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*A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
Empowered to force the door denied and closed
Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.*

*(Sketch by the Mother, given to Huta for Meditations on Savitri
Book One, Canto 2, picture 17)*

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The Mother's experience of 29.2.1956

This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that "the time has come", and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow.

(MCW 15 : 202)

From Sri Aurobindo's letters:
about passages in
Book One, Canto Two (second part)

*Almost they saw who lived within her light
Her playmate in the sempiternal spheres
Descended from its unattainable realms
In her attracting advent's luminous wake,
The white-fire dragon-bird of endless bliss
Drifting with burning wings above her days.*

... the purpose is to create a large luminous trailing repetitive movement like the flight of the Bird with its dragon tail of white fire.

1936

Q: In the mystical region, is the dragon bird any relation of your Bird of Fire with 'gold-white wings', or your Hippogriff with 'face lustred, pale-blue-lined'? And why do you write: 'What to say about him? One can only see'?

All birds of that region are relatives. But this is the bird of eternal Ananda, while the Hippogriff is the divinised Thought and the Bird of Fire is the Agni-bird, psychic and tapas. All that however is to mentalise too much and mentalising always takes most of the life out of spiritual things. That is why I say it can be seen but nothing said about it.

1936

*

One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.

Q: Who is 'One' here? Is it Love, the godhead mentioned before? If not, does this 'dubious godhead with his torch of pain' correspond to the 'image white and high of godlike Pain' spoken of earlier? Or is it

Time whose 'snare' occurs in the last line of the preceding passage?

Love? It is not Love who meets the burdened great and governs the fate of men! Nor is it Pain. Time also does not do these things - it only provides the field and movement of events. If I had wanted to give a name, I would have done it, but it has purposely to be left nameless because it is indefinable. He may use Love or Pain or Time or any of these powers but is not any of them. You can call him the Master of the Evolution, if you like.

1936

*

This truth broke in in a triumph of fire.

The line you object to on account of forced rhythm, 'in a triumph of fire' has not been so arranged through negligence. It was very deliberately done and deliberately maintained. If it were altered the whole effect of rhythmic meaning and suggestion which I intended would be lost ... the rhythm here is a turn of art and not a manufacture. ... In the first part of the line the rhythm is appropriate to the violent breaking in of the truth while in the second half it expresses a high exultation and exaltation in the inrush. This is brought out by the two long and highly stressed vowels in the first syllable of "triumph" and in the word " fire" (which in the elocution of the line have to be given their full force), coming after a pyrrhic with two short syllables between them. If one slurs over the slightly weighted short syllable in "triumph" where the concluding consonants exercise a certain check and delay in the voice, one could turn this half line into a very clumsy double anapaest, the first a glide and the second a stumble; this would be bad elocution and contrary to the natural movement of the words.

1946

About Savitri

Introduction by Huta *

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 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 started to explain *Savitri* to me, and on January 28 she gave the name "About Savitri" to this work. 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.

Our work continued up to 9 August 1970, when the Mother had to suspend it on account of her health. The last passage she could comment on is halfway through Book One, Canto Four.

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 guidance and inspiration. Three more volumes of "About Savitri", containing the Mother's explanations of Canto Two, Canto Three and the first half of Canto Four are in preparation and awaiting publication.

The Mother's wonderful comments give a unique insight into Sri Aurobindo's masterpiece, in the light of her own experiences during the time when our work was going on. My profound gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother for their Grace and Love.

Huta

* For a more detailed account by Huta, see Invocation 7 pp. 5 - 6

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

Book One, Canto Two - second part

*Till then no mournful line had barred this ray.
On the frail breast of this precarious earth,
Since her orb'd sight in its breath-fastened house,
Opening in sympathy with happier stars
Where life is not exposed to sorrowful change,
Remembered beauty death-claimed lids ignore
And wondered at this world of fragile forms
Carried on canvas-strips of shimmering Time,
The impunity of unborn Might's was hers.
Although she leaned to bear the human load,
Her walk kept still the measure of the gods.
Earth's breath had failed to stain that brilliant glass:
Unsmear'd with the dust of our mortal atmosphere
It still reflected heaven's spiritual joy.
Almost they saw who lived within her light
Her playmate in the sempiternal spheres
Descended from its unattainable realms
In her attracting advent's luminous wake,
The white-fire dragon bird of endless bliss
Drifting with burning wings above her days:
Heaven's tranquil shield guarded the missioned child.*

Although she had accepted the burden of all the earth's misery, the influence of the Origin was so strong that it could not change in her this constant Peace, this wide understanding, this universal Love, that was making of her a messenger of the highest Consciousness.

*

*A glowing orbit was her early term,
Years like gold raiment of the gods that pass;
Her youth sat throned in calm felicity.
But joy cannot endure until the end:*

*There is a darkness in terrestrial things
That will not suffer long too glad a note.
On her too closed the inescapable Hand:
The armed Immortal bore the snare of Time.*

The story of the earth is an ascent from darkness and unconsciousness to Light and Consciousness. The journey is, in spite of *so many* years, just at its beginning still, and only in front of us is the assurance of the Light that will be.

When we look back, we look at so much darkness, suffering, misery, that if we do not have the inner consciousness and its assurance of future Victory, truly we could say, as so many have said in the past, that to escape misery we must get out of earth-life.

Now Savitri has brought the promise and the certitude that Light will prevail and that misery will go. So on this promise we must base our certitude also, and advance towards the luminous Future.

*

*One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.
Assigner of the ordeal and the path
Who chooses in this holocaust of the soul
Death, fall and sorrow as the spirit's goads,
The dubious godhead with his torch of pain
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.
August and pitiless in his calm outlook,
Heightening the Eternal's dreadful strategy,
He measured the difficulty with the might
And dug more deep the gulf that all must cross.
Assailing her divinest elements,
He made her heart kin to the striving human heart
And forced her strength to its appointed road.
For this she had accepted mortal breath;
To wrestle with the Shadow she had come
And must confront the riddle of man's birth
And life's brief struggle in dumb Matter's night.*

Invocation

*Whether to bear with Ignorance and Death
Or hew the ways of Immortality,
To win or lose the godlike game for man,
Was her soul's issue thrown with Destiny's dice.
But not to submit and suffer was she born;
To lead, to deliver was her glorious part.*

There it is put exactly and clearly: it was like a problem to be solved and she had the Will and the capacity to solve it. She came remembering who she was, and with this remembrance she faced the ordeal. This world of miseries, this world of death and suffering must become a world of glorious Light and of Divine Consciousness. Whatever the pain, whatever the ordeal, whatever the length of the trouble, she has come to win, and she brings with her the Victory.

*

*Here was no fabric of terrestrial make
Fit for a day's use by busy careless Powers.
An image fluttering on the screen of fate
Half-animated for a passing show,
Or a castaway on the ocean of Desire
Flung to the eddies in a ruthless sport
And tossed along the gulfs of Circumstance,
A creature born to bend beneath the yoke,
A chattel and a plaything of Time's lords,
Or one more pawn who comes destined to be pushed
One slow move forward on a measureless board
In the chess-play of the earth-soul with Doom, -
Such is the human figure drawn by Time.*

This is the description of the usual human being and his powerlessness in front of circumstances. But this was not the case with Savitri, who came keeping conscious in herself the Origin and the Source from which she came.

Men are accustomed to be pushed by circumstances and have only the

force of desire or habit, and this force is powerless in front of the Power of the true Force - the governing Force of the Divine.

*

*A conscious frame was here, a self-born Force.
In this enigma of the dusk of God,
This slow and strange uneasy compromise
Of limiting Nature with a limitless Soul,
Where all must move between an ordered Chance
And an uncaring blind Necessity,
Too high the fire spiritual dare not blaze.
If once it met the intense original Flame,
An answering touch might shatter all measures made
And earth sink down with the weight of the Infinite.*

This is a magnificent description of what will happen when the true Power will manifest upon earth. She came to prepare earth with the New Consciousness, the Consciousness that will transform the life on earth to make it ready for a New Creation.

If read with the true understanding, this Epic becomes prophetic and announces the events that are beginning to come upon earth.

*

*A gaol is this immense material world.
Across each road stands armed a stone-eyed law,
At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.
A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgment sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God:
Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel's circling immobility,
A bond is put on the high climbing mind,*

Invocation

*A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life.
Thus is the throne of the Inconscient safe
While the tardy coilings of the aeons pass
And the Animal browses in the sacred fence
And the gold Hawk can cross the skies no more.*

This is a very pathetic description of the condition of the world; each effort to pull it out of this condition meets at each step, every moment, this horrible resistance. Not only power is needed but also endurance, self-sacrifice and a patience that can face all ordeals.

*

*But one stood up and lit the limitless flame.
Arraigned by the dark Power that hates all bliss
In the dire court where life must pay for joy,
Sentenced by the mechanic justicer
To the afflicting penalty of man's hopes,
Her head she bowed not to the stark decree
Baring her helpless heart to destiny's stroke.
So bows and must the mind-born will in man
Obedient to the statutes fixed of old,
Admitting without appeal the nether gods.
In her the superhuman cast its seed.
Inapt to fold its mighty wings of dream
Her spirit refused to hug the common soil,
Or, finding all life's golden meanings robbed,
Compound with earth, struck from the starry list,
Or quench with black despair the God-given light.
Accustomed to the eternal and the true,
Her being conscious of its divine founts
Asked not from mortal frailty pain's relief,
Patched not with failure bargain or compromise.*

It is only when there is the power to remain in constant contact with the Supreme Consciousness, beyond all these distortions and these black thoughts, that it is possible to maintain the Truth and to keep up the hope and the conviction of a better life.

The Consciousness is there, the faith is there, the clear vision is there. There is only to bear and to last.

*

*A work she had to do, a word to speak;
Writing the unfinished story of her soul
In thoughts and actions graved in Nature's book,
She accepted not to close the luminous page,
Cancel her commerce with eternity,
Or set a signature of weak assent
To the brute balance of the world's exchange.
A force in her that toiled since earth was made,
Accomplishing in life the great world-plan,
Pursuing after death immortal aims,
Repugned to admit frustration's barren role,
Forfeit the meaning of her birth in Time,
Obey the government of the casual fact
Or yield her high destiny up to passing Chance.
In her own self she found her high recourse;
She matched with the iron law her sovereign right:
Her single will opposed the cosmic rule.*

The earth has been chosen for the big work of bringing back the manifested to its Origin. The world has become the symbol of the whole universe, and upon the earth the Sovereign Mother has incarnated from the beginning, to hasten the waking up of the world to the consciousness of its Origin.

It is to this Consciousness of the Mother that legend gave the name of Savitri, and then the whole story was built.

Invocation

*To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose.
At the Unseen's knock upon the hidden gates
Her strength made greater by the lightning's touch
Awoke from slumber in her heart's recess.
It bore the stroke of That which kills and saves.
Across the awful march no eye can see,
Barring its dreadful route no will can change,
She faced the engines of the universe;
A heart stood in the way of the driving wheels:
Its giant workings paused in front of a mind,
Its stark conventions met the flame of a soul.
A magic leverage suddenly is caught
That moves the veiled Ineffable's timeless will:
A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule,
One mighty deed can change the course of things;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.*

The secret of this Power is the unification of the manifested consciousness with the Original Consciousness - with the Supreme. If this union is total and conscious, there is no limit to the Power manifested. If it is constant, the world can be transformed.

And then, if this is realised, what would take some thousands and thousands of years to be accomplished can be done in a moment.

*

*All now seems Nature's massed machinery;
An endless servitude to material rule
And long determination's rigid chain,
Her firm and changeless habits aping Law,
Her empire of unconscious deft device
Annul the claim of man's free human will.
He too is a machine amid machines;
A piston brain pumps out the shapes of thought,*

*A beating heart cuts out emotion's modes;
An insentient energy fabricates a soul.
Or the figure of the world reveals the signs
Of a tied Chance repeating her old steps
In circles around Matter's binding-posts.*

This is the world as the New Consciousness has found it and still it lingers on, without thinking even of changing. But the time will come when things will change. The time is coming and one must be ready.

*

*A random series of inept events
To which reason lends illusive sense, is here,
Or the empiric Life's instinctive search,
Or a vast ignorant mind's colossal work.
But wisdom comes, and vision grows within;
Then Nature's instrument crowns himself her king;
He feels his witnessing self and conscious power;
His soul steps back and sees the Light supreme.
A Godhead stands behind the brute machine.
This truth broke in in a triumph of fire;
A victory was won for God in man,
The deity revealed its hidden face.
The great World-Mother now in her arose:
A living choice reversed fate's cold dead turn,
Affirmed the spirit's tread on Circumstance,
Pressed back the senseless dire revolving Wheel
And stopped the mute march of Necessity.
A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
Empowered to force the door denied and closed
Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.*

This is just what has happened and is still happening, and to pick up courage there is only to look in front to a future that is not so far away.

Invocation

We are slowly but surely coming out of an almost desperate past towards a future full of promise, bringing to a humanity that is tired, exhausted and almost in despair, the vision of a Realisation that will bring back not only hope but Light, Power and Realisation.

(to be continued)

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About Savitri – Part Two is now available in book form. See page 27

***He who has heard with devotion
the glorious story of Savitri,
that man is fortunate,
his affairs shall prosper and
never shall sorrow visit him.***

(The Mahabharata)

Some Unusual Words in Canto Two

*A combatant in silent dreadful lists,
The world unknowing, for the world she stood ...*

The word “lists” here means a space set aside for a contest. It derives from a Latin word *liciae* - barrier. In medieval Europe the lists was especially a place for single combat. In cases of serious dispute, each side would choose a champion, and the fight would take place ceremoniously, before the King and his Court in a specially demarcated area. It was believed that victory in such a combat was proof of the rightness of the victor’s cause, and indicated divine approval and support. Here Sri Aurobindo shows Savitri as a champion representing the world, wrestling with “*embodied Nothingness*”, “*immortal Death*”. But the human world is unaware of her battle, she has no “seconds” or supporters:

*No helper had she save the Strength within;
There was no witness of terrestrial eyes;
The Gods above and Nature sole below
Were the spectators of that mighty strife.*

(p.13)

*

... beauty death-claimed lids ignore ...

(p.16)

Here Sri Aurobindo uses the word “ignore” in its original Latin sense, the one which has given rise to the word “ignorance”. In common usage when we say that someone ignores the facts, we mean that he is not paying attention to them. But the original sense of this word implies not knowing, having no knowledge. Sri Aurobindo is referring to beauty which exists under

*... happier stars
Where life is not exposed to sorrowful change*

Invocation

which our mortal eyes (*death-claimed lids*) have never experienced and know nothing about.

*

*There is a darkness in terrestrial things
That will not suffer long too glad a note.*

Here “suffer” means to allow or permit, as in the words attributed to Christ in the New Testament: “*Suffer the little children to come unto me.*”

*

*A creature born to bend beneath the yoke,
A chattel and a plaything of Time's lords ...*

A chattel is an old legal term for a belonging, a possession. It would normally refer to an object or an animal. To say that a human being is a “chattel” implies that he is a slave or serf, a mere piece of moveable property.

*

A gaol is this immense material world:

Gaol is the original spelling of the word pronounced and now commonly written “jail”. I remember one of my professors at University giving it as an example of an interesting fossil-remnant, pointing to the time at which it entered the English language from Old French: some time between the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, and the first appearance of early written forms of English, about two hundred years later. At that time all serious documents were written in Latin, and the modern European languages were still in formation in mainly spoken forms without fixed spelling systems. She explained that the spelling came from one regional dialect of Old French, while the pronunciation came from a different one. Modern English still tolerates some very illogical spellings, but the extreme irregularity of this one has led to its progressive abandonment in favour of “jail” - which Sri Aurobindo has also used elsewhere in *Savitri*.

A force in her that toiled since earth was made,

...

Repugned to admit frustration's barren role ...

To repugn means to fight against or resist. It comes from the same root as “repugnance”, meaning disgust. But the pronunciation is different. In the noun the ‘g’ is pronounced. In the verb it is silent, and lengthens the vowel, giving the pronunciation “re-pyoon”, and here “re-pyooned”. Here “admit” means “accept”. Within Savitri there was a timeless force which refused to accept failure and defeat.

*

*In her the superhuman cast its seed.
Inapt to fold its mighty wings of dream
Her spirit refused to hug to the common soil,
Or, finding all life's golden meanings robbed
Compound with earth, struck from the starry list,
Or quench with black despair the God-given light.
Accustomed to the eternal and the true,
Her being conscious of its divine founts
Asked not from mortal frailty pain's relief,
Patched not with failure bargain or compromise.*

The word ‘compound’, whether used as a noun, adjective, or - as it is here - as a verb, always implies the bringing together of different elements. To ‘compound with’ means to come to an agreement, reach a compromise, make a bargain. It is paralleled by the colourful, almost Shakespearean word ‘Patched’ in the following sentence. Savitri’s spirit is ‘inapt’ - unfitted, unsuitable, unskilled at folding *its mighty wings of dream*. It will not make a compromise with the limitations of normal earthly life. Her being is conscious of its divine source and will not patch up any bargain or compromise with the failure and weakness that ordinary human beings have to accept.

Shraddhavan

Some Questions

*which have come up in the Savitri Study Circle
as we have been reading Canto Two:*

One of our questions relates to the passage which begins at the top of page 12:

*A point she had reached where life must be in vain
Or, in her unborn element awake,
Her will must cancel her body's destiny.*

It continues onto page 13:

*Acquittance she must win from her past's bond,
An old account of suffering exhaust,
Strike out from Time the soul's long compound debt
And the heavy servitudes of the Karmic Gods,
The slow revenge of unforgiving Law
And the deep need of universal pain
And hard sacrifice and tragic consequence.*

This refers unmistakably to a karmic load from the past which has to be dissolved in order for Savitri to be able to fulfil her mission.

The question that arose in our minds was, “Savitri is a direct incarnation of the Supreme Mother - in what sense is she bound by the law of Karma? Does she have a personal karma from a personal past - or has she assumed a general human karma by the fact of taking a human body?”

Trying to find an answer to this question led us through a very interesting exploration of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said or written on the subject of Karma. Here we quote only one passage from the Master which seems to cast the clearest light on the matter:

*Whatever soul there is in man is not a separate spiritual
being which has no connection with all the rest of the
terrestrial family, but seems to have grown up out of it*

by a taking up of it all and an exceeding of its sense by a new power and meaning of the spirit. This is the universal nature of the type man on earth, and it is reasonable to suppose that whatever had been the past history of the individual soul, it must have followed the course of universal Nature and evolution.

... this animal element is present in every mother's son of us; it is our legacy, our inheritance from the common earth-mother: ...

16:268-9

This seems to suggest that by taking birth as a human being, Savitri has taken on herself a load of common human karma, an account of suffering and death that automatically goes along with birth into an as-yet imperfect human nature. This is the bond from the past that she has to pay off - to deliver Satyavan, the Soul of Man, and through him, the whole of humanity.

*

The second question relates to the powerful last lines of the first section of Canto Two:

*In her he found a vastness like his own,
His high warm subtle ether he refound
And moved in her as in his natural home.
In her he met his own eternity.*

Who is this 'he'? Some people relate this to Sri Aurobindo himself, and say that here he is speaking directly about himself and the Mother. No doubt, as elsewhere in *Savitri*, we can feel here the voice of direct personal experience. But looking at the development of the poem, we find that these lines connect with and complete earlier ones on page 14:

*Love came to her hiding the shadow, Death.
Well might he find in her his perfect shrine.
Since first the earth-being's heavenward growth began,*

Invocation

*Through all the long ordeal of the race,
Never a rarer creature bore his shaft,
That burning test of the godhead in our parts,
A lightning from the heights on our abyss.
All in her pointed to a nobler kind.*

Here 'he' is clearly the God of Love, who finds in Savitri his perfect shrine, his home, for in the whole story of humankind there has never been a "rarer creature" to bear the stroke of his shaft, his arrow of love, which is a *burning test* of our inner divinity. Everything in Savitri points towards a higher, purer species. And then comes the marvelous long description of her nature which culminates:

The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.

Then the poet refers back to the context of this description of Savitri, by referring to *the great unsatisfied godhead* - Love.

*Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air,
Her mood could harbour his sublimer breath
Spiritual that can make all things divine.*

There is a clear continuity throughout the passage, which shows how Savitri is fit and able to house the Love of which the Mother has said:

This is the description of Love in its essence, not the Love that is known upon earth and is mixed up with so many egoistic movements that it has got out of recognition and is become only the expression of selfish desires. It is the Love that is as vast as the Universe, equal to all and to everything, and asking nothing in exchange for what it gives.

Here it is revealed that the way out of Death for the creation is Love - Love, not as it is falsified and deformed in the human consciousness, but Love in its essence and

its pure Origin. It is this Love that found the way to manifest through the consciousness and the life of Savitri.

All manifestations of Love in the world had always been deformed and reduced to need and desire. For the first time a human consciousness was capable of manifesting Love in its simple and magnificent purity - the Love that is entirely and totally divine, free from all desire and all selfishness, all narrowness and all egoism: the Love that exists for the joy of loving and is at once giving and receiving, at the same time in the same vibration. This is the Supreme Power that is capable of transforming the world and making it ready for the Divine Manifestation.

*

Another question comes in connection with the lines:

*A colloquy of the original Gods
Meeting upon the borders of the unknown,
Her soul's debate with embodied Nothingness
Must be wrestled out on a dangerous dim background:
Her being must confront its formless Cause,
Against the universe weigh its single self.*

Who are these 'original Gods'? "Colloquy" means "speaking together" - a conversation or discussion. Here the colloquy seems to be parallel to the debate in the third line, the debate between Savitri's soul and 'embodied Nothingness' - in fact the "Debate of Love and Death" that takes place in Book Ten, Canto Three. Does this mean that the principles of Love and Death can be seen as 'the original Gods' - positive and negative poles of being, which stand at the very origin of the creation?

Words from the Mother about Savitri

The Mother said that *Savitri* is :

- 1) *The daily record of the spiritual experiences of the individual who has written.*
- 2) *A complete system of yoga which can serve as a guide for those who want to follow the integral sadhana.*
- 3) *The yoga of the Earth in its ascension towards the Divine.*
- 4) *The experiences of the Divine Mother in her effort to adapt herself to the body she has taken and the ignorance and falsity of the earth upon which she has incarnated.*

(MCW 13:24)

On a diary containing quotations from *Savitri*, she wrote :

Some extracts from Savitri, that marvellous prophetic poem which will be humanity's guide towards its future realisation.

27.11.1963

(MCW 16:294)

She told Norman Dowsett :

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

In 1963 she told Satprem :

I believe that it is his message; all the rest are the preparations, but Savitri is the message.

(MA 1963:86)

And to Udar she said :

Savitri is a mantra for the transformation of the world.

New Study Materials

The month of August 2000 marked an important step forward in *Savitri* studies, with the appearance of a number of significant study-aids. One of these was the first volume of *Perspectives of Savitri*, edited by R.Y. Deshpande and published by Auro-Bharati Trust, which was announced in our last issue. This is a book of over five hundred pages, which brings together a large number of essays on *Savitri* published over the last half century in various books and periodicals, many of which may now be out of print and difficult to find. For any scholar to get access to all of these would involve quite a time-consuming labour. So editor and publisher have done us all a great service by bringing them together into one accessible volume. The full list of contents is given below.

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[*by the editor*]

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APPENDICES

Facsimile of a Page from the Savitri MSs

A Short Bibliographical Note

The book is produced to the high standard we expect of Ashram publications, and available from SABDA at Rs.300. A second volume is in preparation, covering new or more recently published essays by a younger generation of writers.

Many of us will appreciate the new handy-size version of *Savitri* released by the Ashram in August which gives line numbers in the left margin. It costs Rs.200.

Another item released in August will also be of immense assistance to all *Savitri* students who work with a computer. It is a CDROM prepared by Sraddhalu Ranade for the Sri Aurobindo Archives, entitled ***Selected Works of Sri Aurobindo***. This provides the full text of eleven of Sri Aurobindo's major works, including *Savitri*, along with a very helpful driver and search-engine which enable the user to have several 'books' open at the same time, and to search for a particular text or keyword. It is available from SABDA at Rs.600.

Also brought out by the Sri Aurobindo Archives in August was a booklet entitled *On the New Edition of Savitri : Further Explanations (Part Two)*. Produced to throw further light on the process of preparing the 1993 edition of *Savitri*, it gives a very lucid explanation of the kind of difficulties the editorial staff encountered, and their approach to resolving them. It is a helpful complement to the Archives' earlier booklets on the same topic: the *Supplement to the Revised Edition of Savitri* of 1994, and *On the New Edition of Savitri* of 1999. It is available free on request from the Sri Aurobindo Archives. Those who are interested to know more about the textual development of *Savitri*, we refer to our *INVOCATION* issue no. 3 of April 1998, and to the series of articles by Richard Hartz of the Sri Aurobindo Archives that is currently appearing in *Mother India*. We hope that this series, once complete, will also come out in book form.

While these new materials will most certainly enrich and assist our study and appreciation of *Savitri*, the greatest treasure which became available last August is *About Savitri – Part Two*: the text of the Mother's explanations of *Savitri*, tape-recorded and transcribed by Huta and then corrected for publication by the Mother herself, along with paintings prepared by Huta under the Mother's guidance. *About Savitri – Part One* was brought out at the Mother's wish during Sri Aurobindo's Centenary Year, 1972, and is now out of print. There are two more parts to follow. *About Savitri – Part Two* has been published by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and is available from SABDA for Rs. 225.

Recently too, Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Savitri*, edited by K.D. Sethna, have also been reissued by the Ashram as a separate volume, costing Rs.60.

Savitri Bhavan has also received from the translator, Rajkrushna Mohanty, a copy of his Oriya version of Nolini Kanta Gupta's Bengali translation of Part Two of *Savitri*. The Oriya translation of Part One came out in November 1999. Both volumes are available from Matrubhavan, Sri Aurobindo Marg, CUTTACK 753 013.

News of Savitri Bhavan :

October 1999 - October 2000

1. Activities

Since we moved into the new building last September there has been a daily presence in the Bhavan from 8 am to 5, 6, or even 7 pm. In addition to the courses, exhibitions, talks and special events which are offered to the public, our office is open 9 - 12 and 2 - 5 every day except Sunday, to handle calls, questions, correspondence, payments and record-keeping. And work is always going on in the garden, which we consider as important as the buildings and activities in establishing and maintaining the atmosphere of *Savitri*.

In addition we are building up the **Reading Room**, where a good basic collection of publications relating to *Savitri* is now available, as well as other works by Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Ashram writers. In the Reading Room are also available some of the **Study Materials** prepared at Savitri Bhavan by our team members. We are preparing an inventory of all the books and non-book study materials available here for study and / or loan.

The multi-purpose hall has housed a series of *Savitri*-related **Exhibitions**:

December '99 - January 2000	:	<i>THE MOTHER'S SAVITRI DRAWINGS</i>
February - March 2000	:	<i>ABOUT SAVITRI</i> - The Mother's explanations of Book One, Canto 2, with paintings by Huta
May - June 2000	:	24 SKETCHES BY THE MOTHER for Book One Canto 1
July - August 2000	:	SAVITRI GRAPHICS BY FRANZ
September	:	MEDITATIONS ON SAVITRI Book One, Canto One: reproductions of Huta's paintings

There is a regular weekly programme of **On-going Courses**:

Sundays	<i>Savitri</i> Study Circle	10.30- 12.00 am
Tuesdays	English through <i>Savitri</i>	4.30- 5.30 pm
	Recorded Talks of the Mother	5.45- 6.30 pm

Wednesdays	<i>The Life Divine</i> led by Dr. Ananda Reddy	6.00- 7.00 pm
Thursdays	<i>Essays on the Gita</i>	5.00- 6.00 pm
Fridays	English through <i>Savitri</i>	6.30- 7.30 am
Saturdays	Recorded Talks on <i>Savitri</i>	6.00- 7.00 pm

For the first weeks of this Saturday evening programme, we were uniquely privileged to be able to play, for the first time in public, the recordings of the Mother's readings and explanations of *Savitri*, made in 1969 - 1970 by Huta, and covering Cantos 1 - 4 of Book One.

Preparation of Study-Materials is an important on-going activity in our work-room, along with care and use of the valuable collection of **Audio-visual materials** we have been able to acquire or make. This includes the Mother's recordings of selected passages from *Savitri* corresponding to the *MEDITATIONS ON SAVITRI* paintings, and her readings and explanations *ABOUT SAVITRI*, as well as slides, negatives, photographs and video films of the paintings made by Huta under the Mother's guidance, and reproductions of the Mother's original sketches.

Among the study-materials and audio-visual aids being prepared at Savitri Bhavan, are albums of photographic reproductions all of Huta's *MEDITATIONS ON SAVITRI* paintings, to which are now being added facsimiles of the Mother's corresponding sketches. We have also shown the series of video films that have been made of these paintings, as well as three slide-shows of them, covering Cantos One, Two and Three, and Four of Book One of *Savitri*.

Moreover we have started a project of recording **a reading of the whole of Savitri**, for the assistance of students. Books One and Three have been completed, and Book Two is in progress.

Also available are audio and video recordings of the **Talks by Guest-Speakers** which have been a regular feature of our programme. Over the last 12 months we have received visits from Professor Arabinda Basu, Dr. C.V. Devan Nair, R.Y. Deshpande, Georges van Vreckem, Nirodbaran (twice), Narad, Dr. M.V. Nadkarni (twice), and Manoj Das, in addition to Dr. Ananda Reddy's weekly courses on *The Life Divine*.

Such talks are usually transcribed for **publication** in *INVOCATION*. This

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periodical has gained a lot of interest and support, and our mailing list now stands at around 1000 addresses in India and abroad.

Over the last twelve months Savitri Bhavan has also hosted a number of *Special Events*, starting last November, when during the week from November 17th to November 24th recordings of the Mother's readings, from *Savitri*, *The Hour of God*, *The Rishi*, and *The Mother*, were played each morning from 7 - 7.30 as well as each evening from 5.30 - 6.00. We played the Mother's reading from *Savitri* Book Eleven again to welcome in the new millennium on January 2, 2000.

On January 7th there was an evening programme of music and poems "To Krishna's Flute", presented by visiting poet and musician Gordon Korstange.

Throughout the month of February there was continuous reading of *Savitri* every afternoon from 3.30 - 5.00 pm under the trees in the garden.

The visits of Dr. Nadkarni and his students, first in March and then again in August, for the concluding sessions of their *Savitri* Study Camps, when



*Dr. Nadkarni's visit on August 26, 2000.
Sharddhavan is introducing Dr. Nadkarni. Nirodbavan is on the left.*

Savitri Bhavan played host to more than 400 people at a time, were particularly memorable highlights of the year. In August, Dr. Nadkarni and his wife stayed as our guests in Auroville for a week, which was an enjoyable time with great significance for our project, and perhaps for Auroville as a whole.

Another significant visit was that of Ms. Leilani Travens, from the University of Pau in France, who is preparing a dissertation on *Savitri* for her M.A. degree in English Language and Literature. The assistance we were able to give her, both in terms of providing access to little-known publications and articles, and in directing her to people who could give authoritative tutorial guidance, typifies one of the ways in which we would like to offer support to increasing numbers of students of *Savitri* in the future.

While these have been the main lines of our activities over the past 12 months, such a bare account does not really give a picture of all the richness of varied contacts we have had with a wide range of *Savitri* lovers and students throughout the year, which have convinced us - if we needed convincing - of the great value of this place and the work that is being done here.

2. Finance

Over the twelve month period from October 1999 to November 2000 we received a total of Rs. 11.38 lakh in donations.

Donors sometimes specify whether their donations are to be used for Construction or Activities. Some are even more specific. For example we were given a donation of Rs. 1 lakh specifically for Landscaping of the Garden. Another donor gave Rs. 2 lakh, requesting that the amount be invested in a fixed deposit, and that the interest from the deposit be used for Sanskrit activities. Another donor has recently given Rs. 1.14 lakh specifically for extending our publications and study-materials programme.

We have also received a lot of donations in kind: for example in the form of equipment and furniture, from an antique garden-bench to a computer, desks and cupboards. In this category too belong all the priceless *Savitri*-related materials we have received from Huta. We are also gradually acquiring a full set of recordings of the Mother's Playground Talks, through the good offices of friends in Pondicherry.

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A good proportion of the donations we received came from Aurovilians. It is worth pointing out that in the early stages of our project, almost all financing came from our own team or close friends: for example for the ground-breaking, fencing, installation of the water and electricity connections, and construction of the keet shelter. Even up to the completion of this first-phase building a year ago, about one third of the necessary finance was contributed by Aurovilians. Another third, the crucial Rs. 6 lakh which launched our construction, came through the fund-raising effort organised for us by friends in Navsari, Gujarat. That set the ball rolling, so that the remaining amounts came in smoothly.

In addition to donations, for the past three years we have received a grant from the Government of India towards our activities under the “Auroville Development Scheme”, which supports a wide range of educational and cultural programmes in Auroville. These grants have helped to cover the expenses of our Guest-Speaker programmes, publication of INVOCATION, and the preparation of exhibitions and study-materials.

We are also receiving support for our activities from the Auroville Central Fund, in the form of a maintenance-allowance for the coordinator.

Since moving our activities into the new first-phase building after it was inaugurated by Nirodbaran in August 1999, the major focus of our effort has gone towards equipping and using it effectively as a base for future growth. This means that we have concentrated on furnishing and equipping it to make maximum use of all the valuable *Savitri*-related materials that have come to us from Huta as well as from other sources; on extending and strengthening our existing programmes; and on making a start with the gardens, which will be a very important part of the future complex.

Our expenditure over the last 12 months has reflected this focus, with the major part going towards furniture, fittings and equipment for the new building. It is important to note that this section is now practically complete, and we do not expect major expenditure under this heading over the coming year. Last year we had prepared an estimate for needed equipment which totalled Rs. 5.5 lakh. We have been able to fulfil our needs well within this target. The other major headings of expenditure have been Activities – this includes the preparation of study-materials and publications, acquisition and

binding of books and periodicals for the reading-room, guest-speaker programmes, exhibitions and some other special events; and Running Expenses - including not only recurring bills for water, electricity and telephone, but also expenditure on stationery and computer supplies, routine postage, cleaning-materials, repairs and maintenance, and so on, as well as payments for labour, and assistance to our team of voluntary workers. We find that a regular monthly budget of Rs. 25,000.- is required for us to keep running at the present level.

3. Future Perspectives

On the threshold of the 5th anniversary of the Savitri Bhavan project, and after one full year of occupation of this first-phase building, what are we envisioning for the future? This is a question we are asked quite often, and in addition to the brief outline of our plans given here, we would like to invite all our well-wishers to join us in the joyful task of trying to receive the correct inspiration about how this unique place is meant to grow to its full scope.



The new building seen from the garden.

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Of course we intend to continue and extend all the existing activities outlined above, and to further strengthen our educational and research programmes. For example, we would like to lengthen the opening-hours of the Bhavan, so that the Reading Room is accessible in the evenings. Moreover courses and presentations could be going on every day from 5 - 8 pm.

About the Garden and Park surrounding the complex, we have received an inspiring suggestion from Narad, and studies are already under way to enable us to start implementing it as soon as possible.

Looking forward to further steps in manifesting the entire Savitri Bhavan campus, a Five-Year Development Proposal has been prepared, and we have requested our architect, Helmut, to take up the task of planning for a second phase of construction, with a view to start building from next November. We have become aware of a need to be able to offer simple accommodation to voluntary workers, whether temporary or permanent staff, as well as to visiting students, researchers, speakers and teachers, and to other guests closely associated with our work. We are therefore proposing to build a hostel with accommodation for a resident caretaker, as well as a multipurpose space in which the future Library of the Bhavan can be built up, even before its permanent quarters are ready - so that when the permanent Library building is complete, we can have a mature collection ready to move into it.

It is hoped that this hostel could be located just north of the educational complex, on the plot which is already under our care.

Naturally, manifesting this second step towards the full physical facilities of Savitri Bhavan implies further active fund-raising: participation in this effort from all our well-wishers will be most welcome.

Apropos of Savitri

by Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna)*

When I was preparing *Savitri* for our International University Centre's one-volume edition in 1954, I was very careful about the collection of Sri Aurobindo's letters to me, which was to accompany it at the end. I made several alterations in the arrangement – some actually at the page-proof stage. Not unexpectedly the Press felt bothered, but it did not put any hitch in my way. The Mother was kept in touch with all the goings-on.

Once I seemed to overstep the limit. After a letter of 1936 had been printed I made a new reading of two words from Sri Aurobindo's manuscript. The letter as it stood in print read:

Savitri is represented in the poem as an incarnation of the Divine Mother The narrative is supposed to have taken place in far past times when the whole thing had to be opened, so as to 'hew the ways of Immortality'.

Now, instead of "*The narrative*" I deciphered "*This incarnation*". Naturally I wanted a change to be introduced. Just as naturally the Press was upset. But it realised that the change was imperative. Either an *erratum* was to be put somewhere or the new words were to be printed on a small slip and pasted over the old ones. I opted for the slip to set right my own slip in decipherment a dozen years earlier. But the new words were longer by three letters and, even if we took advantage of the three dots after the full stop to the preceding sentence, the words could not be fitted into the context. I suggested the use of a slightly smaller type. The aesthetic sense of the Press was somewhat shocked. I agreed with its disgust, but to leave the wrong reading intact and resort to an *erratum* elsewhere was hardly a harmonious and felicitous solution either. I thought of submitting the whole matter to the Mother the next morning when I would be seeing her.

*From *Our Light and Delight: recollections of life with the Mother*, Pondicherry, 1980

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On finishing my pranam I told the Mother : “A special problem has come up in a certain letter of Sri Aurobindo’s to me on *Savitri*.” The Mother replied with a slight tinge of sternness: “I know all about it. The Press sent me the news last afternoon. I was informed that you had made a wrong reading in a letter and that a correction was now necessary. The printing is already done, So to correct is very inconvenient. I told Amiyo what I thought of you.” “Mother, what did you say?” “You won’t like it.” “Well, whatever comes from you is welcome, even if it is not to one’s liking. There’s something to learn. Please tell me.” “I said : ‘Amal is too sure of himself.’ ”

I was extremely puzzled. Obviously the Mother had somehow not seized the situation in its total bearing. I answered : “You must be right – but from what you say it seems that somebody else than myself detected my blunder and offered the correction.” “Yes, and isn’t that so?” “Mother, it is I who found my own mistake and I wanted to rectify it with my new reading of the manuscript.” “Oh, that’s how it is? I did not get such an impression.” “Mother, let me again be a little too sure of myself and say that not even in a hundred years would anybody else, on reading the printed version, suspect a mistake. I felt uneasy over the version and went back to the original in Sri Aurobindo’s hand and then I thought that I must correct myself at all costs. What would you say now?” “I say that you have the courage to declare your mistakes.” “Thank you, Mother.”

As for my proposal to get a slip in smaller type stuck over the old misreading on my part, the Mother remarked : “I too had the same idea. But the Press was not very happy.” Ultimately the Press got over its initial recoil and did the sticking. No reader, to my knowledge, has drawn my notice to anything odd on the page concerned.

Before leaving, I told the Mother : “Tomorrow I’ll bring Sri Aurobindo’s manuscript for you to see for yourself that my old reading was wrong.” The next morning I presented the letter to the Mother. She took up a magnifying glass and scrutinised Sri Aurobindo’s semi-hieroglyphics. Looking at me, she asked: “Are you sure it is not as you first read it?” This consoled me no end : after all, if even the Mother could be in doubt, mine had not been a Himalayan blunder. Finally she agreed to my new version, which makes better sense and is more consistent.

*

There must have been a bit of intellectual pride in my ambience, for on more than one occasion the Mother appeared to counteract the importance I seemed to attach to my own mind. To give one instance, the Press sent to the Mother the proof of the Contents of the *Savitri*-volume. When I came as usual to meet her, she showed me the pages and said : “Nolini and I have gone through everything. It’s all right. There is no need for you to look at the proof.” “Still, Mother, will you give it to me?” “Oh, you think we are wrong? Here are the pages. You won’t find anything to correct.” I glanced at the proof. Indeed there was no misprint, and in that sense nothing to correct, but I immediately saw that a certain title differed from the form in which it stood in the body of the book. Inside it had run: “Sri Aurobindo’s Letters on *Savitri*.” In the proof the first two words were missing. Neither the Mother nor Nolini knew of the form inside; so they saw nothing. But it was necessary to make the titles match. Plucking up courage I faced the Mother’s challenging eyes and said as quietly as I could : “I’m afraid there is an error. One item does not correspond to the wording inside the volume. It has to be changed. The Contents should be accurate.” The Mother kept silent for a few seconds and then nodded approval.

When the title was to be composed, there was discussion about the wording to be used in order to indicate the presence of Sri Aurobindo’s letters at the end. The Mother cut short the debate and brought out the formula to be put between the mention of “Savitri” and the line giving the name “Sri Aurobindo”. Her formula was : “(Followed by the Author’s Letters on the Poem)”. On hearing such a long-drawn-out phrase, Udar grinned broadly and even let out a ghost of a chuckle. The Mother looked at him steadily and said in a serious tone : “It is a little long, I know, but nothing else will make things quite clear.” After the book came out, I suggested to the Mother : “If *Savitri* is reprinted, don’t you think a smaller formula can serve just as well? I propose simply : ‘With Letters on the Poem’. As Sri Aurobindo’s name comes in the next line it should be clear whose letters these are.” The Mother readily accepted the shorter phrase as both elegant and sufficient. It now stands in all editions, along with a subtitle to *Savitri* which Sri Aurobindo himself intended : “A Legend and a Symbol”.

*

Invocation

In subsequent editions new matter has been added to the “Letters”, but two letters in my collection have been overlooked by me. Perhaps it is not necessary to include them, but I give them here for future consideration of the parts in them that bring in *Savitri*. The earlier is in reference to the first number of *Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual*, which I was editing. It is also one of the last two handwritten letters of Sri Aurobindo. It goes :

Don't wait for any poems for your Annual. I think the Pondicherry poets will have to march without a captain, unless you take the lead. I have been hunting among a number of poems which I perpetrated at intervals, mostly sonnets, but I am altogether dissatisfied with the inspiration which led me to perpetrate them, none of them is in my present opinion good enough to publish, at any rate in their present form, and I am too busy to recast, especially as poetically I am very much taken up with 'Savitri' which is attaining a giant stature, she has grown immensely since you last saw the baby. I am besides revising without end so as to let nothing pass which is not up to the mark. And I have much else to do.
(March 18, 1945)

The second letter, which was sent to me in typescript, is the last to allude – after touching on other things – to the epic:

I am afraid I am too much preoccupied with constant clashes with the world and the devil to write anything at length even about your new poems; a few lines must suffice. In fact, as I had to explain the other day to Dilip, my only other regular correspondent, my push to write letters or to new literary production has dwindled almost to zero – this apart from 'Savitri' and even 'Savitri' has very much slowed down and I am only making the last revision of the First Part already completed, the other two parts are just now in cold storage.

(July 20, 1948)

The rather grim tone at the beginning of the note alludes to a state of affairs which called for an even grimmer accent with the same turn of phrase at the start of a typewritten letter to me in May 1949 about my discussion of the philosophical implications of modern physics:

*I am afraid I have lost all interest in these speculations;
things are getting too serious for me to waste time on
these inconclusive intellectualities*

However, interest in the writing of *Savitri* revived and resulted in almost an unwonted hurry towards the end of 1950. Nirodbaran has recorded how anxious Sri Aurobindo was to complete whatever he thought most important of the epic, as if, because of the increasing seriousness of the Yogic situation, he knew of the sacrifice he would soon have to make of his body – as he did in the early hours of December 5.

*

After the one-volume *Savitri* had come out I expected the Mother to give me a copy with her own hands. But nothing was done. I felt perplexed and said to her somewhat dramatically though not insincerely: “I don’t know why you haven’t given me a copy. *Savitri* means so much to me. I would give my heart’s blood for it.” The Mother replied: “I am sorry. I haven’t distributed the book at all. But certainly I’ll give you a copy.” She called for a copy, wrote “To Amal with blessings” and put her symbolic signature. It was a precious gift and one has only to look at my markings and my copious marginalia to realise how closely the book has been studied and cherished.

*

I have related elsewhere some other incidents connected with my editorial work on *Savitri*. I may mention the *grand finale* as it were. After the last pages had been printed, the Mother calmly announced to me: “The Press is very displeased with you.” I answered: “I know it, Mother, and I am sorry to have troubled the Press. But are you displeased with my work?” She gave a faint smile and said: “No”.

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The Press's displeasure found a concrete expression in a long manifesto that came out on the heels of the *Savitri*-publication, asking all future customers to observe a set of rather Draconian-sounding rules. I was not mentioned anywhere but I knew that every shot fired had me as its main target. I accepted the charter without a word of protest. What it demanded was fair enough. However, the Press's bark is seldom followed by a bite. In fact, the people who work there have been exceedingly considerate and I cannot thank them enough for letting me break every rule of the charter now and again. I honestly do my best to behave, but inspiration of the moment sometimes gets the better of me and I cannot help some chopping and changing. My "copy" too is occasionally far from being a model. As much as possible the Press cooperates in a true Yogi's spirit full of understanding, tolerance, dedication to the Mother's Cause, fellow-feeling and even a dash of semi-Aurobindonian humour. Perhaps it even appreciates that, if not in anything else, at least in my dealings with the proofs I have walked rather faithfully in the footsteps of my Master, who was an inveterate practitioner of creative proof-reading.

Perhaps the master-stroke of the Master occurred when *Savitri* was first appearing canto by canto in small fascicules. After all the pages of a certain canto were ready for printing, the Press sent up again to Sri Aurobindo the proof of one page, asking whether a particular comma was quite in place. Sri Aurobindo, instead of just replying "Yes" or "No", added a dozen or more new lines! The additional verses upset the arrangement of the fascicule and much had to be redone. I have not yet achieved anything so gloriously disturbing – but there is always hope of being more and more Aurobindonian.

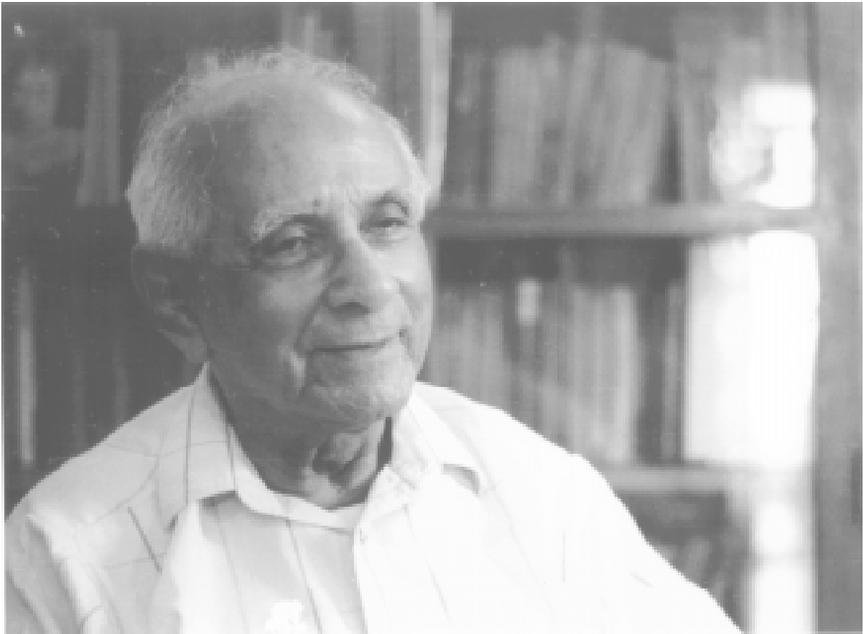
*

Soon after the one-volume edition was out, the Mother said to our small group upstairs :

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

An appreciative treatment of *Savitri* in terms of its poetic quality – an elucidation of its thought-content, its imagery-inspiration, its word-craft and its rhythm-impact: this she did not consider as beyond another interpreter than herself. I can conclude thus, because she fully approved Huta's proposal to her that I should go through the whole of the epic with Huta during the period when the Mother and she were doing the illustrations of the poem, the Mother making outline sketches or suggesting the general disposition of the required picture and Huta following her instructions, invoking Sri Aurobindo's spiritual help, keeping the Mother's presence constantly linked to both her heart and hand and producing the final finished painting.

It was a long-drawn-out pleasure – my study-sessions with the young artist who proved to be a most eager and receptive pupil. Indeed so receptive that on a few occasions, with my expository enthusiasm serving as a spur, she would come out with ideas that taught a thing or two to the teacher.



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There was a period when the Mother was reciting passages from *Savitri* in front of a tape-recorder. Her longest recitation was from Book Eleven Canto One, the lines beginning a little before the important turning-point –

Around her some tremendous spirit lived –

And ending with :

Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.

It was a most exalting performance. In connection with it, the Mother disclosed to us that in the line

For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!

the word she saw in place of “*beautiful*”, although she did not read it, was “*powerful*”. In the late hours of the evening, when she used to be inwardly absorbed in Sri Aurobindo’s presence, she asked him why she had made that variant in the line. He answered : “What you have read is a truth – but a truth of the future. At present, ‘*beautiful*’ and not ‘*powerful*’ is the true word.”

One day in the same period the Mother came down to the first floor from her room on the second floor after one more recitation and exclaimed : “Do you know what pains I take? I spent nearly two hours early this morning consulting an English Dictionary to get the correct pronunciation of several words. Now I hope my reading was good.” We had the chance to hear the tape-record. It was really a good reading – though in two or three places there still lingered a slight shift of accent or a French way of speaking a word.

Often the Mother spoke excellent English so far as phrasing and construction were concerned. Her modulation always had a French ring, but that was a charming trait and not for the world would I have missed it, any more than I would have wanted her voice – resonant and thrilling – to be changed one whit.

Savitri

For ever love, O beautiful
Slave of God!



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.