a world-wide heart,
To the lone Immortal's unshared work she rose.*

This is the correct and exact description of the condition of those who are united with the Divine. Once this union is realised fully, the reactions of the human being exist no more. It is the same Nature working in all, it is the same Divine conscious in all. There is no more the sense of ego, and the suffering – if there is any – is not personal suffering, but some universal feeling, some universal contradiction of the Divine Consciousness.

All that happens, happens in the Divine Consciousness and no selfish or egoistic movement can exist.

There are all the movements that belong to the past and have to go, and it is because they have to go that they belong to the past. All the divine movements that are luminous and progressive and creative of unity and beauty, belong to the future; and they have to live because they belong to the future. There is, in the world, a constant fading of all that belongs to the past and the constant growth of that which belongs to the future.

When we are conscious with the Divine Consciousness, there is no attachment for what belongs to the past and there is full collaboration with what belongs to the future.

Personal motives exist no more.

*

*At first life grieved not in her burdened breast:
On the lap of earth's original somnolence
Inert, released into forgetfulness
Prone it reposed, unconscious on mind's verge,
Obtuse and tranquil like the stone and star.
In a deep cleft of silence twixt two realms
She lay remote from grief, unsawn by care,
Nothing recalling of the sorrow here.
Then a slow faint remembrance shadowlike moved,*

*And sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom
And recognised the close and lingering ache,
Deep, quiet, old, made natural to its place,
But knew not why it was there nor whence it came.*

This is the effect on the Consciousness when it descends into the material world. There is so much inertia in this world that the Consciousness gets faint, remote, uncertain. It is a general happening. All the beings from above that take birth in this world have the same experience. It takes a l-o-n-g time to remember what they are, from where they came, and to get back their conscious movement and conscious knowing.

And even when they remember, there is a kind of dulling of the knowledge. It is no more so clear, so vivid, so intense. Everything gets dulled. But it is just by bringing more and more often something of the Higher Realms of Consciousness so as to wake up a response in Matter that little by little its very nature will change, and instead of being dull and unconscious, it will wake up to a conscious response.

This is just the work that is going on and will go on until this Matter is transformed and capable of manifesting the Supreme Consciousness from which it comes.

*

*The Power that kindles mind was still withdrawn:
Heavy, unwilling were life's servitors
Like workers with no wages of delight;
Sullen, the torch of sense refused to burn;
The unassisted brain found not its past.
Only a vague earth-nature held the frame.
But now she stirred, her life shared the cosmic load.
At the summons of her body's voiceless call
Her strong far-winged spirit travelled back,
Back to the yoke of ignorance and fate,
Back to the labour and stress of mortal days,
Lighting a pathway through strange symbol dreams
Across the ebbing of the seas of sleep.*

Invocation

This is the description of how the Consciousness works its way back, bringing back remembrance, waking the faculties – more conscious by night than by day, because the inner being is more active. As the body goes to sleep, the inner being wakes up and, with it, comes back the memory of the past.

For those who are more developed in the inner being than in the body, those who came down upon earth fully conscious and had their consciousness veiled and dulled by the contact with Matter, sleep is often a revelation. Because the body is asleep, inactive, the inner consciousness is more free, and in contact with what it knows more directly.

So all those who have come down upon earth fully developed and fully conscious, at night when the body rests, remember what they were and what they can do. In fact, they actually continue to do their work at night when their body is immobile. They continue their activity and they do what they came to do upon earth, even before the body knows and can help in the work.

*

*Her house of Nature felt an unseen sway,
Illumined swiftly were life's darkened rooms,
And memory's casements opened on the hours
And the tired feet of thought approached her doors.
All came back to her: Earth and Love and Doom,
The ancient disputants, encircled her
Like giant figures wrestling in the night:
The godheads from the dim Inconscient born
Awoke to struggle and the pang divine,
And in the shadow of her flaming heart,
At the sombre centre of the dire debate,
A guardian of the unconsolated abyss
Inheriting the long agony of the globe,
A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain
Stared into space with fixed regardless eyes
That saw grief's timeless depths but not life's goal.
Afflicted by his harsh divinity,
Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased
The daily oblation of her unwept tears.*

All earth life is under the governing shadow of the vital beings. Even the Highest Divinity, when coming upon earth, cannot escape the consequence of this shadow governing all the events of the earth.

For the life upon earth to become entirely divine, harmonious, happy, painless, these forces and beings of the vital world must be conquered or destroyed, transformed, or they must disappear – that is, return to the Nirvana of their Origin.

*

*All the fierce question of man's hours relived.
The sacrifice of suffering and desire
Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy
Began again beneath the eternal Hand.
Awake she endured the moments' serried march
And looked on this green smiling dangerous world,
And heard the ignorant cry of living things.
Amid the trivial sounds, the unchanging scene
Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate.
Immobile in herself, she gathered force.
This was the day when Satyavan must die.*

It is this terrible story of the creation of earth and man as the means to save the world from suffering and destruction.

The death of Satyavan becomes the symbol of the misery of the earth's creation, of its fate and, through Savitri, of its liberation. She faces the doom in order to give the solution.

The creation is plunged in misery, suffering and death. But it can and *will* be saved through Her intervention.

(to be continued)

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Some unusual terms in Canto One

by *Shraddhavan*

From time to time in *Savitri* we come across unusual words, and words that are used in unusual ways, so that it might be difficult to find the meaning by looking in a dictionary. Our friend Narad (Richard Eggenberger) is working on a *Savitri* Lexicon that will give help on such terms. And as we proceed through *Savitri* with our study, we may pinpoint some of them in these pages.

In the second part of Canto One we find two such terms:

The first is the word ‘grain’, in the lines:

*Earth's grain that needs the sap of pleasure and tears
Rejected the undying rapture's boon:
Offered to the daughter of infinity
Her passion flower of love and doom she gave.*

The primary sense of the word ‘grain’ is a seed, or a seedlike portion of something, such as sand or metal; and the connection with ‘sap’ might make us think of ‘grain’ in the sense of a cereal, the fruit that grows from the earth.

But a second sense of the word is ‘the arrangement, size and direction of the fibres or layers in wood, leather, etc.’. And it is this sense that gives us the idiomatic expression ‘it goes against the grain’ - in the sense of being contrary to someone’s character or ‘ingrained’ ways of thinking and acting. A carpenter will prefer to avoid working ‘against the grain’ of the timber he is using, or will try to bring out the grain of a beautiful piece of wood which shows the way the free has grown.

Perhaps this is the better sense here: the way that earth-nature grows needs the sap, the life-juice, of duality, of pleasure and tears; it resisted the boon of everlasting bliss which *Savitri* came to give; instead of producing a bloom of pure delight, the earth-nature offered her a flower of passion, of love linked with death and suffering.

Another unusual usage is 'gin', in the lines:

*Thus trapped in the gin of earthly destinies,
Awaiting her ordeal's hour abode,
Outcast from her inborn felicity ...
The godhead greater by a human fate.*

Even many native English-speakers are not aware of the special sense of this word here. 'Gin', as a contraction of 'engine', is used for various kinds of machinery, such as a 'cotton-gin', used to separate the seeds from the cotton fibre. But in 19th century England it had a special connotation: a dreadfully strong man-trap with steel jaws, used by landowners to catch or discourage poachers. It was eventually made illegal because it might cripple a man for life. Once caught in those steel jaws, there was nothing you could do but await the hour of ordeal ... when the game-keeper on his rounds found you and carried you off to be punished by imprisonment, transportation or even hanging.



Narad reading at Savitri Bhavan on February 27

Savitri : an essay

by *Nolini Kanta Gupta*

This essay appears in Chapter 5, "Poetry and Mysticism" of Nolini's book Evolution and the Earthly Destiny, pp. 257-273. The first two sections were read at Savitri Bhavan by Nirodbaran, in September 1998.

(1)

Savitri, the poem, the word of Sri Aurobindo, is the cosmic Answer to the cosmic Question. And *Savitri*, the person, the Godhead, the Divine Woman, is the Divine's response to the human aspiration.

The world is a great question mark. It is a riddle, eternal and ever-recurring. Man has faced the riddle and sought to arrive at a solution since he has been given a mind to seek and interrogate.

What is this universe? From where has it come? Whither is it going? What is the purpose of it all? Why is man here? What is the object of his existence?

Such is the mode of human aspiration. And Ashwapati in his quest begins to explore the world and see what it is, the way it is built up. He observes it rising tier upon tier, level upon level of consciousness. He mounts these stairs, takes cognisance of the modes and functions of each and passes on enriched by the experiences that each contributes to his developing consciousness. The ascent he finds is from ignorance to knowledge. The human being starts from the darkest bed of ignorance, the solid basis of rock as it were, the body, the material existence. Ignorance here is absolute inconscience. Out of the total absence of consciousness, the being begins to awake and rise to a gradually developing - widening, deepening and heightening - consciousness. That is how Ashwapati advances, ascends from a purely bodily life and consciousness, to the next rung of the ladder, the first appearance and expression of life-force, the vital consciousness - energies and forms of the small lower vital. He moves on, moves upward, there is a growing light in

and mixed with the obscurity; ignorance begins to shed its hard and dark coatings one by one and gives place to directed and motivated energies. He meets beings and creatures appropriate to those levels crawling and stirring and climbing, moved by the laws governing the respective regions. In this way Ashwapati passes on into the higher vital, into the border of the mental.

Ashwapati now observes with a clear vividness that all these worlds and the beings and forces that inhabit them are stricken as it were with a bar sinister branded upon their bodies. In spite of an inherent urge of ascension the way is not a straight road but devious and crooked, breaking into by-lanes and blind alleys. There is a great corruption and perversion of natural movements towards Truth: falsehoods and pretensions, arrogance of blindness reign here in various degrees. Ashwapati sought to know the wherefore of it all. So he goes behind, dives down and comes into a region that seems to be the source and basis of all ignorance and obscurity and falsehood. He comes into the very heart of the Night, the abyss of consciousness. He meets there the Mother of Evil and the sons of darkness. He stands before

*... the gate of the false Infinite,
An eternity of disastrous absolutes.* (p.221)

Here are the forces that pull down and lure away to perdition all that man's aspirations and the world's urge seek to express and build of Divine things. It is the world in which the forces of the original inconscience find their primitive play. They are dark and dangerous: they prey upon earth's creatures who are not content with being vassals of darkness but try to move to the Light.

Dangerous is this passage for the celestial aspirant :

*Where the red Wolf waits by the fordless stream
And Death's black eagles scream to the precipice ...* (p.230)

He must be absolutely vigilant, absolutely on his guard, absolutely sincere.

*Here must the traveller of the upward way -
For daring Hell's kingdoms winds the heavenly route -*

Invocation

*Pause or pass slowly through that perilous space,
A prayer upon his lips and the great Name.* (p.210)

But there is no escape. The divine traveller has to pass through this region. For it lies athwart his path to the goal. Not only so, it is necessary to go through this Night. For Ashwapati

*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* (p.231)

Ashwapati now passes into the higher luminous regions. He enters regions of larger breath and wider movement - the higher vital and then into the yet more luminous region of the higher mind. He reaches the heavens where immortal sages and the divinities and the gods themselves dwell. Even these Ashwapati finds to be only partial truths, various aspects, true but limited, of the One Reality beyond. Thus he leaves all behind and reaches into the single sole Reality, the transcendental Truth of things, the status vast and infinite and eternal, immutable existence and consciousness and bliss.

*A Vastness brooded free from sense of Space,
An Everlastingness cut off from Time...*

A stillness absolute, incommunicable... (pp.308, 310)

Here seems to be the end of the quest, and one would fain stay there ever and ever in that status

*...occult, impenetrable,-
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.* (p.309)

Ashwapati was perhaps about to be lured into that Bliss but suddenly a doubt enters into him - there is a hesitation, a questioning; he hears a voice:

*The ego is dead; we are free from being and care,
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.
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?
On what dead bank on the Eternal's road? (p.310)*

Ashwapati veers round. A new perception, a new consciousness begins to open within him. A new urge moves him. He has to start on a new journey, a new quest and achievement. The world exists neither as a Truth nor as an illusion in itself. It exists in and through the Mother of the worlds. There is a motive in its existence and it is her will that is being worked out in that existence. The world moves for the fulfilment of a purpose that is being evolved through earth-life and human-life. The ignorant incomplete human life upon earth is not the be-all and end-all of the life here. That life has to evolve into a life of light and love and joy perfect here below. Nature as it is now will be transmuted into a new pure and radiant substance. Ashwapati is filled with this new urge and inspired by this new vision. He sees and understands now the truth of his life, the goal that has to be achieved, the great dream that has to be realised here upon earth in and through matter. He sees how nature has been labouring ceaselessly and tirelessly through aeons through eternity onward. He is now almost impatient to see the consummation here and now. The divine Voice however shows him the wisdom of working patiently, hastening slowly. The Voice admonishes him:

*I ask thee not to merge thy heart of flame
In the Immobile's wide uncaring bliss...
Thy soul was born to share the laden Force;
Obey thy nature and fulfil thy fate:
Accept the difficulty and godlike toil,
For the slow-paced omniscient purpose live...
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour. (pp.335,341)*

But the human flame once kindled is hard to put down. It seeks an immediate result. It does not understand the fullness of time. So Ashwapati cries out:

Invocation

*Heavy and long are the years our labour counts
And still the seals are firm upon man's soul,
And weary is the ancient Mother's heart...
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time...
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate."* (p.345)

This great cry of the human soul moved the Divine Mother and she granted at last its prayer. She answered by bestowing of her motherly comfort on the yearning thirsty soul:

*O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law...
A seed shall be sown in Deaths'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)

And She herself came down upon earth as Ashwapati's daughter to undertake the human labour and accomplish the Divine work.

(2)

The Divine Mother is upon earth as a human creature. She is to change the mortal earth into an immortal paradise. Earth at present is a bundle of material inconscience. The Supreme Consciousness has manifested itself as supreme unconsciousness. The Divine has lost itself in pulverising itself, scattering itself abroad. Immortality is thus entombed here below in death. The task of the incarnate Supreme Consciousness is to revive the death-bound divinity, to free the human consciousness in its earthly life from the obscurity of the material unconsciousness, re-install it in its original radiant status of the Divine Consciousness.

Such is Savitri's mission. This mission has two sessions or periods. The first, that of preparation; the second, that of fulfilment. Savitri, the human

embodiment, was given only twelve months out of her earthly life and in that short space of time she had to do all the preparation. She knew her work from her very birth, she was conscious of her nature and the mission she was entrusted with. Now she is facing the crisis. Death is there standing in front. What is to be done, how is she to proceed? She was told she is to conquer Death, she is to establish immortal life upon mortal earth. The Divine Voice rings out:

Arise, O soul, and vanquish Time and Death. (p.474)

Yes, she is ready to do it, not for herself, but for her Love, the being who was the life of her life. Savitri is the Divine Consciousness, but here in the mortal body she is clothed in the human consciousness; it is the human consciousness that she is to lead upward and beyond, and it is in and through the human consciousness that the Divine Realisation has to be expressed and established. The human Savitri declares: If Death is conquered, it is for the sake of Satyavan living eternally with her. She seems to say: What I wish to see is the living Satyavan and I united with him for ever. I do not need an earthly life without him; with him I prefer to be in another world if necessary away from the obscurity and turmoil of this earth here.

*“My strength is taken from me and given to Death,
Why should I lift my hands to the shut heavens...
Why should I strive with earth’s unyielding laws
Or stave off death’s inevitable hour?
This surely is best to pactise with my fate
And follow close behind my lover’s step
And pass through night from twilight to the sun...?”* (p.475)

But a thunderous voice descends from above shaking Savitri to the very basis of her existence.

*“And what shall thy soul say when it wakes and knows
The work was left undone for which it came?”* (p.475)

Thus a crisis very similar to that which Ashwapati had to face now confronts

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Savitri also. Both of them were at the crossroads away from the earth in the pure delights of the heavens or in the world labouring on earth's soil. Savitri's soul was now revealed to her in its fullness. She viewed the mighty destiny for which she had come down and the great work she had to achieve here upon earth, not any personal or individual human satisfaction or achievement but a cosmic fulfilment, a global human realisation. The godhead in Savitri is now fully awake, established in its plenitude - the Divinity incarnate in the human frame. All the godheads, all the goddess-emanations now entered into her and moulded the totality of her mighty stature.

Here begins then the second stage of her mission, - her work and achievement, the conquest of Death. Only the Divine human being can conquer Death. Savitri follows Death step by step, revealing gradually the mystery of death, his personality and his true mission, although the dark God thinks that it is he who is taking away Satyavan and Savitri along with him, to his own home, his black annihilation. For Death is that in its first appearance, it is utter destruction, nothingness, non-existence. So the mighty Godhead declares in an imperious tone to the mortal woman Savitri:

*“This is my silent dark immensity,
This is the home of everlasting Night,
This is the secrecy of Nothingness
Entombing the vanity of life's desires...
Hopedst thou still always to last and love?”* (p.586)

Indeed Death is not merely a destruction of the body, it is in reality nothingness, non-being. The moment being, existence, reality manifested itself, established itself as a material fact, simultaneously there came out and stood against it, its opposite: non-being, non-existence, non-reality; against an everlasting 'yes' there was posited an everlasting 'no'. And in fact, this everlasting No proves to be a greater effective reality, it has wound itself around every constituent atom of the universe. That is what has expressed itself in the material domain as the irreversible degradation of energy and in the mortal world it is denial and doubt and falsehood - it is that which brings about failure in life, and frustration, misery and grief. But then Savitri's vision penetrated beyond and she saw, Death is a way of achieving the end more swiftly and more completely. The negation is an apparent obstacle in order to increase, to

purify and intensify the speed of the process by which the world and humanity is being remodelled and recreated. This terrible Godhead pursues the human endeavour till the end; until he finds that nothing more is to be done; then his mission too is fulfilled. (We are reminded here of a parallelism in Goethe's conception of the role of Satan (the Negative Principle) in human affairs. Satan is not merely a destroying devil, he is a constructive angel. For it is he

*Who must goad and tease
And toil to serve creation*

whenever

Man's efforts sink below his proper level.)

So a last cry, the cry of a desperate dying Death, pierces the universe and throws the final challenge to Savitri:

*O human claimant to immortality,
Reveal thy power, lay bare thy spirit's force,
Then will I give back to thee Satyavan.
Or if the Mighty Mother is with thee,
Show me her face that I may worship her;
Let deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death... (p.664)*

Death's desire, his prayer too is fulfilled. He faces Savitri. But this is not the Savitri against whom he fought. Whose is this voice?

*I hail thee almighty and victorious Death,
Thou grandiose Darkness of the Infinite...
I have given thee thy awful shape of dread
And thy sharp sword of terror and grief and pain
To force the soul of man to struggle for light... (p.666)*

What happens thereafter is something strange and tremendous and miraculous. Light flashed all around, a leaping tongue of fire spread out and the dark form of Death was burnt - not to ashes but to blazing sparks of light:

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His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured. (p.667)

Thus Death came to his death - not to death in reality but to a new incarnation. Death returned to his original divine Reality, an emanation of the Divine Mother.

*A secret splendour rose revealed to sight
Where once the vast embodied Void had stood.
Night the dim mask had grown a wonderful face.* (p.679)

In that domain of pure transcendent light stood face to face the human Savitri and the transformed Satyavan.

(3)

Savitri has entered into the deathless luminous world where there is only faultless beauty, stainless delight and an unmeasured self-gathered strength. Savitri heard the melodious voice of the Divine:

You have now left earth's miseries and its impossible conditions, you have reached the domain of unalloyed felicity and you need not go back to the old turbulent life: dwell here both of you and enjoy eternal bliss.

But Savitri answered firm and moveless:

*I climb not to thy everlasting Day,
Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night...
Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
Thy servitudes on earth are greater, king,
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.* (p.685-6)

Once more Savitri, even like Ashwapati, has to make a choice between two destinies, two soul-movements - although the choice is already made even before it is offered to her. Ashwapati had to abandon, we know, the silent immutable transcendent status of pure light in order to bathe in this lower earthly light. Savitri too, as the prototype of human consciousness, chose and turned to this light of the earth.

The Rishi of the Upanishad declared : they who worship only Ignorance enter into darkness, but they who worship knowledge alone enter into a still darker darkness. This world of absolute light which Savitri names 'everlasting day' is what the Upanishadic Rishi sees and describes as the golden lid upon the face of the Sun. The Sun is the complete integral light of the Truth in its fullness. The golden covering has to be removed if one is to see the Sun itself - to live the integral life, one has to possess the integral truth.

So it is that Savitri comes down upon earth and standing upon its welcoming soil speaks to Satyavan as though consoling him for having abandoned their own abode in heaven to dwell among mortal men :

*Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not our earth...
Still am I she who came to thee mid the murmur
Of sunlit leaves upon this forest verge...
All that I was before, I am to thee still...* (p.719)

Voicing Satyavan's thought and feeling, all humanity, the whole world in joy and gratefulness utters this *mantra* of thanksgiving :

*If this is she of whom the world has heard,
Wonder no more at any happy change.* (p.723)

(4)

In her *Prayer and Meditations* the Mother says:

*Comme l'homme n'a pas voulu du repas que j'avais
préparé avec tant d'amour et de soin, alors j'ai invité le
Dieu à le prendre.*

*Et mon Dieu, Tu as accepté mon invitation et Tu es venu
T'asseoir à ma table; et en échange de ma pauvre et humble
offrande Tu m'as octroyé la finale liberation!
(Since the man refused the meal I had prepared with so
much love and care, I invoke the God to take it.*

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My God Thou hast accepted my invitation, Thou hast come to sit at my table, and in exchange for my poor and humble offering Thou hast granted to me the last liberation.)

What is this banquet that she prepared for man and which man refused? It is nothing else than the Life Divine here below - the life of the Gods enjoying immortality, full of the supreme light and power, love and delight. Man refused because for him it is something too high, too great. Being a creature earthbound and of small dimensions he can seize and appreciate only small things, little specks of a material world. He refused, first of all, because of his ignorance; he does not know, nor is he capable of conceiving that there are such things as immortal life, divinity, unobscured light, griefless love, or a radiant, tranquil, invisible energy. He does not know, and yet he is arrogant, arrogant in his little knowledge, his petty power, in his blind self-sufficiency. Furthermore, besides ignorance and arrogance there is an element of revolt in him, for in his half-wakefulness, with his rudimentary consciousness, if ever he came in contact with something that is above and beyond him, if a shadow of another world happens to cross his threshold, he is not at peace, does not want to recognise but denies and even curses it.

The Divine Mother brings solace and salvation. For the Grace it is such a small and easy thing, it is a wonder how even such a simple, natural, inconspicuous thing could be refused by anybody.

If man finds no use for the gift she has brought down for him, naturally she will take it back and return it to Him to whom it belongs, for all things belong to the Supreme Lord, even She belongs to Him, as She is one with Him. The Gita says: there is nothing else than the Brahman in the creation - the doer, the doing and the deed, all are essentially He. In the sacrifice that is this moving, acting universe, the offerer, the offering and the offered, each and every element is the Brahman - *brahmarpanam brahma havih*.

This gesture of the Divine Mother teaches us also what should be the approach and attitude of human beings in all their activities. In all our movements we should always remember Him, refer to Him, consider that in the last analysis each and every movement comes from Him and we must always offer them to Him, return them to the parent-source from where they come; therein lies freedom, the divine detachment which the

individual must possess always in order to be one with Him feel, one's identity with Him.

(5)

Man's refusal of the Divine Grace has been depicted very beautifully and graphically in a perfect dramatic form by Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri*. The refusal comes one by one from the three constituent parts of the human being. First of all man is a material being, a bodily creature, as such he is a being of ignorance and misery, of brutish blindness. He does not know that there is something other than his present state of misfortune and dark fate. He is not even aware that there may be anything higher or nobler than the ugliness he is steeped in. He lives an earth-life with an earth-consciousness, moves mechanically and helplessly through vicissitudes over which he has no control. Even so the material life is not a mere despicable thing; behind its darkness, behind its sadness, behind all its infirmities, the Divine Mother is there upholding it and infusing into it her grace and beauty. Indeed, she is one with this world of sorrows, she has in effect become it in her infinite pity and love so that this material body of hers may become conscious of its divine substance and manifest her true form. But the human being individualised and separated in egoistic consciousness has lost the sense of its inner reality and is vocal only in regard to its outward formulation. It is natural for physical man therefore to reject and deny the physical Godhead in him, he even curses it and wants to continue as he is. He yells therefore in ignorance and anguish:

*I am the Man of Sorrows, I am he
Who is nailed on the wide cross of the Universe; ...
I toil like the animal, like the animal die.
I am man the rebel, man the helpless serf;...
I know my fate will ever be the same,
It is my Nature's work that cannot change:...
I was made for evil, evil is my lot,
Evil I must be and by evil live;
Nought other can I do but be myself;
What Nature made, that I must remain.* (p.505-507)

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The Divine glory manifests itself for a moment to the earthly consciousness, but man refuses to be pulled out of his pigsty. The Grace withdraws, but in its Supreme Consciousness of unity and love consoles the fallen creature and gives it the assurance:

*One day I will return, a bringer of strength...
Misery shall pass abolished from the earth;
The world shall be freed from the anger of the Beast... (p.507)*

The basic status or foundation of Man, in fact of creation, is earth, the material organization. After the body, next comes the life and Life-power. Here man attains a larger dynamic being of energy and creative activity. Here too, on this level, what man is or what he achieves is only a reflection, a shadow, but mostly a misshapen resemblance, an aberration of the divine reality that hides behind, and yet half-reveals itself. That godhead is the Mother's form of Might, we name it variously, Kali and Durga and Lakshmi, for it is Her Grace that is ultimately expressed and fulfilled in this world of vital power. It is because of this realising power of the Mother that

*Slowly the Light grows greater in the East,
Slowly the world progresses on God's road.
His seal is on my task, it cannot fail;
I shall hear the silver swing of heaven's gates
When God comes out to meet the soul of the world (p.510)*

But man in the strength of his ignorance and arrogance does not recognise this Goddess. Human power, we have said, is a reflection, a shadow of the Divine Power - but most often it is a deformed, a perverted Divine Power. Man is full of his egoistic vital self-confidence: he believes it is his own will that is realising all, all which is achieved here; whatever he has created, it is through the might of his own merit and whatever new creations will be done in the future will be through the Grace of his own genius. A mighty vital selfhood obscures his consciousness and he sees nothing else, understands nothing else beyond the reach of that limited vision. This is the Rakshasa, this is the Ausura in man. Here is his philosophy of life:

*I climb, a claimant to the throne of heaven.
The last born of the earth I stand the first...
I am God still unevolved in human form;
Even if he is not, he becomes in me. ...
No magic can surpass my magic's skill.
There is no miracle I shall not achieve.* (p.511-512)

So this vital being in man in his Rakshasic hunger and Asuric self-conceit rejects the Divine Power that is in fact behind him too, supporting him. The Goddess, in the wake of her predecessor, goes back from where she came, leaving however a consoling word, assuring that one day she will return; she will bide her time. For one day,

*The cry of the ego shall be hushed within,
Its lion-roar that claims the world as food,
All shall be might and bliss and happy force.* (p.514)

In his body man is the beast, in the vital he is the Rakshasa and the Asura, he rises now into the mind. And in the mind he is the human being proper, he has attained his own humanity. Here he has received the light of knowledge, a wider and deeper consciousness, he has unveiled the secret mysteries of Nature, brought to play hidden forces that were unknown and untapped. All these achievements have been possible for man because it is the Mother of Light that is behind and has come forward to shed something of her luminous presence around. But man has no inkling of the presence of this luminous Deity, his own light has been a screen in front of the inner divine light. It is not possible for the human mind to seize the higher light: his consciousness, his knowledge is too narrow, too superficial, too dull to comprehend what is beyond. This Divine Light is also a thing of delight, the consciousness it possesses is also the very essence of Joy and Felicity. But all that is occult to the human knowledge. Man considers Truth is his property, whatever truth is there his understanding can grasp it and bring it to play: Truth and Reality are commensurate with his own consciousness, his mental comprehension. What others speak of as realities of the spirit, truths transcendental, are an illusion and delusion. This is what is usually known

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as the scientific mind, the rational consciousness. An orthodox scientific mentality is in the first instance a thing of overweening self-confidence, of arrogant self-assertion. It declares in its formidable pride:

*I have seized the cosmic energies for my use.
I have pored on her infinitesimal elements
And her invisible atoms have unmasked...
If God is at work his secrets I have found.* (p.518-519)

This imperiousness in man seems however to be a sheer imperviousness: it is a mask, a hollow appearance; for with all his knowledge, at the end he has attained no certainty, no absoluteness. There is something behind, all the outer bravado he flourishes has a sense of helplessness, at times almost as pitiable as that of a child; for he finds at last

*All is a speculation or a dream:
In the end the world itself becomes a doubt.* (p.519)

It is true that his survey of the universe, his knowledge of boundless Nature and the inexhaustible multiplicities of creation have given him a sense of the endless and the infinite, but he has not the necessary light or capacity to follow those lines of infinity; on the contrary, there is a shrinking in him at the touch of such vastnesses; his small humanity makes him desperately earth-bound, his aspiration follows the lines of least resistance:

*Our smallness saves us from the Infinite.
In a frozen grandeur lone and desolate
Call me not to die the great eternal Death...
Human I am, human let me remain
Till in the Inconscient I fall dumb and sleep.* (p.520)

Thus, this Goddess too is rejected like her previous comrades, the Mother of Light, the Deity who is properly the guide and ruler of man's own destiny. Even she is refused, but hers is not to complain, in tranquil quietness she brings comfort and hope to the troubled human mind and says she goes to come back in the fullness of her incarnation. She utters divinely:

*One day I shall return, His hands in mine,
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,
Then shall the divine family be born.* (p.521)

(6)

To the inconscient and ignorant human nature, Savitri, the Divine's delegate, presents the powers and personalities that are behind man's present infirmities - these broken images of true realities lying scattered about in the front of existence. Man will be made conscious, he is being made conscious step by step precisely by such relations from time to time. The Vedic image is that of the eternal succession of dawns whose beginning no one knows, nor the end, that creation proceeds from light to light, from consciousness to higher reaches of consciousness. From the material life through the vital and the mental life he first reaches the spiritual life and finally the Life Divine. From the animal he rises to manhood, and in the end to Godhood.

But there are intermediaries. The fullness of the realisation depends on the fullness of the incarnation. The Evil in the body, the Evil in the vital, the Evil in the mind are, whatever their virulence and intransigence, subsidiary agents, for they serve only a mightier Lord. The first original Sin is Death, the God of Denial, of non-existence. That is the very source - *fons et origo* - the fount and origin of all the misfortune, the fate that terrestrial life involves. This demon, this anti-Divine has to be tracked and destroyed or dissolved into its original origin. This is the Nihil that negates the Divine - *Asat* that seeks to nullify *Sat* and that has created this world of ignorance and misery, that is to say, in its outward pragmatic form. So Savitri sees the one source and knows the remedy. Therefore she pursues death, pursues him to the end, that is, to the end of death. The luminous energy of the Supreme faces now its own shadow and blazes it up. The flaming Light corrodes into the substance of the darkness and makes of it her own transfigured substance. This then is the gift that Savitri brings to man, the Divine's own immortality, transfusing the mortality that reigns now upon earth.

In view of the necessity of the age, for the crucial, critical and, in a way, final consummation of Nature's evolutionary urge, the Divine Himself has to come down in the fullness of His divinity; for only then can the earth be radically changed and wholly transformed. In the beginning the Divine once came down, but by sacrificing Himself, being pulverised, scattered and lost in the infinitesimals of a universal, material, unconsciousness. Once again He has to come down, but this time in the supreme glory of His victorious Luminosity.

This then is the occult, the symbolic sense of the Mother's gesture, turning away from man with her gifts and returning to the Divine Himself, and inviting Him as the chief guest of honour upon this earth. Or, in the Vedic image, He is to come as the flaming front and leader of the journeying sacrifice that is this universal existence.



*Listening to Georges van Vrechem under the trees
at Savitri Bhavan on February 6th*

News of Savitri Bhavan

February to March 2000

February is always a special month in Auroville. Both the Mother's Birthday, on February 21, and the anniversary of Auroville's Foundation, on February 28, are dates that are charged with significance for us, and the week between them, known as "The Birthday Week", is always packed with events and presentations. So it is a natural time for friends and visitors from all over the world to gravitate here. This year was extra-special, partly because this year of 2000 seems to represent a new beginning on many levels, to mark a new phase in the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a new step in Auroville's growth, and partly because, as a Leap Year, it brought a celebration of "The Golden Day", February 29, the eleventh since the Supramental Manifestation took place in 1956 ... twelve "Golden Days" altogether so far.

At Savitri Bhavan, we marked this period of remembrance and celebration by a unique exhibition, *About Savitri - Part Two*. This was made possible by the generosity of Huta, who permitted us to display unpublished material entrusted to her by the Mother. Twenty-two panels carried the explanations of Canto Two of *Savitri* given by the Mother to Huta, who tape-recorded them, then transcribed them to show to the Mother, who corrected and approved the texts for publication. Alongside the Mother's comments were the corresponding lines from *Savitri*, as well as reproductions of the accompanying paintings made by Huta according to the Mother's instructions and inspiration. For further details about this work, please see Huta's introduction on pages 4-5 of this issue. While *About Savitri - Part One* appeared in book form in 1972, Parts Two, Three and Four are yet to be published. So we are most thankful to Huta for permission to present the Mother's explanations in serial form in our journal, in addition to the exhibition. *About Savitri - Part Two* was on display from the first week of February up to March 14th.

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During this period too, we were privileged to host a number of outstanding guest-speakers.

The first, on February 6, was Aurovilian Georges van Vreckhem, author of *Beyond the Human Species - the life and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, a book which has been highly appreciated and translated into many languages. At the moment Georges is working on a biography of the Mother, and in his inimitably vivid way he presented a selection of extracts from it to an appreciative audience of about 200 people, under the trees in the garden.

The following Sunday, February 13, we were blessed by another visit from our beloved eldest brother Nirodbaran. We had requested him to read us some passages from *Savitri*. He chose the description of Savitri from Book One, Canto Two : “*All in her pointed to a nobler kind ...*”, and some passages from Book Three, The Book of the Divine Mother. He also shared with us his own translation of a Bengali article by Nolini Kanta Gupta. Responding to our welcome, Nirod-da said :

Well friends, I really cannot thank you enough for giving me this opportunity to read *Savitri*. I am not a good reader, so it is not for that that I thank you. Then for what? It takes me back to my halcyon days in the 1940s. What happened then? I lived in the presence of the Lord for some hours every day. He dictated to me practically three-fourths of *Savitri*. How did I get that opportunity? It is the Divine Mother who gave me the opportunity, as you know, to be his ‘scribe’. I did not understand much then of what is meant by ‘scribe’, what is his position, what is his function. But now you are calling me here because I had that opportunity. But it is not of being a scribe that I am proud. I am proud, and every one of you would be proud if you had the opportunity given to you. Every day at a particular time to sit before Sri Aurobindo, and he, lying comfortably on his bed, or half-reclined, and dictating, quietly, simply, in a pure accent, line after line, coming from nowhere as it were. And sitting before him by his side I was scribing, line by line. So today I am going back to those days, and you can imagine my feelings - going back, bringing to my memory all those days one after the other, sitting before him and writing whatever he was

dictating. What a grand opportunity it is, I am sure you can imagine. What am I? Nothing - a young man of no importance. I didn't know much English. But still I was the scribe. And he is quietly sitting, dictating, line after line, and I am enjoying, his company as well as his English, and as well as his sweetness and softness - everything filling my small store - for one or two hours every day. The clock strikes eleven thirty, I come with my notes, with my pencils etc. Then sitting there two hours, enjoying his voice, enjoying his company, and enjoying many other things which are too deep to speak about - this is my treasure. After that of course there have been a lot of troubles, a lot of difficulties, but the sense, the feeling, the remembrance of those days gave me some solace. And I am sure that wherever I go, even in the next life, this memory will be with me. Throughout this morning I was having that recollection. So I thank you from the depth of my heart that you have given me this occasion.



Nirodbaran answering students' questions in the Savitri Bhavan garden, during his visit on February 13.

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Another most welcome guest during this time was Richard Eggenberger, named “Narad” by the Mother in 1972. Narad, poet, singer and gardener, joined the Ashram in 1960, and was later entrusted by the Mother with responsibility for the Matrimandir gardens. In 1971 the Mother gave him her blessings for preparing slides of all the 450-odd “Meditations on Savitri” paintings she and Huta had made together. The Meditations on Savitri slide-shows of the paintings, accompanied by the Mother’s readings of the selected passages and her own organ music, were shown in the Ashram and in Auroville during 1972, Sri Aurobindo’s Centenary Year. The slides made by Narad were later used as the basis for the Meditations on Savitri films prepared by Michel Klostermann and his team. During his three-month stay in the Ashram this year, Narad and his wife Mary-Helen were interviewing and recording the responses of senior disciples of Sri Aurobindo to their questions about *Savitri*. This work was a preparation for two projects they are deeply committed to.

One of these is the compilation and publication of a “Savitri Lexicon” - a project first suggested to Narad more than 30 years ago by M.P. Pandit. Only now is he able to take it up and devote a major part of his time and energies to the necessary research. The second is a related dream: realisation of a website on the Internet devoted exclusively to *Savitri*.

In the early of days of Auroville, Narad was one of the very few people to whom the Mother gave blessings for public reading of *Savitri*. Regular readings used to be held in the Matrimandir Nursery on Sunday mornings, early precursors of our present Sunday morning study-circles. So we were very happy when Narad agreed to give us a reading on Sunday February 27. Along with a few additional selections, he read the whole of Book 5, Canto 2, “Satyavan”.

During his recent stay in the Ashram Narad, in his capacity as a gardener and expert on tropical trees, carried out some much-needed pruning on the “Service Tree” which grows in the Ashram courtyard, shading the samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The tree, planted in 1930, is now 70 years old - rather an advanced age for a *gul mohur*; but it is still in excellent health. Narad brought with him to Savitri Bhavan a child of that Service Tree, a sapling grown from one of its seeds, which he planted at the entrance to our new building, delighting us with some anecdotes about its parent tree, to which the Mother attributed a unique significance.

For the last ten years, twice each year, in August and February after the darshan, Dr. Mangesh V. Nadkarni has been holding a Savitri Study Camp in the hall of the Sri Aurobindo Society's Beach Office in Pondicherry. And it has gradually become a custom with him to accept our invitation to come and speak at Savitri Bhavan at the end of the Camp. Naturally many of the people who had been enjoying his talks in Pondicherry felt like accompanying him on the visit to Auroville. So last year it was decided to include a final session at Savitri Bhavan as an integral part of the camp. The first major event here after the inauguration of the first phase building was Dr. Nadkarni's wonderful exposition of Book Seven, the book of Savitri's yoga, a transcript of which was published in our November issue (*Invocation 5*). This happy occasion was repeated on the afternoon of Sunday March 5th, when about 350 guests joined us to enjoy Dr. Nadkarni's final address, dealing with Book Eight, the Book of Death. We look forward to publishing the transcript of this talk too in a forthcoming issue of *Invocation*.



*Professor Manoj Das speaking under the trees
at Savitri Bhavan on March 12th*

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To round off the festive season, on Sunday March 12, we had the very enjoyable experience of hearing Professor Manoj Das of the Ashram speaking on the mythic background to the Savitri legend. His two special skills, of story-telling and scholarship, combined to make this a fascinating presentation of some other ancient legends dealing with the problems of Death and Immortality.

The Savitri Study Circle in Auroville started meeting weekly from November 24, 1994. After a few introductory sessions, we started reading *Savitri* at the beginning. The way we proceed is as follows: when embarking on a new canto, everyone present reads in turn, according to their feeling, anything from half a page to two pages of the text. In this way we go through a whole canto to get an overview of it, before turning back to the beginning of it. We then read it a second time, two or three sentences at a time. After each short passage has been read, we keep silent for a while - at least long enough for everyone to re-read the passage silently to themselves. Then if there are any comments or questions, we share them before moving on to the next passage. We also take the help of any written comments we can find, or the remarks of any visiting speaker. Proceeding in this way we came to the end of our first full reading of *Savitri* on Sunday January 16 - just over five years after we began. Every day throughout February, there was continuous reading of *Savitri* for one to one and a half hours, in the afternoons, under the trees in the garden, starting at the beginning on February 1st and reaching the end of Book Twelve on February 29th. And on March 19th we had the joy of beginning our reading and study again, at that magnificent first line, which resounds like the tolling of a great bell: *It was the hour before the Gods awake*. The Book of Beginnings, a new beginning for our journey of exploration, our immersion in the atmosphere of *Savitri*.