

Invocation

Savitri

B H A V A N

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Study notes and Newsletter

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*Apart he lived in his mind's solitude
A demigod shaping the lives of men:
One soul's ambition lifted up the race; ...
Filling earth's smallness with their boundless breadths,
He drew the energies that transmute an age.
Immeasurable by the common look,
He made great dreams a mould for coming things
And cast his deeds like bronze to front the years.
His walk through Time outstripped the human stride.
Lonely his days and splendid like the sun's.*

(Savitri, Book One, Canto Three, p.45)

Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri Mantra

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं रूपां ज्योतिः परस्य
(धीमहि) ।
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

*Tat savitur varam rupam jyotih parasya dhimahi,
yannahsatyena dipayet*

*Let us meditate on the most
auspicious form of Savitri,
on the Light of the Supreme
which shall illumine us with
the Truth.*

*Let us meditate on the most auspicious
form of Savitri, on the Light of the Supreme
which shall illumine us with the Truth.*

My SAVITRI Work with The Mother

by Huta

Savitri is Sri Aurobindo's mantric epic. He says in one of his letters :

Savitri is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and it is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences.

The work of illustrating the whole of *Savitri* through paintings was given to me by the Divine Mother on 6th October 1961. It was so great, so beyond the capacity of the little instrument she had summoned, that only her Grace working in Sri Aurobindo's light could have seen me through.

The Mother wrote to me on 12.7.1956 :

Bonjour

To my dear little child

To my sweet Huta

Indeed I shall show you how to paint and I shall be glad if you learn well.

One day I shall call you and do a painting in front of you.

With my love and blessings always

The Mother

On 14.12.1956, in the morning, I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs, as previously arranged by the Mother. There she taught me painting right from the very beginning, because I did not know how to draw even a straight line, or how to hold a brush – nor did I have any colour sense.

After a few days the Mother sent me a card showing a vase with beautiful carnations of various colours. Her encouraging words were :

24.12.56

Bonjour

To my dear little child

To my sweet Huta

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Here is a nice vase of "Collaboration", for indeed we shall collaborate to do nice things and express in painting a higher world and consciousness.

Truly the Divine Grace is over you to lead you to an exceptional realisation.

Along with it my love and blessings never leave you.

The Mother

The Mother has given this significance to the Carnation:

Collaboration, ever ready to help and knowing how to do it.

After that the Mother started sending me for painting numerous objects from her rare collections. Also many varieties of exquisite flowers, along with her own sketches, in order to show me their right composition and perspective.

I received a letter from the Mother, dated 7.2.57.:

Bonjour

To my dear little child

To my sweet Huta

I have received your nice letter. Yes, we are going towards a painting that will be able to express the supramental truth of things.

My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are always with you

The Mother

That same evening she explained to me:

I want you to do something new. You must try to do the Future Painting in the New Light.

There is a reason why I ask you to paint mostly on a white background. It is an attempt to express the Divine Light without shadow in the Future Painting. But everything will come in its own time.

*In the Future Painting, you must not copy blindly the outer appearance without the inner vision. **Never** let*

*people's ideas influence your mind and impose their advice about the Future Painting. Do not try to adopt the technique either of modern art or of old classical art. But **always** try to express the true inner vision of your soul and its deep impression behind everything to bring out the Eternal Truth and to express the glory of the Higher Worlds.*

Truth is behind everything. For the Divine dwells in flowers, trees, animals, birds, and rivers as well as human beings - in fact, in every creation of Nature.

You must have the psychic touch to see and feel the vibrations, the sensations and the essence of the Truth in everything and that Truth is to be expressed in the Future Painting.

To paint perfectly is not an easy thing. It certainly takes time. But by the growth of consciousness you can have inspiration, intense vision, delicacy of colours, harmony and subtlety of true beauty. Then you can surely express wonderful things in painting. Otherwise painting will be a lifeless confusion.

The growth of consciousness is essential for doing marvellous paintings. I shall help you, I shall put my Force into you so that there will be a link between our two consciousnesses.

I asked the Mother, "Without seeing the Divine Light, how can I paint?" She laughed softly and said:

Child, it will come.

Now it was apparent that I had to learn numerous things from various angles in painting in order to step into the unknown domain of the secret and higher worlds where I could release lavishly, freely my imaginations, reveries and inspirations to express exactly what the Mother wished me to do.

The play of colour — balanced distribution of light and shadow to bring out the perfect harmony of colour the subtle infusion of light, the transcendent spontaneity, the magical changes of Nature — the supreme Colourist's

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realism and visions — all these I had to put on canvases with vibrant, various strokes of brushes.

I was perfectly aware that it was not going to be easy, but life now beckoned me along strange paths which I must tread. There was no turning back since I had committed myself to the spiritual life and the higher artistic sphere.

The Mother has stated:

If you want art to be true and highest art, it must be the expression of a Divine World brought down into this material world.

She valued true feeling and right consciousness more than only precise and decorative work without vibrations and vividness. She put stress on “White Light without shadow”. It is the vibration of Light which alone can give life and colour to every scene painted.

The Mother gave a proper training to my hands. In 1956 she asked me to clean the inside of her two carved cupboards which are in the Meditation Hall upstairs, so that I might learn to hold the most precious, delicate and fragile objects with steadiness, great care and concentration. She made my hands conscious, receptive and sensitive by putting her Force, Light and Consciousness into them.

She also sent me thousands of the most exquisite picture-cards, so that I might perceive and grasp their beauties and obtain inspiration from Nature: trees, flowers, mountains, rivers, animals and so on. These cards were prepared by Champaklal. He used to paste the pictures on folders, on which the Mother wrote to me.

Surely the Mother did not take up the *Savitri* work abruptly. She educated me both outwardly and inwardly, knowing that these types of paintings were not of the common kind. This training went on for years with patience and perseverance. Nobody knew of it!

On 21.1.57, the Mother revealed to me about her way with paintings:

I enter into their consciousness and find out their meanings, the truth and beauty behind each painting.

Some paintings are indeed very nice to look at - they

have pretty and gorgeous colours, but when there are no living vibrations and deep harmony, then obviously the paintings are lifeless and without value. But where there is a combination of the two - outward charm and inner vision - then they are real and can be considered as true art.

In your paintings I have felt the living vibrations and that is very good.

The Mother added :

A true artist never speaks of what he has done: "Oh! I have done a nice painting!" Instead he thinks and says, "Oh, no. I could not do it nicely, it is not what I wanted to do."

In fact, he is never satisfied with his work and he continues his effort until he paints masterpieces. An artist puts the full power of his aspiration in his work to reach perfection.

Not only was the Mother teaching me painting, but also giving me lessons of life: how to be modest and persistent in my endeavour to reach perfection and develop into a true artist.

None can beat the Mother's vision, conception and knowledge. A pointer to her being and her ways may be found in *Savitri*, Book Four, Canto 1 :

*And from her eyes she cast another look
On all around her than man's ignorant view.
All objects were to her shapes of living selves
And she perceived a message from her kin
In each awakening touch of outward things. (p.357)*

The Mother never failed to encourage me. On 19.2.57 she sent me a beautiful card depicting her coloured photograph. Her words were:

*Bonjour
To my dear little child
To my sweet Huta*

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This is to say to my sweet child, on the occasion of my birthday, how glad I am of the progress she is making both spiritually and in her painting — and to assure her of my constant and affectionate help so that this progress will increase without stop.

My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace never leave you.

The Mother

Towards the end of 1958 I went to London according to the Mother's wish. I came back in August 1960.

This was the New Year message of 1961 from the Mother to all:

This wonderful world of delight waiting at our gates for our call to come down upon earth.

As always, she gave me diaries in which to write my journal.

On 1st September 1961, my physical birthday, the Mother called me to the Meditation Hall upstairs and gave me a folder. When I opened it, I found my own paintings on either side. One was "Soul of Beauty", and the other was a vision the Mother had seen in my heart and asked me to paint in 1957. Underneath the picture these lines from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* were inscribed :

This golden figure ...

Hid in its breast the key of all his aims,

A spell to bring the immortal's bliss on earth. (p. 397)

The Mother looked at me for a few seconds. Then her eyes closed gradually. She slid into a profound trance which lasted more than ten minutes. On opening her eyes she said :

I achieved in my tender age the highest occult truths. I have realised and seen all the visions set forth in Savitri.

Actually I experienced the poem's supramental

revelations before I arrived in Pondicherry, and before Sri Aurobindo read out Savitri to me early in the morning day after day at a certain period of the Ashram. I never told Sri Aurobindo all that I had seen in my visions beforehand ...

She laughed softly, sweetly, and resumed :

I have seen the beauties and wonders of the higher worlds. Now I think of expressing them in painting by various colours - blues, golds, pinks and whites - with certain vibrations of Light - all in harmony forming the New World.

I wish to bring down upon earth this New World. Since I have no time physically, I will paint through you.

The world of Supreme Beauty exists. I shall take you there, you will see the things, remember them and then express them in paintings.

Yes, yes, my will shall be done - the Supreme Beauties exist. I will certainly take you there.

I see the butterfly ready in its cocoon. I do not wish it to come out soon, but gradually. Then after emerging from the chrysalis you will have enough knowledge to reach your goal.

Once again the Mother closed her eyes - a slight smile hovering on her lips. When she awoke, she said :

I realised the Divine in my early twenties, your age!

You see, the Inner Divinity is Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence. This Divinity is constantly with me - guiding and inspiring me.

I held her hands and said eagerly, "Oh, I haven't yet realised the Divine."
She smiled and assured me :

You will.

Further she added :

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For occultism one needs a Guru. But spirituality can be transferred (she made a gesture moving her index finger from the middle of her chest towards my heart), like this.

On another occasion, the Mother once said :

Child, our work is a work of the Future - a work of tomorrow for younger generations who will be the builders of the New World.

She also revealed :

Savitri is the prophetic vision of Sri Aurobindo. It will surpass the Gita and the Bible.

Without reading *Savitri* intellectually I could not go any further. So in 1961 the Mother arranged for me to read it with Ambalal Purani. We finished reading Book One. Then in 1963 he went to the U.K. and United States. After he had returned from abroad he fell ill. In 1965 he passed away. So the Mother arranged for me to read *Savitri* with Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna).

Sri Aurobindo first introduced *Savitri* to Amal in private drafts, and wrote to him all the letters that are now published along with the epic.

Amal and I met for the first time in 1961, upstairs in the passage which connects the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's rooms. I casually asked him about a chess board, because just then the Mother and I were doing something on that theme. He drew one and made me understand it.

When we started our reading of *Savitri*, some people warned Amal against me and asked him to discontinue. Amal cut them short, saying, "The Mother has arranged our reading. Besides, I have seen and felt Huta's soul. I cannot back out."

Amal made me understand *Savitri* intellectually and aesthetically. As soon as he left my apartment after our study sessions, I used to write down what he had explained to me in detail. I have numerous cherished notebooks which are of great value to me.

It was 7.8.1965 when I finished reading the whole of *Savitri* with Amal. I could not check my tears of joy. He too was moved. We shook hands over

the long harmonious collaboration and absorbing discussions.

That day in the afternoon I went to the Mother to inform her about it. She smiled, heaved a sigh of happiness, and said:

Ah, one big work is done.

Here are Amal's own words, published in the *Mother India Monthly Review of Culture* in May 1979, on page 276 :

An appreciative treatment of Savitri in its poetic quality — an elucidation of its thought-content, its imagery-inspiration, its word-craft and its rhythm-impact: this [the Mother] 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.

I never knew he would write such a thing about me. I always marvelled at his modesty, selflessness and good will.

Meanwhile the month of October 1961 had arrived — slowly, like a benediction, hope and peace diffused in my whole being.

The Mother called me to the Meditation Room upstairs on 6th October 1961 in the morning, to take up the work of *Savitri* painting.

She and I exchanged flowers and smiles. Then I looked at her eagerly to show me how to do the first painting. I felt as if the doors of hidden worlds

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were going to open before me. From the Mother's expression I gathered that now I would always be submerged in this wonderful consciousness from where I would never come out. Ah, it is true so far!

The date 6th was auspicious - according to the Mother, the number 6 signifies "New Creation".

She was absolutely indrawn in sheer silence. After her deep meditation she looked at me unblinking. Then there was the sudden flicker of a smile in her eyes when she spoke :

Child, have you thought of painting the jacket of the book which will be published after we have finished some paintings of Savitri ?

Once more she lapsed into a profound trance. She awoke, took a piece of paper and a pencil and drew a cover picture. She explained :

Show the descent of the Supreme Mother: a flash of white Light forming the feet which rest on the globe of the earth. Don't forget to paint the outline of a lotus, which must be mingled with the white Light.

She also made me understand the colour-scheme.

Then she held my hands, and pressed them in order to fill them with her Consciousness. She kissed my forehead.

With a blank mind I reached my apartment, sat on a chair in my studio where the Mother herself had sat when she declared open my apartment on 10th February 1958. There was the jumble of colour-tubes, brushes, palette, knives, distilled turpentine, linseed oil, rags. I put the canvas board on the easel and squeezed liberal quantities of pigments on a palette. The Mother had shown me how to arrange colours on the palette when she started teaching me painting on 11th December 1956.

I finished the painting and sent it to the Mother that very morning. She returned it through Ambu who brought *prasad* from her at midday along with this note :



The Descent of the Supreme Mother

*The Mother's sketch for the first painting of the
"Meditations on Savitri" series*

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There is no need of changing anything. It is excellent.

This was the beginning of our work. The following name was given by the Mother to this work :

Meditations

on

Savitri

It is impossible for me to give the full description of all the *Savitri* paintings here. But I shall try to convey glimpses of some of them.

The Mother explained to me the sixth picture of Book One Canto One:

*All can be done if the God-touch is there.
A hope stole in that hardly dared to be
Amid the Night's forlorn indifference ...
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal ...
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moments brink*

*Child, you must show in your painting the rays of White
Light streaming out from all the fingers of "a wandering
hand".*

In reality, from the occult point of view the White Light flowed from the Mother's own fingers.

On 4th November 1961 she made me understand the eighth picture of the same book, the same canto:

*The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
from the reclining body of a god.*

She went into a deep meditation for quite a long time. When she opened her

eyes. I felt as if she were still dreaming. The Mother said:

*I saw in 1904 the vision of a Spirit when I went into the
Inconscient. The form of this Spirit was neither of man nor
of woman. Nor was it Vishnu or Shiva or Krishna.*

Once again she closed her eyes to recall what she had seen in the fathomless darkness. When she awoke she instructed me:

*Child, you must paint a pale gold reclining figure of a God.
His right cheek is resting on his right palm. His head with
long golden hair is on a white cushion. And in the
background you must show a myriad rainbow hues of opals.
Also the black colour of the darkness sliding off Him.*

It was difficult to paint rainbow colours. I could not finish the painting. That very night I had a vision:

The shimmering waves of the divine white Light enveloped me as they turned into brilliant multi-colours. They were in gradations - from pale blue to night sky, from shell-pink to deepest crimson, from pale green to Nile green, and the same with the rest of the hues.

Then suddenly they assumed the faces of beautiful beings – but their lower bodies were like trails of different colours. These beings mingled with one another, yet retained their individualities. Their dancing movements were like music, the tinkle, the chime of numerous bells echoing and re-echoing through the sweet silence of eternity. My eyes drank in the melody of the vivid, various colours with as much joy as I would have had hearing an ethereal symphony in perfect harmony in the Divine Light.

This was an ecstasy, an indescribable thrill. I was floating upward into a realm of glory beyond anything I had ever beheld or ever known.

This vision of mine reminds of me of Sri Aurobindo's poem *The Life Heavens*:

*... sounds, colours, joy-flamings - Life lies here
Dreaming, bound to the heavens of its goal,
In the clasp of a Power that enthral's to sheer
Bliss and beauty body and rapt soul*

Indeed the *Savitri* paintings were expressed in multi-colours to accord with

the twelve dimensions known to occultism.

The next morning I finished the picture, and showed it to the Mother in the afternoon. She clasped my hands, looked into my eyes for a moment or two and gave me a kiss on my forehead. Her gesture conveyed to me everything.

My memory winged back to the year 1958. On 8th February in the evening the Mother and I had met. She looked at me for a few seconds and plunged into deep meditation. I could not have cared less, did not respond, did not concentrate; my vagrant thoughts rambled on. She was serenely peaceful, unruffled, untouched. Then the Mother opened her eyes and said with great regret:

Just now I saw in my vision beautiful luminous beings from above bringing precious gifts for you. They wished to enter your whole being with these boons. But unhappily, you were completely shut up and denied them. So they went back to where they had come from.

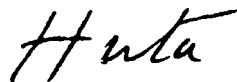
There were no tears in my eyes – only solid, unutterable despair.

The Mother looked at me and smiled – a sad smile. I had failed to collaborate, to receive, to assimilate. I felt sick, very sick, in my heart, mind and body.

She leaned from her couch, patted my cheeks and affirmed:

The luminous beings will return one day and enter your whole being.

So they came back to me by the Divine's Grace.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huta', written in a cursive style.

(to be continued)

News of Savitri Bhavan

The most significant event for Savitri Bhavan over the past three months has been the moving to Auroville of all the 465 "Meditations on Savitri" paintings made by Huta under the Mother's guidance from 1961 to 1966. After being exhibited in the Ashram Exhibition Hall in February 1967, the paintings were taken to two rooms in Golconde, set aside for them according to the Mother's wish. In January 1999 Huta moved them to her apartment, at the request of the Golconde management. Now we are extremely happy to provide a home for them in Auroville.

On Monday June 11th members of the Savitri Bhavan team went to Huta's apartment to receive the paintings from her, along with the unpolished jambun-wood frames and storage-cupboards prepared for them according to the Mother's instructions and design.

Huta has taken a very supportive interest in our project from the very beginning, providing us xerox copies of many valuable materials and allowing us to make use of them. She has told us that she once expressed to the Mother her feeling that "Savitri must have her own home", and that after a deep concentration the Mother responded, "*It will be*". Now Huta feels that Savitri Bhavan is destined to become that place. This certainly accords with our aspiration that Savitri Bhavan should house all possible materials to enrich our understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic. In the design of the Savitri Bhavan complex space has been provided for an art-gallery where all the "Meditations on Savitri" paintings could be kept on permanent display under very secure conditions. We have given our undertaking to Huta that these materials will be used only according to the Mother's instructions and that no unauthorised usages will be permitted. This means for example no photography or video-filming, and that none of the paintings may be reproduced as cards, calendars, book-covers or illustrations, and that they should not be displayed or reproduced out of sequence or context, but be kept together and shown together as the Mother wished.

The Mother told Huta that these art-works are not mere paintings but living beings, meant to bring the powers and beauties of the higher planes closer to this material world. Moreover, before they were exhibited in the

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Ashram in February 1967, the Mother concentrated intently on each one, charging them with her Consciousness, Light, Force and Love, so that they have become even richer and more vibrant. The coming of this priceless treasure gives a new urgency to our aspiration to complete the main building as soon as possible. For the time being they are in safe storage. On July 7th Huta visited us to inspect the arrangement that have been made for them, and to meet the Savitri Bhavan team. This was a specially sweet and happy occasion for all of us.



Huta at the entrance to Savitri Bhavan with members of the team, during her visit on July 7th 2001.

Another significant development has been the holding of a series of study-camps, each focussing on a particular section of *Savitri*. The first was a 5-day concentration on Book Three, 'The Book of the Divine Mother', held from May 17th to 22nd. Fifteen participants of a wide range of ages and nationalities, from Auroville, the Ashram, and the surrounding area, took part in a varied programme of activities from 6.30 in the mornings up to 9 or 9.30 in the evenings. We were not able to make this a residential camp, but

meals and refreshments were provided in our keet shelter, so that the mood of silent concentration could be maintained throughout the entire period. In addition to study of the text, led by Shraddhavan, there were sessions devoted to singing, led by Aurelio, body-awareness explorations, led by Aryamani, concentration on flowers, focalised by Claudia, and times for meditation, individual study, creative activities and service. We also had the joy of visits by friends from the Ashram. Richard Pearson and Kailash joined us for a whole day, and Richard shared with us his memories of growing up in the Mother's Light, as well as some of the lessons he had learned from her about communing with Nature and especially with flowers "the prayers of the vegetal world". In the evening he showed us a glorious series of slides of flowers with the Mother's significances. On the Sunday morning Professor Arabinda Basu led us through the second canto of Book Three, 'The Adoration of the Divine Mother'.

Two following camps, of shorter duration but with a similar pattern of activities, focussed on Book Seven, 'The Book of Yoga'. On June 24th there was a one-day concentration on Canto Two, 'The Parable of the Search for the Soul'; and on July 21 – 22 we took up Canto Four, 'The Triple Soul-Forces'. It is planned to continue these concentrations, once a month if possible.

This widening scope of our activities has brought about a widening involvement of people from inside and around Auroville, and we find it a great enrichment to our programme.

Unfortunately we did not manage to record Professor Basu's illuminating talk on May 20th on 'The Adoration of the Divine Mother'. Instead we are giving in this issue the transcript of an earlier talk by him at Savitri Bhavan, on a canto which is closely related in theme: Canto Fourteen of Book Two. 'The World Soul' - in which King Aswapati has a first vision of the Supreme Divine Mother.

The World Soul

Savitri, Book Two, Canto 14

Professor Arabinda Basu's talk

at Savitri Bhavan, 26th September, 1999

Children of the Mother, the canto that has been chosen for study this morning is "The World Soul". But before taking it up, I would like to refer you back to the previous canto, "In the Self of Mind". This is because Aswapati in his journey to the fullness of the realisation of the Divine is going from plane to plane, and passing through each of them. During this journey, he comes to the plane that Sri Aurobindo calls 'the Self of Mind'. Canto 13, "In the Self of Mind" ends with the sentence :

To be was a prison, extinction the escape.

"The Self of Mind" means the Self as it is on the plane of Mind. Self is everywhere, on all planes, down to the physical: the physical self. Sri Aurobindo also refers to the *Mahanatma* - an Upanishadic expression meaning 'the Great Self'. Normally people think that the Great Self is the Self as such, Self in its essence. But no, it isn't. The Great Self is the Self on the plane of Greatness - *mahat*, which in Sri Aurobindo's language is the Supermind. And just as there is the Self in the Supermind, so also there is the Self in the Mind. There is a Self in the vital, and a Self in the physical. So in the course of his journey, Aswapati comes to the Mind plane and finds the Self there. But this is a kind of self which does not help him very much in his sadhana. It is important to know that there is a Self of Mind, because what we are after is an integral apprehension, but let us take a look at what this Self is like ... I'll read a few lines from this canto:

He stood on a wide arc of summit Space

Alone with an enormous Self of Mind

Which held all life in a corner of its vasts.

Omnipotent, immobile and aloof.

(p.283)

This is the Self of the Mind - and Sri Aurobindo gives Mind a capital M. In

point of fact, in Sri Aurobindo's own technical terminology, Mind and Maya are the same reality, the same force. Mind creates division - so does Maya: *vedapratha - maya*. Wherever you have got division, you have got *maya* - or rather, Maya is there and it creates division. Mind does the same. But the Self of Mind is utterly aloof, apart, detached from all that Maya does. Sri Aurobindo puts it like this:

*... an enormous Self of Mind
Which held all life in a corner of its vasts.
Omnipotent, immobile and aloof.*

Life is there, in one corner of its vastness, but the Self seems hardly aware of it. This Self doesn't take part in the work of Maya at all. It only witnesses, observes, watches - it doesn't take any part in what it sees. This is the Self that Aswapati comes across on the plane of Mind. Obviously he will have to go beyond it. And what lies beyond is the World-Soul. That is why this introduction was necessary. Further on Sri Aurobindo says of this Self of Mind:

*In the world which sprang from it, it took no part:
...
It acted not but bore all thoughts and deeds,
The witness Lord of Nature's myriad acts
Consenting to the movements of her Force.*

Static, silent, quiet, uncreative - not only uncreative, but not even participating. Now Aswapati naturally cannot be satisfied with this Self of Mind. He has to know it, because it is part of the total reality; but even so, this is not what he wants. He wants something more positive, more affirmative, more active, more dynamic. So we come to the end of the Canto "In the Self of Mind" :

*It moved veiled in from Self's infinity
In a world of beings and momentary events
Where all must die to live and live to die.
Immortal by renewed mortality,*

This is the nature of the mental plane. The world of Maya is a mortal world, but it continues to be. It is immortal by continuity, not by essential reality.

It wandered in the spiral of its acts

Invocation

*Or ran around the cycles of its thought,
Yet was no more than its original self
And knew no more than when it first began.
To be was a prison, extinction the escape.* (p.288)

If you are in the mental plane, you feel that you are in a prison. And if you are in a prison, what do you want to do? You want to escape. And if existence itself is a prison, extinction seems the only escape.

But Aswapati says, "I must go ahead, forge forward", and he prays to the Mother to show him the route of escape. The next canto begins with the line:

A covert answer to his seeking came. (p.289)

The Mother responds. Covert means secret, occult - the answer is not obvious. Aswapati himself does not even know what it is.

*A covert answer to his seeking came.
In a far shimmering background of Mind-Space*

(not in mind itself, but in a background)

*A glowing mouth was seen, a luminous shaft;
A recluse gate it seemed, musing on joy,
A veiled retreat and escape to mystery.*

An opening was found, through which Aswapati can move on to something else. That something else is the World-Soul.

It is very important for him to have this realisation, because he has to come back to the world. The Self of Mind is aloof; the World-Soul is very much in the world, and active in it. This is the difference between the two.

In his technical terminology Sri Aurobindo uses three terms with regard to Brahman, the Supreme Reality: Atman, Purusha, and Ishwara. These are all the same Reality in three different aspects. Atman is the Self: of a withdrawing disposition, aloof and apart, it supports everything but does not take part in anything. The Purusha, Sri Aurobindo translates as 'Soul' with a capital S. What does the Soul do? It sanctions: "Let there be manifestation", but it does not take part actively in the process of creation. Ishwara is the Lord and Master. He combines the phases of both Self and Soul. He is free from his own creative act, he is free in the creative act. In

between there is a sanctioning: “Let there be manifestation”. Here we are concerned with the Ishwara aspect. Towards the end of the canto we shall see that Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Two-in-One - Ishwara-Ishwari: the Lord and his creative conscious Force. This where the world comes from. So the World-Soul has to be in between.

That is where Aswapati comes to now.

*Away from the unsatisfied surface world
It fled into the bosom of the unknown,
A well, a tunnel of the depths of God.
...
As if a beckoning finger of secrecy
Outstretched into a crystal mood of air,
Pointing at him from some near hidden depth,
As if a message from the world's deep soul*

The world has a soul. In Sri Aurobindo's view the earth is a living being, the world is a living organism, and wherever you have any kind of organism, of life, you get soul. Therefore,

*As if a message from the world's deep soul,
An intimation of a lurking joy
That flowed out from a cup of brooding bliss,*

A beautiful phrase - “brooding bliss”. Brooding means concentration. Bliss is the creative principle from which everything comes - not only the creative principle but the stuff of everything “*anandeva bhutani jayanti*”: “From ananda everything is born, everything is sustained in ananda, everything goes back to ananda.” I am quoting from the Taittiriya Upanishad. Here bliss is brooding, concentrating, in order to create, to express itself, to manifest itself, to come out into the world of multiplicity, as the world of multiplicity.

*As if a message from the world's deep soul,
An intimation of a lurking joy
That flowed out from a cup of brooding bliss,
There shimmered stealing out into the Mind
A mute and quivering ecstasy of light,
A passion and delicacy of roseate fire.*

Invocation

*As one drawn to his lost spiritual home
Feels now the closeness of a waiting love,
Into a passage dim and tremulous
That clasped him in from day and night's pursuit,
He travelled led by a mysterious sound.*

Then comes a very detailed description of this sound which beckons him, leads him on to where he has to go. This is actually the Omkara - OM, and there's a detailed and very beautiful description of it:

*A murmur multitudinous and lone,
All sounds it was in turn, yet still the same.*

The Indian philosophy of sound, *śabda*, says that there is one supreme sound which is OM. All sounds come from it. This is *śabda* Brahman, Brahman as sound, creative of all things that are, because all form is vibration, and *śabda* is vibration. The original, sempiternal, eternal sound, this is OM.

*All sounds it was in turn, yet still the same.
A hidden call to unforeseen delight
In the summoning voice of one long-known, well-loved,
But nameless to the unremembering mind,
It led to rapture back the truant heart.*

The truant heart, which is wandering here, there and everywhere, is led back to rapture, to the delight.

*The immortal cry ravished the captive ear.
Then, lowering its imperious mystery,
It sank to a whisper circling round the soul.*

If you go deep down into the soul you will hear this sound, because while there is a flame-light in the psychic being, in the heart-centre, there is also a sound, always going on whether you hear it or not.

*It seemed the yearning of a lonely flute
That roamed along the shores of memory
And filled the eyes with tears of longing joy.*

People who have heard the OM in various phases and aspects really are

capable of hearing this sound. Some people hear it as a lonely flute. Some people hear it as a cricket, chirping. Later Sri Aurobindo refers to 'anklet bells'. Some people hear it like those anklet bells that women wear, or like the chirping of the crickets that you hear from a distance.

*A cricket's rash and fiery single note,
It marked with shrill melody night's moonless hush
And beat upon a nerve of mystic sleep
Its high insistent magical reveille.
A jingling silver laugh of anklet bells
Travelled the roads of a solitary heart;
Its dance solaced an eternal loneliness:
An old forgotten sweetness sobbing came.* (p. 290)

This dance solaced the eternal loneliness of the Brahman. It is sabda Brahman that really creates the delight.

*Or from a far harmonious distance heard
The tinkling pace of a long caravan
It seemed at times, or a vast forest's hymn.
The solemn reminder of a temple gong,
A bee-croon honey-drunk in summer isles
Ardent with ecstasy in a slumbrous noon,
Or the far anthem of a pilgrim sea.*

The sea itself is a pilgrim towards the Divine. And here the sound of the waves, heard from a distance, is one voice of the OM.

Dara Shulkoh, the son of Shah Jehan the Moghul emperor, was a Sufi mystic who was very much influenced by the Hindu Upanishads. In fact he got them translated into Persian. He claimed that he heard this universal music. Pythagoras, in Greece, has referred to it also, as 'the music of the spheres'. This is the OM, the original sound. And somebody asked Dara Shulkoh, "What do you mean, you hear the OM? What is it like?" He said, "It is indescribable, nothing can describe it. But I can give you some kind of an idea. Think of a bazaar or *haat*, five or ten miles away. There everyone is absorbed in his own business, everybody is shouting, there is a lot of noise. From ten miles away you will hear a kind of hum, nothing else. OM is something like that". So with a caravan, a long line of bullock carts moving

Invocation

along. From some distance you will hear a sound, but you can't make out exactly what it is.

*An incense floated in the quivering air,
A mystic happiness trembled in the breast
As if the invisible Beloved had come
Assuming the sudden loveliness of a face
And close glad hands could seize his fugitive feet
And the world change with the beauty of a smile.*

The Beloved comes down as a personal reality, and his smile beautifies the whole world.

*Into a wonderful bodiless realm he came,
The home of a passion without name or voice,
A depth he felt answering to every height,
A nook was found that could embrace all worlds*

How can a nook or corner embrace all the worlds? This is what this plane of the world-soul is like: there, a point is the whole world.

*A point that was the conscious knot of Space,
An hour eternal in the heart of Time.* (p.290)

If you follow the flow of Time, at the centre you will find the Eternal. In one of his dialogues, Plato says "Time is a moving image of eternity". So if you know how to take Time by the horns, you will find eternity right there in the middle of it. If you can get hold of Time in the right way, you will get hold of the Eternal, right here in the world.

The silent Soul of all the world was there: (p.291)

Now Aswapati has actually come to the Soul of the world.

*The silent Soul of all the world was there:
A Being lived, a Presence and a Power,
A single Person who was himself and all ...*

This Divine is himself, and yet he is all. This is what Aswapati is discovering now. And that is the World-Soul, because it is the soul of the world. Everywhere it is present.

*The silent Soul of all the world was there:
A Being lived, a Presence and a Power,
A single Person who was himself and all
And cherished Nature's sweet and dangerous throbs
Transfigured into beats divine and pure.*

Please note the phrases that Sri Aurobindo uses:

*And cherished Nature's sweet and dangerous throbs
Transfigured into beats divine and pure.*

They are attractive and yet dangerous, if we do not know the Master of Nature. But the World-Soul does. Nature belongs to the World-Soul - it is not something independent.

Then come a number of lines and sentences in which Sri Aurobindo contrasts the World-Soul with the Self in the Mind. For example, The Self in the Mind doesn't love anything or anybody - it is aloof and apart. But the World-Soul is:

*One who could love without return for love,
Meeting and turning to the best the worst,*

That is his work - he is always turning the worst into the best.

*It healed the bitter cruelties of earth,
Transforming all experience to delight;
Intervening in the sorrowful paths of birth
It rocked the cradle of the cosmic Child
And stilled all weeping with its hand of joy;
It led things evil toward their secret good,
It turned racked falsehood into happy truth; (p.291)*

There on that plane everything is true, everything is beautiful, everything is joy. Opposites are there in the world, but here we are in the Soul of the World, where they are all reconciled.

*It turned racked falsehood into happy truth;
Its power was to reveal divinity.*

That is what it is at, that is its business - to reveal divinity.

Invocation

*Infinite, coeval with the mind of God,
It bore within itself a seed, a flame,
A seed from which the Eternal is new-born*

Here Sri Aurobindo is coming to the concept of the psychic being. The Eternal is always being born as the soul in man, the psychic being.

A flame that cancels death in mortal things.

This is the psychic fire.

*All grew to all kindred and self and near;
The intimacy of God was everywhere,
No veil was felt, no brute barrier inert,
Distance could not divide, Time could not change.*

The World-Soul remains what it is, in spite of expressing itself perpetually, eternally.

*A fire of passion burned in spirit-depths,
A constant touch of sweetness linked all hearts,
The throb of one adoration's single bliss
In a rapt ether of undying love.
An inner happiness abode in all, ...*

In all there is one single happiness, which is the delight of Brahman.

*A sense of universal harmonies
A measureless secure eternity
Of truth and beauty and good and joy made one.*

In this universal soul, all these are harmonised: truth, beauty, good and joy. They are all different aspects of the same reality.

*Here was the welling core of finite life;
A formless spirit became the soul of form. (p.291)*

The spirit itself is formless; it is always assuming form, and no form is without soul. So there is spirit and soul, two things, the same reality in different forms and phases, spirit in itself and soul in us.

Now Aswapati perceives everything to be 'soul-stuff'. On that plane,

everything is basically spiritual.

*All there was soul or made of sheer soul-stuff;
A sky of soul covered a deep soul-ground.
All here was known by a spiritual sense.* (p.291-92)

He didn't need any other means of knowing. Whatever he knew was known by a spiritual sense. Why does Sri Aurobindo use the word 'sense' here? Because sense-knowledge gives a direct apprehension of things. But here the sense is spiritual, not physical. That brings what is described in the next lines:

*All here was known by a spiritual sense.
Thought was not there but a knowledge near and one
Seized on all things by a moved identity,*

You become the thing that you know, and you know the thing that you have become as yourself. This identity is also dynamic. It moves, and moves things.

*A sympathy of self with other selves,
The touch of consciousness on consciousness
And being's look on being with inmost gaze
And heart laid bare to heart without walls of speech ...*

You see things from deep within. You become one with the thing and therefore you know it from within. There is a gaze, there is a regard, but it is 'inmost'. You don't need any speech, you don't have to speak to anyone, there communication is automatic, spontaneous.

*And heart laid bare to heart without walls of speech
And the unanimity of seeing minds
In myriad forms luminous with the one God.*

God is one, but forms are myriad. He perpetually expresses himself in the multiplicity without losing his unity and oneness. This is the World-Soul.

*Life was not there, but an impassioned force,
Finer than fineness, deeper than the deeps.
Felt as a subtle and spiritual power, ...*

There was no life, but there was an impassioned force. What kind of force?

Invocation

In “*The Life Divine*”, when Sri Aurobindo describes the eightfold levels of existence, he says that Conscious-Force becomes vitality or life-force in the world. This is a very old Indian idea, based on a spiritual experience of life. Life in its essence is a spiritual power, not a vital one as we know it in ourselves or in the world.

*Life was not there, but an impassioned force,
Finer than fineness, deeper than the deeps.
Felt as a subtle and spiritual power,
A quivering out from soul to answering soul,
A mystic movement, a close influence,
A free and happy and intense approach
Of being to being with no screen or check, ...
Without which life and love could never have been.*

There is no interdiction, there is no barrier. The closeness is so intimate - beings are many and yet they are all one in the unity of the World-Soul. And without this unity at the centre, life and love could never have been. There is life and there is love, but both are essentially centred in one single unitative reality.

*Body was not there, for bodies were needed not,
The soul itself was its own deathless form*

There is no necessity for body there, everything is spiritual. Soul itself has a form, not a shape which we could recognise with our senses, or even conceive, but nevertheless it had its own form.

*The soul itself was its own deathless form
And met at once the touch of other souls
Close, blissful, concrete, wonderfully true.*

The touch of other souls is close, blissful, concrete, wonderfully true. It is based on truth – otherwise it could not be blissful and concrete and close.

*As when one walks in sleep through luminous dreams
And, conscious, knows the truth their figures mean,
Here where reality was its own dream,*

If reality is seeing a dream, it is seeing itself. But can you get any idea of it? Is there anything in our experience that can even distantly hint at it? Yes –

sometimes in symbolic dreams we know what they mean. So the truth comes through the dream. Here reality itself was its own dream. What it dreams becomes real, and what is real is its own dream.

He knew things by their soul and not their shape:

There was no shape, no body, but he knew things by their soul, by their inner essence.

*As those who have lived long made one in love
Need word nor sign for heart's reply to heart,
He met and communed without bar of speech
With beings unveiled by a material frame.*

There is no body or materiality here. Then follows a lovely description of the plane of the World-Soul.

*There was a strange spiritual scenery,
A loveliness of lakes and streams and hills,
A flow, a fixity in a soul-space,*

‘Soul’ hyphen ‘space’. Why? We get these things in space as we know it, in the physical, material space. But soul is also a space, because everything is in the soul. In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo says that Spirit is ultimate Space, original Space, because in Spirit everything is. So that also is space. Here we get soul-space. In Indian spiritual thought three kinds of space are mentioned, namely: *bhutaakasha* - material space; *chintaakasha* - mind space; and *chidakasha* – spiritual space. This is soul-space. In the *chidakasha* everything is there. So therefore he sees it as:

*A flow, a fixity in a soul-space,
And plains and valleys, stretches of soul-joy,*

These valleys, these plains, are all stretches of soul-joy. Everything is delight.

*And gardens that were flower-tracts of the spirit,
Its meditations of tinged reverie.*

There were flower-tracts, and they were all made of the spiritual stuff – not material.

Invocation

*Air was the breath of a pure infinite.
A fragrance wandered in a coloured haze
As if the scent and hue of all sweet flowers
Had mingled to copy heaven's atmosphere.*

All flowers with their aroma and scent had come together, and yet it was possible to distinguish them separately, because the One is All.

All of these things appeal directly to the soul, not the physical eye.

*Appealing to the soul and not the eye
Beauty lived there at home in her own house,
There all was beautiful by its own right
And needed not the splendour of a robe.*

She didn't need any silk dresses - the soul's beauty is its own dress.

*All objects were like bodies of the Gods,
A spirit symbol environing a soul,
For world and self were one reality.* (p.293)

How can world and self be one reality? Because this is the World-Soul. There self and the world are the same reality. There is a projection, there is an expression, there is an outward manifestation, and yet it is still the Soul. If body and self can be one, then you get the world and soul as one reality.

In the next section Sri Aurobindo goes on to talk about the psychic plane, without mentioning that term.

*Immersed in voiceless internatal trance
The beings that once wore forms on earth sat there
In shining chambers of spiritual sleep.
Passed were the pillar-posts of birth and death,
Passed was their little scene of symbol deeds,
Passed were the heavens and hells of their long road;
They had returned into the world's deep soul.* (p.293)

'Internatal' means between one birth and another. We all know that psychic beings after physical death go to a certain plane for rest. They absorb all the experiences they had in the previous life, and then they take birth again. On that plane there is no heaven or hell. It is a place of rest and refuge. They

have gone to the plane of the world-soul for rest.

All now was gathered into pregnant rest:

Rest for what? For a new adventure in life.

*All now was gathered into pregnant rest:
Person and nature suffered a slumber change.
In trance they gathered back their bygone selves,*

They remembered all the previous experiences they had in different selves.

*In a background memory's foreseeing muse
Prophetic of new personality
Arranged the map of their coming destiny's course:*

They are going to take a new birth, they are going to decide upon what kind of life they are going to have, what they are going to do in their next birth.

Heirs of their past, their future's discoverers,

They carried their past with them because they have absorbed their experiences, and now they are going to discover the future.

*Electors of their own self-chosen lot,
They waited for the adventure of new life.*

They decide what their next life is going to be

A Person persistent through the lapse of worlds,

The psychic being doesn't really die. It leaves the body, yes. And he says 'Person' with a capital P. That Person continues throughout time. One may say that the psychic being eventually realises the Divine. What happens to it? It merges itself into the Divine - but it can also keep its distinct existence. Sri Aurobindo says that it would be desirable to do so, because that is also one aspect and phase of the divine. Don't lose your psychicality, retain it. But know that it is the Divine as the psychic being. This is part of the yoga.

A Person persistent through the lapse of worlds,

Invocation

*Although the same for ever in many shapes
By the outward mind unrecognisable,
Assuming names unknown in unknown climes
Imprints through Time upon the earth's worn page
A growing figure of its secret self,
And learns by experience what the spirit knew,
Till it can see its truth alive and God.* (p.293)

Through life after life the psychic being is evolving, growing, becoming more and more what it is supposed to be: arriving at the Divine and yet retaining its individual personality. The spirit knows everything, the psychic being goes on discovering, life after life, until it reaches the Divine, its ultimate goal. Until then, they must come back to birth and the world.

*Once more they must face the problem-game of birth,
The soul's experiment of joy and grief
And thought and impulse lighting the blind act,
And venture on the roads of circumstance,
Through inner movements and external scenes
Travelling to self across the forms of things.* (p.293-4)

This refers to the psychic being when it is born again. What is it going to do? It is going to experiment with joy and grief.

Why does he say “*the blind act*”? Because this is a world of ignorance. The psychic being is born again, but it has not realised its divinity yet. So what it does, it does in ignorance. And yet “*thought and impulse lighting the blind act*”: it is not entirely ignorant, it is not completely blind. It has thought and impulse to light its way, even though not completely.

Into creation's centre he had come.

This “he” is Aswapati.

*The spirit wandering from state to state
Finds here the silence of its starting-point
In the formless force and the still fixity
And brooding passion of the world of Soul.* (p.294)

The soul of the world, and the world of Soul. This is what he finds there: the

“brooding passion of the world of Soul.” This world also has a passion, a purpose and a goal – that is its passion. The whole of Nature is doing yoga, including everything in the world.

*All that is made and once again unmade,
The calm persistent vision of the One
Inevitably re-makes, it lives anew:
Forces and lives and beings and ideas
Are taken into the stillness for a while;
There they remould their purpose and their drift,
Recast their nature and re-form their shape.
Ever they change, and changing ever grow,*

This is the truth of the evolution – things are always changing, but in and through the change they are ever growing, developing. Beautifully put!

*Ever they change, and changing ever grow,
And passing through a fruitful stage of death
And after long reconstituting sleep
Resume their place in the process of the Gods
Until their work in cosmic Time is done. (p.294)*

What happens? The soul goes into death, passes through death, but goes where? Into a reconstituting sleep. This sleep is a stage of rest. And in that sleep what does the soul do? Reconstitutes - re-shapes, reforms, makes itself anew.

Everything that is going on in the world is a process of the Gods, and you come back to take part in this process. That is the task of the psychic being. There is no rest for the psychic being, it has to go on growing, evolving, developing, till it reaches the Divine in all aspects, in all phases, and fulfils the purpose of God in the world, which is the manifestation of the Divine in Matter.

*Here was the fashioning chamber of the worlds.
An interval was left twixt act and act,
Twixt birth and birth, twixt dream and waking dream,
A pause that gave new strength to do and be.*

It is a pause between two births, and yet in that pause they get new strength to do and be. Then Aswapati moves on.

Invocation

*Beyond were regions of delight and peace
Mute birthplaces of light and hope and love,
And cradles of heavenly rapture and repose.
In a slumber of the voices of the world
He of the eternal moment grew aware;*

The eternal moment is all the time being born, and all the time it is eternal. Sri Aurobindo speaks of three kinds of eternity. Eternity proper, the eternal moment, and Time-eternity. Time is endless and beginningless, it is eternal in that sense. Earlier I quoted the words of Plato from the Symposium, "Time is a moving image of Eternity". It is moving, yet it is Eternity in movement. So here we find:

*His knowledge stripped bare of the garbs of sense
Knew by identity without thought or word;*

Again there is a direct knowledge, becoming what you know.

*His being saw itself without its veils,
Life's line fell from the spirit's infinity.* (p.294)

He saw his being, realised what it is, and there is no screen, no veil, no darkness.

*Along a road of pure interior light,
Alone between tremendous Presences,
Under the watching eyes of nameless Gods,
His soul passed on, a single conscious power,
Towards the end which ever begins again,
Approaching through a stillness dumb and calm
To the source of all things human and divine.* (p.294-5)

It's a passage, a journey.

*There he beheld in their mighty union's poise
The figure of the deathless Two-in-One,*

This refers to the Divine and his conscious Power, the Two-in-One: Ishwara-Ishwari, the Divine and his concentrated Force, which is the creative act. Is it two or is it one? That is a mystery, a paradox. That is the Divine in his

creative phase. Beyond that is the One. That is not Two, that is neither being nor becoming, not Divine nor Force, it just is what it is. But is that the ultimate? No. Beyond it is the Unknowable. Let us follow this step by step.

*There he beheld in their mighty union's poise
The figure of the deathless Two-in-One,
A single being in two bodies clasped,
A diarchy of two united souls,
Seated absorbed in deep creative joy;
Their trance of bliss sustained the mobile world.*

Bliss sustains the world. If there were no bliss, there would be no world. This is again from the Upanishads: if there were no ananda, no-one would be able to breathe. But what lies behind them? This is important.

Behind them in a morning dusk One stood

There is One beyond and behind the Two-in-One. The Two-in-One are that One expressed in “a diarchy of two united souls”, representing the Being and the Becoming, the static divine and the dynamic divine, the Self and the conscious Force. But beyond that is the One. But that is not the end either.

*Behind them in a morning dusk One stood
Who brought them forth from the Unknowable.*

Now we go to the Unknowable, the Transcendent. So there is the Transcendent, then the One, then the Two-in-One. The Transcendent is ineffable, indescribable, nothing can be said about it except that it is Unknowable. There is a hymn in the Rig Veda which says “In the lap of the Unborn the One was placed.” *Aja* - the Unborn which has no manifestation, no sign, no hint, no knowledge can be had of it. In Sri Aurobindo's language, this is Parabrahman. Sri Aurobindo says this over and over again: you cannot know the Parabrahman, but you can become it. Parabrahman is beyond all knowledge, all sign, all hint, all expression. This is the Unknowable. The Rig Veda says it very beautifully: “In the lap of the Unknown the One was placed. In the One, all the worlds were there.” So we have three aspects: The Unknowable, the One, and the Two-in-One.

*Behind them in a morning dusk One stood
Who brought them forth from the Unknowable.*

Invocation

What is this morning dusk? It is mysterious, but still it is morning, it is turned towards creation. It recalls the Symbol Dawn in the first canto of the epic.

*Ever disguised she awaits the seeking spirit;
Watcher on the supreme unreachable peaks,
Guide of the traveller of the unseen paths,
She guards the austere approach to the Alone.*

This One is the conscious force, the Mother, who “*guards the austere approach to the Alone*”. Nobody could approach the Alone unless the Mother helps – it’s impossible.

*At the beginning of each far-spread plane
Pervading with her power the cosmic suns
She reigns, inspirer of its multiple works
And thinker of the symbol of its scene.
Above them all (all the planes) she stands supporting all,
The sole omnipotent Goddess ever-veiled
Of whom the world is the inscrutable mask;
The ages are the footfalls of her tread,
Their happenings the figure of her thoughts,
And all creation is her endless act.* (p. 295)

This is the ever-creative Mother, Savitri.

Now the poet comes back to Aswapati. This is Aswapati’s spirit, but all of us are supposed to become vessels and instruments of the conscious force of the Mother.

*His spirit was made a vessel of her force;
Mute in the fathomless passion of his will
He outstretched to her his folded hands of prayer.*

Aswapati is now in a prayerful attitude, and he extends his hands of prayer to the Mother. And the Mother responds to his prayer:

*Then in a sovereign answer to his heart
A gesture came as of worlds thrown away.
And from her raiment’s lustrous mystery raised*

*One arm half-parted the eternal veil.
A light appeared still and imperishable.* (p. 295)

“Half-parted” - the Mother will never reveal the whole of herself. Mysteries will always be there, but she will reveal enough so that you can do her work.

*Attracted to the large and luminous depths
Of the ravishing enigma of her eyes,
He saw the mystic outline of a face.* (p.296)

Only an outline, not the face as such, because the veil was only half-parted.

*Overwhelmed by her implacable light and bliss,
An atom of her illimitable self
Mastered by the honey and lightning of her power,
Tossed towards the shores of her ocean-ecstasy,
Drunk with a deep golden spiritual wine,*

All this refers to Aswapati’s inner state. But he doesn’t stop there satisfied, he does something outwardly - namely:

He cast from the rent stillness of his soul

His soul is pacified and still, without any disturbance, and yet he cast from it

A cry of adoration and desire ...

This is not a wordly desire, but an aspiration.

*He cast from the rent stillness of his soul
A cry of adoration and desire
And the surrender of his boundless mind
And the self-giving of his silent heart.*

Surrender is the real essence of the yoga. He prays, and then he surrenders. His mind surrenders, his heart gives itself.

He fell down at her feet, unconscious, prone.

So Aswapati ends with an obeisance to the Mother, as we are all supposed to do.

Lexicon of an infinite Mind

by Narad

Narad - originally Richard Eggenberger - was given his name by the Mother in 1972. Poet, singer and gardener, he joined the Ashram in 1960. Later the Mother made him responsible for developing the gardens of the Matrimandir in Auroville. He was also responsible for preparing the slides of Huta's "Meditations on Savitri" paintings, which the Mother arranged to be shown as a series of slide-shows, first in the Ashram and later in Auroville, as part of the celebrations for Sri Aurobindo's Centenary year in 1972.

The inspiration for *Lexicon of An Infinite Mind, a Dictionary of Words and Terms in Sri Aurobindo's "Savitri"* came in late 1970 or early 1971. The title is taken from two lines in *Savitri*, Book XI, The Book of Everlasting Day, Canto I.

*... the first lexicon of an infinite mind
Translating the language of eternal bliss.*

The inspiration for the lexicon came around the time that Mother gave me Her permission and blessings to read *Savitri* aloud at the Center in Auroville. Nearby we had begun the initial work of establishing a nursery for the purpose of collecting and studying the many species of plants and flowers that would eventually comprise the Matrimandir Gardens surrounding the Matrimandir, whose construction would soon begin. I shared my vision of the lexicon with Madhav Pandit who gave me great encouragement, saying that the work was of such importance that Mother's Force would be with me for its immediate realization!

As we had no personal funds and the financial situation in Auroville was extremely difficult, I wrote to my father asking his help to purchase the compact edition of the complete sixteen volume *Oxford English Dictionary*. Although my parents were strongly opposed to my living in India, my father kindly sent me the money and I began the work. I had been reading *Savitri* since 1961, during my first visit to the Ashram. Of all the world's poetry and literature, *Savitri* is the only work that speaks directly to my soul. Even

though most of it is beyond mental comprehension, I nonetheless was drawn to the magnificence and force of its great mantric lines and read its uplifting passages again and again. I made my first list of words in 1971 and Madhav referred me to his books for definitions of terms in Sri Aurobindo's yoga. However, the intensity of the work in the Matrimandir Gardens precluded further efforts on the lexicon and the work was delayed for many years.

In 1998, twenty-seven years later, the lexicon was again taken up, though at first only sporadically, for in that year Mary Helen and I collaborated with Bob Zwicker and Lilo Burke of the Ashram Archives Department on the book of Mother's flower significances, taking up the complete revision of the botanical section. Towards the end of 1998, as the world was now fully in the computer age, I began entering each line of *Savitri* into a computer program, then checking and re-checking for accuracy. I was aware that it would have been possible to scan the entire text into the computer and have no errors, but then the *rasa* of typing each word and reading each line would have been lost.

After entering and numbering each line, I began compiling and entering words to be defined. The list rapidly grew to immense proportions, forcing me to learn the rudiments of designing a layout that would enable me to search individual fields and alphabetize instantaneously. I chose a software program called FileMaker Pro for the database as it allowed an almost infinite number of fields with fast and powerful search capabilities. Initially, book, canto, page and line number were entered in separate fields that could be individually sorted. These were followed by a word field and then by a definition field which could be expanded to any length desired. I then read through the complete text of *Savitri* a second time, finding many more words and phrases, including proper names from Greek and other mythologies.

At this point another inspiration came that once again somewhat delayed the work on the lexicon. A constant aspiration during the 1980's and '90's was to save enough funds to one day be able to donate copies of *Savitri* to colleges and universities throughout the world. As I observed the rapid growth of the Internet, the inspiration came for a website that would be devoted exclusively to *Savitri* and would include the complete text of the poem, Sri Aurobindo's letters on the poem, Mother's words on *Savitri* and much more. Written permission was received from the Ashram Trustees to

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establish an authorized Internet site, and my first attempts at collating data, learning the basics of computer codes, uploading data to the Internet, and other arcane steps began. Being a rank neophyte I realized that the technical aspects were far beyond my capabilities and I began to search for professional help to design the site. The work was quite intense and required the better part of a year for its realization. As the website neared completion there were still numerous adjustments and corrections to be made and after an inspired suggestion by Matthijs Cornelisson of the Ashram Archives Department, I contacted David Hutchinson who, with an already taxing schedule, worked overtime to make the necessary refinements and emendations. The site, first posted on August 15, 2000, Sri Aurobindo's birthday, is now complete and has the following location:

<http://www.savitribysriaurobindo.com>.

With the completion of the *Savitri* website, I was now able to devote full time to the lexicon. In the fall of 1999 Mary Helen joined me in the work and together we read through the entire text two more times, adding hundreds of words to the list and evaluating the direction in which we were proceeding. One major decision was to discontinue the references to book, canto, page and line number. The primary reason for this was our realization that Sri Aurobindo often uses words in many different senses. For example, the same word may be used in four different lines with four different meanings or shades of meaning. To attempt to give the book, canto, page and line numbers for each of these instances would make for an unwieldy volume.

In December 1999 we returned for a stay of three months in the Ashram and had numerous opportunities for meeting with Amal Kiran, Nirodbaran and Udar Pinto. We recorded hours of Udar's reminiscences with especial reference to *Savitri*, talked with Nirodbaran about his work as Sri Aurobindo's scribe, and spent many hours visiting Amal with dozens of questions about words and lines in *Savitri* and recording many of his reminiscences as well. Amal began writing replies to our questions and continues to do so although a little less frequently now. Yet, in recent months he wrote us a three page reply to a letter which was published in a recent edition of *Mother India* under the title "How to Recite *Savitri*". We also met Huta on two occasions and she presented me with one of the greatest treasures of my life, a copy of

Savitri signed in Mother's own hand with Her blessings. At this point we should also mention that during the mid to late 1970's Mary Helen and I had three extraordinary meetings with Nolini Kanta Gupta who commented on many lines and answered many questions on *Savitri* from his illumined understanding.

During our months in the Ashram we also met with Madanlal Himatsingka who presented us a copy of the *Savitri Concordance*, an alphabetical listing of all the words in *Savitri* together with the number of times each word occurs and the page and line number where it is found. This has been a very helpful aid in double-checking against our list of words to be defined. Our meeting with Madanlal was very productive in another area as well. I had always felt that it would be very useful for those who wished to study *Savitri* to be able to have at hand an edition in the style of the great epics in which every fifth line is numbered. I had once hand-numbered the 1954 edition for Madhav Pandit, who found it very helpful. Together with Madanlal we researched many texts of classical poetry and decided on the format. With the Ashram's permission this valuable reference edition is now available.



*Narad planting a sapling - child of the Samadhi Service Tree
at Savitri Bhavan in February 2000*

Invocation

Returning to the U.S. at the end of March 2000 we focused our efforts almost exclusively on the lexicon. We work with three dictionaries, *The Oxford English Dictionary - Second Edition*, on compact disc (1992) which is the complete text of the sixteen volume work, *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1996), and *Webster's Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (1937). We are also working with Quest, one of the most valuable search engines ever designed, presented to us by Matthijs Cornelisson, which has enabled us to search through twelve of the major works of Sri Aurobindo for definitions and comments. This invaluable reference aid is now available from the Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency (SABDA) on CD Rom as "Selected Works of Sri Aurobindo". Without it our work would have taken much longer and our research would not have been nearly as complete.

It is now April 2001 and we have completed almost two-thirds of the lexicon, with thousands of words defined. The work goes slowly because we look up each word in every line that it occurs in *Savitri*. Often this means reading through 40 or 50 lines for one word and then, since Sri Aurobindo employs such subtlety of nuance in the use of many English words, we must research all the definitions in the dictionaries that apply. To give an example, let us say that a word occurs thirty times in *Savitri* and we find that it has 40 definitions in our dictionaries. We then search the entire text of *Savitri* and study each line in which the word occurs, attempting to understand the subtlety of senses in which Sri Aurobindo employs the word and selecting all applicable definitions from our reference works. We have often spent a full morning on one word. We do not attempt to refer a definition to a specific line but merely include all possible definitions. There is also no attempt at an exegesis, although we have at times included quotations from Sri Aurobindo that may not exactly define a word or term but are expository, revealing to our deeper understanding levels upon levels of meaning.

Our efforts during the past months have tended to encompass a broader sphere of words and become more inclusive, adding words that may seem familiar to those whose first language is English but may present a challenge to others who come to the poem from many different linguistic backgrounds. This has led to a list we have termed "borderline words" which we have

sent to Savitri Bhavan for the study group to review. As this is a collaborative work we have sought insights from many disciples and devotees. Among those who have offered their help are Aravinda Basu, Prof. M. V. Nadkarni, who regularly lectures on *Savitri*, R.Y. Deshpande who has published major expositions on Savitri, including the two volume edition, *Perspectives on Savitri*, a collection of the writings of elder and younger disciples, and Shraddhavan of Savitri Bhavan whose goodwill and encouragement are ever present.

In the coming months we will continue our journey through the alphabet and simultaneously will be researching Mother's written works and adding Her definitions and commentaries. Our aspiration for the lexicon is to help those for whom *Savitri* is "the way", always with the understanding that we do not offer any explanations since, as Mother said to Huta, "Only I can explain *Savitri*".

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

*R.Y. Deshpande, editor of the **Perspectives of Savitri** collection mentioned in our issue no 9 of November 2000, has asked us to inform our readers that since many misprints have been found in this book, a booklet of corrections is being provided. Anyone who would like to receive one may contact him at the following address:*

R. Y. Deshpande, C/o "Mother India",

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002

*He also informs that the second volume of the **Perspectives** series is expected to be available shortly.*

About Savitri Bhavan

We dream of an environment in Auroville

that will breathe the atmosphere of Savitri

that will welcome Savitri lovers from every corner of the world

that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

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

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

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

Savitri Bhavan is a project of SAIER (Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research). Donations by cheque or draft may be made payable to 'SAIER' and sent with a covering note specifying that the amount is meant for Savitri Bhavan. You may also specify whether you would prefer your donation to be used for construction or activities. Contributions from within Auroville may be made through the Auroville Financial Service, account no. 230247.

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Savitri
is a Mantra
for the transformation
of the world

The Mother