

Invocation

Savitri

B H A V A N

Study notes and Newsletter

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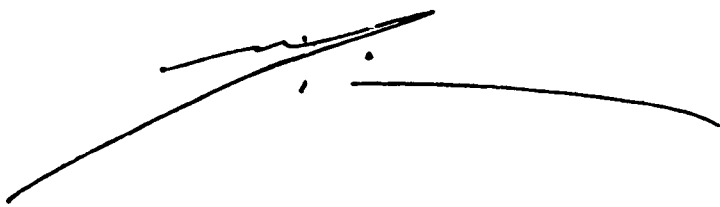
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What Sri Aurobinde
represents in the world,
history is not a teaching,
not even a revelation;
it is a decisive action
direct from the Supreme





The Secret Knowledge
Savitri, Book One, Canto Four
Reading and comments on the first section
by Jhumur Bhattacharya
at Savitri Bhavan on Sunday July 13, 2003

Jhumur, niece of the Mother's musician Sunil Bhattacharya, is one of those privileged to grow up in the Ashram from her childhood, under the direct influence and guidance of the Mother. Now she is a teacher in the Ashram school, where among other things she guides some students who are studying Savitri. We were very happy that she accepted our request to come and speak to us about this canto. Her graceful presence, musical voice and insight based on experience made this a very special day for all who were present to hear her reading and comments.

Mother once wrote to me that *Savitri* is a prophetic poem that can save the world. It contains, she said, all that Sri Aurobindo has come to say, his vision, his yoga, everything which is there in *The Life Divine*. Also the way, the method of achieving the goal, that too is given in the poem. Whatever is in *The Synthesis of Yoga* as well as in *The Life Divine* is in this poem, and more. It is a legend, and it is a symbol. It is extremely beautiful, but it is also experience. This language of experience gives experience also to the reader. If one concentrates, if one tries to go within, then there is a beginning of inner change, of inner perception. That is the reason maybe why Sri Aurobindo has shown us something of the method of his yoga in this canto, “The Secret Knowledge”. Every yoga, every system of spiritual quest has its secret knowledge, has its mysteries, has its own method; and in this particular canto, which can stand almost by itself, there is a certain sequence, a development by which Sri Aurobindo shows us how he himself proceeded – because Aswapati’s yoga is his own yoga – and how those who want to follow him may proceed.

In his letters Sri Aurobindo says that his yoga starts with an interiorisation. He mentions that. It is an integral yoga, true, we don’t have to leave out anything; but in his own personal yoga, as in Aswapati’s also, he starts with the Gnana Yoga. It is an inner movement that first has to be established, in which the seeker has first to find his secret self, the inner presence. Once that presence is established then one can take

up the rest of the journey. But that inner stand must never be lost. In one of his last poems Sri Aurobindo says, “*Act in the world with thy being beyond it.*” Be within, be above, and then with that as a starting-point one can do whatever has to be done, and not lose the contact.

So there are certain very, very important guidelines, for me at least, in this particular canto, which is why it is one of my favourites.

The Secret Knowledge

Already in Book One Canto Three there is “The Yoga of the Soul’s Release”. The soul has come out of the Ignorance, and now this canto is a kind of universal statement. It is not about just Aswapati and his yoga, but is a universal statement.

*On a height he stood that looked towards greater heights.
Our early approaches to the Infinite
Are sunrise splendours on a marvellous verge
While lingers yet unseen the glorious sun.
What now we see is a shadow of what must come.
The earth’s uplook to a remote Unknown
Is a preface only of the epic climb
Of human soul from its flat earthly state
To the discovery of a greater self
And the far gleam of an eternal Light.
This world is a beginning and a base
Where Life and Mind erect their structured dreams;
An unborn Power must build reality.*

This is a very essential statement. Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is based on the truth of involution – which makes evolution possible.

*This world [of Matter] is a beginning and a base
Where Life and Mind erect their structured dreams;*

There is a sense of opposition between this line and the next one which mentions Reality. The structures of Life and Mind will remain dreams until one has realised the inner divinity. As the Mother says in one of her statements, “*Without the Divine, life is a painful illusion; with the Divine, all is bliss.*” So as long as that inner divinity has not been found,

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it remains dream. There is a sense of everything passing, nothing has any fundamental truth. It is organised, it is structured, there is a sequence – especially on the level of Mind there is a pattern very clearly making itself visible, but it is the unborn power that must build reality, as opposed to the previous line's dream.

An unborn Power must build reality.

The 'unborn' has for me both the meaning of that which is to be, and of that which is eternal and so does not have to enter into birth, that which was from the very beginning. It was before the beginning that the eternal gods were there, the Supreme was there. In Sanskrit the gods are described as 'ajata', they are not born, they are never born because they are a part of the Eternal. They have always been there, they will always be there, so birth and death do not need to frame their existence. And in our field of progressive manifestation there is past, present and future: that which is not yet born will be manifested. So you have both significances: in this world of progressive manifestation the reality that is already there, which has always been there, will have to be manifested and then only will this world of existence begin to really be built on Truth. Until then it will be illusion.

Then he continues with a very strong statement in the next line: we are ourselves unborn. In our essence there is the Eternal. Therefore

A deathbound littleness is not all we are:

Otherwise we are very small.

*Immortal our forgotten vastnesses
Await discovery in our summit selves;*

We are not little, we are vast, but to find these these depths of infinite vastness, one has to reach the heights. When you are right on top of the mountain, then you can see far below. When you are climbing up the slope you just look at the next stage.

Unmeasured breadths and depths of being are ours.

We are not small, we are not just human and therefore limited and

bound. The human is the child of the divine. We are sons of God. That concept is already clear.

*Akin to the ineffable Secrecy,
Mystic, eternal in unrealised Time,
Neighbours of Heaven are Nature's altitudes.*

It is because we are such that we can realise the Divine, make real that which is latent, that which is potential. There is no real essential contradiction between the human and the Divine, between matter and spirit, between this life and any other life. That is something central to Sri Aurobindo. It is this that makes it possible for us to hope, to aspire for perfection, for transformation. It is only the outer layers of ignorance and inconscience and imperfection – these have to be removed. But essentially we are already divine. As Mother says in one of her very simple sentences “*It is very simple: we have to become what we already are.*” We are essentially divine – we have to become it. In the Becoming there has to be a change. In the Being, the presence is already there. And that is the starting-point of the Secret Knowledge. Otherwise there cannot be any purpose in a secret knowledge. If we always see ourselves as human and as permanently opposed to the Divine the question of Yoga, Union, does not arise. But we can join with the Divine because we are him, we are his. We are part of him.

*To these high-peaked dominions sealed to our search,
Too far from surface Nature's postal routes,
Too lofty for our mortal lives to breathe,*

We are too concerned with our surface life, we live on the outside, our consciousness is always turned outwards. The first condition, as he says, is that one has to be interiorised.

*Deep in us a forgotten kinship points
And a faint voice of ecstasy and prayer
Calls to those lucent lost immensities.*

Therefore the act of prayer is a first movement of turning inwards. One can pray to him, but what is that part in us that prays, what is the part that connects with the Divine? It is already the part that is divine. It is

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the divine in us that opens to the divine. Otherwise, if we are alien to him we can never turn to him. The act of prayer, the part in us that prays, and the Being to whom we pray are all three equally divine. And our prayer has to be utterly pure and utterly sincere, without any mixture of any desire, of anything other than the pure prayer.

Even when we fail to look into our souls

which is what we often do –

*Or lie embedded in earthly consciousness,
Still have we parts that grow towards the light,*

You see the strength and the hope that these lines can give us!

*Yet are there luminous tracts and heavens serene
And Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy
And temples to the godhead none can see.*

But how do we see them? It is only when we have turned our sight within.

*A shapeless memory lingers in us still
And sometimes, when our sight is turned within,
Earth's ignorant veil is lifted from our eyes;
There is a short miraculous escape.*

So the first condition is laid: we have to turn within. And in the beginning we cannot stay in that state for long. But it is a start, a change, a turn of consciousness. Then the veil of ignorance is lifted. This ignorance is our prison. We escape from this prison into the light and the freedom of the spirit. This prison then he describes as a 'narrow fringe'. This is what we call our everyday life.

*This narrow fringe of clamped experience
We leave behind meted to us as life,
Our little walks, our insufficient reach.
Our souls can visit in great lonely hours
Still regions of imperishable Light, ...*

But for that one has to be alone, in the sense that, as Mother says again,

“*One is always alone with the Divine*”. There has to be one-pointedness, the being has to be wholly turned towards the Divine and nothing but the Divine. That is the lonely hour, there is no sharing. Then in that communion there is light, there is power, there is bliss, there is existence – Satchidananda.

*Our souls can visit in great lonely hours
Still regions of imperishable Light,
All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power ...*

We have the sight with the power, that is knowledge and Light and Peace and Force – things that very often in our daily life exclude one another: where there is power there is no silence, where there is silence there is not always necessarily knowledge.

*And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss
And calm immensities of spirit space.
In the unfolding process of the Self
Sometimes the inexpressible Mystery
Elects a human vessel of descent.*

There are also those who act as intermediaries between those heights and this ordinary surface life of man. They are like links, like guides, and such a person very often becomes the sage, the saint, the avatar. But for that there has to be a complete opening, a complete stillness in the being so that the descent can take place absolutely.

These lines often remind me of Sri Aurobindo’s symbol, where you have the ascending triangle which is opening up from below, and the descending force and bliss that comes down, and then you have the flowering of the consciousness, when the ascent and the descent are absolutely equal.

In the unfolding process of the Self ...

Because in this process of progressive manifestation there have to be perhaps milestones shown by certain particular chosen individuals.

*Sometimes the inexpressible Mystery
Elects a human vessel of descent.*

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*A breath comes down from a supernal air,
A Presence is born, a guiding Light awakes,
A stillness falls upon the instruments:*

The being has to be utterly silent, utterly receptive.

*Fixed, motionless like a marble monument,
Stone-calm, the body is a pedestal
Supporting a figure of eternal Peace.*

Again, we have a suggestion that in Sri Aurobindo's yoga, the body participates. There is no opposition between spirit and body. Each contains the other, collaborates with the other.

Or a revealing Force sweeps blazing in; ...

The line becomes very, very dynamic.

*Out of some vast superior continent
Knowledge breaks through trailing its radiant seas,
And Nature trembles with the power, the flame.*

These are also moments of inspiration. When a person is filled with a greater breath, that is really inspiration. When the breath of the Lord really fills the being. It is not only just abroad upon the waters of the being, but really fills the whole being, lifts it up. Those are the inspired moments that can happen. Also again inspiration demands utter silence, tranquillity, so that the force can come in, sweep in. If one is full of oneself then one cannot be filled with the Grace. The Mother told us, *'The Grace is always there, but you are full of yourselves, you have closed all your doors and your windows – the Grace may come knocking on your door, but it will not be able to enter. Empty yourself of yourself, remove the ego, make yourself completely empty, open, clean, pure, and then you can be filled with the presence.'*

*A greater Personality sometimes
Possesses us which yet we know is ours:*

This is our real self.

Or we adore the Master of our souls.

*Then the small bodily ego thins and falls;
No more insisting on its separate self, ...*

That is the whole problem, the separative egoistic consciousness, this surface being which has taken up so much room in our lives and insists on its separate existence. This has either to go by itself, or sometimes it is swept away by the Force, which if one is blessed enough one receives.

*No more insisting on its separate self,
Losing the punctilio of its separate birth,
It leaves us one with Nature and with God.*

It is like the image the Mother gave of the drop that falls into the ocean and becomes the ocean. The individual becomes the Whole. Yet again the insistence is, first, on the interiorisation of the consciousness.

In moments when the inner lamps are lit

For that we have to light those lamps. That has to be done. Mother's *Prayers* constantly speak of the aspiration, the flame that goes up from the depths. In her it was constantly there. In us it happens mostly at certain moments. So those moments have to be multiplied until it becomes constant.

*In moments when the inner lamps are lit
And the life's cherished guests are left outside, ...*

All our preferences, all the things we insist on as being an essential part of ourselves, those are our guests, they are not ourselves. Our real self is within:

*Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.
A wider consciousness opens then its doors;
Invading from spiritual silences
A ray of the timeless Glory stoops awhile
To commune with our seized illumined clay
And leaves its huge white stamp upon our lives.
In the oblivious field of mortal mind,
Revealed to the closed prophet eyes of trance
Or in some deep internal solitude*

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*Witnessed by a strange immaterial sense,
The signals of eternity appear.*

Again this image, that mind has to be put aside or transcended; and it is the inner vision, the eyes of a deeper insight. It is truly in-sight, from deep within. That is the knowledge the prophet has. It is not for no reason, I think, that in the ancient days very often great prophets and poets were described as being blind. They were often blind – that is, they were blind to the surface world. They didn't see the apparent world, they saw the essence of things. That has to happen. There has to be this inner opening.

*Or in some deep internal solitude
The signals of eternity appear.*

The eternal and the mortal are essentially the same. The eternal can join with the mortal because the mortal is the child of the eternal.

The truth mind could not know unveils its face,

That is the problem very often – the mind. Mind is an instrument of light, it is supposed to be an instrument that looks for light. But how often does it dodge and hide from light and feigns that half-darkness and half-light is the whole light! So that is one change we have to really work on.

*The truth mind could not know unveils its face,
We hear what mortal ears have never heard,
We feel what earthly sense has never felt,
We love what common hearts repel and dread;*

That is a surprising word, 'dread'. There is fear, because we are expected to give up our little self. We have to give up all that we relate to and feel, 'this is my identity, this is who I am, this is how I am.' All these things have to be put aside, have to be destroyed. And that is, to start with, quite frightening. One doesn't know then what one is. That is perhaps why we repel it.

*Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient;
A Voice calls from the chambers of the soul;*

It comes from above, it calls from within. The heights and the depths are one. We have lost that contact and they have to be bridged.

*We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead's touch
In golden privacies of immortal fire.*

Again the image of lighting the flame deep inside. This man can do. This is there inside him. Therefore we are more than our little selves. Sri Aurobindo defines the essence of manhood as being more than man. He says 'To exceed himself is man's manhood.' Man is the only creature really that can go beyond himself. He can become more than man, but unfortunately he can become less than man. Man can go down to the level of the beast or the brute, or the demon even; he can rise to the level of the god. His frontiers are really of his own choosing. Whether he wants frontiers or not – it is up to him. No other creature on earth has that faculty. If you look after a tree and you nourish it and take care of it, it grows into a wonderful tree. But if you let a man grow in the right way he becomes a god, becomes more than human. That is the nature of man. Man is always more than what he thinks he is. And therefore the idea of progress and change and conscious evolution is not something so difficult.

*These signs are native to a larger self
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives
And a diviner Presence moves the soul;*

This change starts with certain special moments of change, moments when the inner lamps are lit, when the soul can sit alone and speak to its gulfs. These moments have to be multiplied, augmented, and slowly we become more and more constantly that which we can be right away, momentarily.

*Or through the earthly coverings something breaks,
A grace and beauty of spiritual light,
The murmuring tongue of a celestial fire.
Ourselves and a high stranger whom we feel,
It is and acts unseen as if it were not;*

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It is part of us, it is flesh of our flesh, spirit of our spirit, bone of our bone. There is no opposition between the outer earthly covering and the inner presence, between spirit and matter. It is our ignorance that has put these two in opposite compartments. So there are moments when a surge comes from within or above that breaks down the barrier. Or we prepare ourselves to move inwards and link with our real selves.

*It follows the line of sempiternal birth,
Yet seems to perish with its mortal frame.*

Here Sri Aurobindo is obviously speaking of the psychic inner presence that is the one thing that we have that is constant in us from birth to birth, from life to life. All our evolutionary progress is not finished in one birth. It is a long, long story that started at the beginning and there is a long way to go, but there is one thing that we have in common with all our earlier incarnations, and that is this presence, the projection of the Divine in the darkness. The Grace slowly making its presence more and more felt as the being evolves. It is never darkened, it has the knowledge, it has the strength, in fact it doesn't have to grow. The psychic being is always there. But we have covered it over with layer after layer of ignorance and inconstancy and our progress is to remove one sheath of darkness and then another, and one by one to remove these coverings and sheaths so that the inner flame becomes more and more bright, more and more evident, and the being is illumined. The distance between the surface being and the psychic being is not any longer so great.

Mother used to tell that very often to us, saying that in certain people the psychic being is very much in front, in others it is still in the background, there are many layers, many walls of darkness, and some of these walls are also what we think is knowledge. Mind, body and all that we identify as ourselves, we put between ourselves and the deeper psychic self, the surface self and psychic self. So these have to be removed. Through evolution, through reincarnation this can happen, but it takes very very long. Through yoga we accelerate the process. We hasten the process, so that Sri Aurobindo

says, 'Yoga is accelerated evolution' – to do in one life what would otherwise have taken many many lives. So it is that:

*Ourself and a high stranger whom we feel,
It is and acts unseen as if it were not;
It follows the line of sempiternal birth,
Yet seems to perish with its mortal frame.
Assured of the Apocalypse to be,
It reckons not the moments and the hours;
Great, patient, calm it sees the centuries pass,
Awaiting the slow miracle of our change
In the sure deliberate process of world-force
And the long march of all-revealing Time.
It is the origin and the master-clue,*

It is this that is the secret of change, this contact with that inner presence.

A silence overhead, an inner voice,

The silence overhead probably is the soul, the inner voice is the psychic.

*A living image seated in the heart,
An unwall'd wideness and a fathomless point,*

Sri Aurobindo often describes the Divine, I have found, using opposing images – here the point and the wideness. Because it is mind that speaks in oppositions, it is the mental language that opposes big to small, right to wrong, black to white. Otherwise mind cannot function. It belongs to the world of dualities. But beyond the mind all dualities become one. So Sri Aurobindo very very often describes what is Divine by adjectives which are normally opposites and contradictions – like here he says it is

*An unwall'd wideness and a fathomless point,
The truth of all these cryptic shows in Space,
The Real towards which our strivings move,
The secret grandiose meaning of our lives.*

The manifestation of that psychic hidden presence has to be the first realisation of our lives. This is the end of the first realisation. What is the nature of that inner presence? These are very beautiful lines:

A treasure of honey in the combs of God,

The essence of sweetness. One of the terms used in the Vedas to describe the Divine is honey, *madhu*. He is the essence of all sweetness. And that is within us:

*A treasure of honey in the combs of God,
A Splendour burning in a tenebrous cloak,
It is our glory of the flame of God,
Our golden fountain of the world's delight,
An immortality cowled in the cape of death,
The shape of our unborn divinity.
It guards for us our fate in depths within
Where sleeps the eternal seed of transient things.*

Again the joining of the transience and the eternal. This is something eternal that enters time consciously, voluntarily; it enters time but it is not mortal, it is not temporal, it is eternal. It chooses to enter into a certain framework, and it is within us that this divine, this eternal has chosen to enter.

*Always we bear in us a magic key
Concealed in life's hermetic envelope.
A burning Witness in the sanctuary
Regards through Time and the blind walls of Form;
A timeless Light is in his hidden eyes;
He sees the secret things no words can speak
And knows the goal of the unconscious world
And the heart of the mystery of the journeying years.*

So here, it is still this psychic presence which is compared to the Purusha, the supreme witness consciousness that has always been, and that is never disturbed because it sees, it knows; being eternal it can wait. It knows where the journey will end.

This is the close of the first section of the Canto.

Savitri Bhavan Activities

April – August 2003

The varied activities being organised and developed at the Bhavan aim to make Sri Aurobindo's vision more accessible to people of very varied psychological types and cultural backgrounds. The object is not mere intellectual scrutiny of Sri Aurobindo's language and thought, but to approach his writings for help and light, for the psychological insights and spiritual support which can show the way to a new kind of human life and society.

All activities are open to interested members of the general public; any of our readers are welcome to join in when they are in the area

Regular weekly classes and courses

Savitri Study Circle, every Sunday morning, 10.30 – 12 noon.

The core-activity at Savitri Bhavan, from which all the rest have sprung, is the Savitri Study Circle, which has run uninterruptedly since it was first started in November 1994. That was before the dream of Savitri Bhavan had even been formulated, and the circle used to meet in various locations. After Nirod-da laid the foundation stone for the future complex on November 24 1995 the Circle started meeting under the trees, then in a temporary keet shelter, until the present building was opened on August 8th, 1999.

The group is now reading *Savitri* for the third time, and has reached Canto Four of Book Ten. Each time we go through the epic our understanding and enjoyment deepens. The method followed is this: starting a new canto, we take turns in reading a page or so, and go through it from beginning to end, to get an overview of the entire canto. Then we return to the beginning and proceed to study two or three sentences at a time. One member of the circle reads the short passage; then we give ourselves time to re-read it again silently to ourselves before sharing any questions and comments. Then we proceed to the next short passage. Once we have gone through the whole canto in this way, we normally go back and read through it once more, before taking up the next one.

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***The Life Divine*, led by Dr. Ananda Reddy, Wednesdays, 6 – 7.30 pm**

This class too was started before we had the present building, taking place in our thatched shelter in the garden. The students who have followed this course regularly have now advanced to a level where Dr. Reddy has decided that it will be more appropriate for him to change over from detailed study of each chapter in a weekly class to summary studies, conducted fortnightly, after the students have prepared the chapter individually. He will be starting this new system from the beginning of September onwards.



***The Ideal of Human Unity*, led by Kittu Reddy, Sundays 5 – 6.15 pm**

Professor Kittu Reddy of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in Pondicherry agreed to come and assist us in a more in-



depth study of *The Human Cycle*, after a group of Aurovilians who had been reading through the book together requested his help. Now that he has led us through that book over the course of 18 months or so,

the group has taken up *The Ideal of Human Unity*. From time to time we make side excursions into chapters or relevant passages from other books of Sri Aurobindo.

***The Synthesis of Yoga*, led by Sraddhalu Ranade, Fridays 5–6.30 pm**

This class began in January this year. Sraddhalu proposed to us that it would be illuminating to study the successive chapters of *The Synthesis of Yoga* in the light of Sri Aurobindo's works which were written and published alongside them in the monthly issues of his journal *The Arya* – that is, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Life Divine*, and *Isha Upanishad*. This new approach has found an enthusiastic response and this is at present the best attended of all our regular courses.



***Entretiens – The Mother's Playground talks*, Wednesdays 4–5 pm**
Recordings of the Mother's talks are played. Listeners are provided with bilingual texts in the Mother's original French alongside the English translation, to help them follow the recording.

“Cultivating Concentration”, Mondays 5.30 – 6.30 pm.

Team-member Dr. Jai Singh gives guidance on request, based on Sri Aurobindo's letters and other texts.

“Light of Savitri” reading group, Wednesdays 3 – 4 pm

Long-term Aurovilians Varadharajan and Shyamala lead a group of young local aspirants in reading *Savitri*, to experience the mantric power of Sri Aurobindo's epic by hearing and repeating the lines.

The English of *Savitri*, led by Shraddhavan Thursdays 4.30–5.30 pm

Participants explore the vocabulary and sentence-structure of a page or a little more of *Savitri*, aiming to improve their understanding of the imagery and meaning, as well as their pronunciation and reading.

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Sanskrit classes

Team-member Vladimir, who is a highly qualified Sanskrit teacher, leads two twice-weekly courses, one for beginners, another for intermediate students focussing on “The Gita and its message”.

Exhibitions

In May we displayed for the second time the beautiful **Savitri paintings on rough stone** by Aurovilian artist Emmanuele. No photograph can convey the originality and charm of these art-works, whose delicate lines and lively colours are enhanced by the texture and layerings of the unpolished stone on which they are painted.



*Sri Aurobindo dictating Savitri :
one of Emmanuele's paintings on stone*

Throughout June visitors enjoyed **Seen from Within** – sensitive portraits and abstract compositions made by Yvonne Artaud, long-time Ashram resident, in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

In July the exhibition was **Happy Rhythms of the Spirit**, by French-born Aurovilian Soham. These were meticulously executed complex geometrical mandalas, pulsing and vibrating with vivid and pastel colours.

The exhibition for August offers homage to the Master with reproductions of 25 paintings by Huta **Inspired by poems of Sri Aurobindo**. See pages – for Huta’s account of how these paintings came into being.

Guest Speakers

After the summer break our first guest speaker was Jhumur Bhattacharya from the Ashram. On Sunday July 13 she read and commented on the first part of Book One, Canto Four, **The Secret Knowledge**. A transcript of her comments appears in this issue.

Our guest speaker for August is Aurovilian author Georges van Vrekhem, whose books on the lives and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been widely read in many languages. On Sunday August 17 he will speak on **Reason in Turmoil**. We hope to publish a transcript of this talk in our next issue.

Paintings inspired by some of Sri Aurobindo's Poems

By Huta

During Sri Aurobindo's birthday month reproductions of 25 paintings by Huta inspired by poems of Sri Aurobindo are on display in the Savitri Bhavan hall. Here Huta tells their story.

After the exhibition of *Savitri* paintings organised by the Mother in February 1967, I felt strongly to express Sri Aurobindo's other poems through paintings. The Mother responded. I recall the words she spoke on 10th February 1967 :

*Child, the Lord wants you to do the new things –
the new creation.*

So here we are to fulfil the Lord's wish.

On 10th March 1967 we started the work. The Mother read with a magnifying glass a passage from "Songs to Myrtilla" which I had typed in capital letters. Then I gave her a sketch book to show me a picture with a few strokes. She said with a smile :

Ah, but my child, I haven't done sketches for ages!

I pleaded, "Mother, please do only a few lines. I will be inspired."

The Mother went into a trance. On waking, she did a sketch and explained to me the colour-scheme.

That night I painted the picture. The next morning I sent it to the Mother. She wrote :

*The painting is excellent – this is a very good start
for the new series.*

*Cheer up, my child, you do well what you do, and
you say that you are lonely, but the Lord is with you
and surely this is a big solace.*

With my love.

On Monday 29th March 1967 I read to the Mother some passages from

Collected Poems. She asked me to reject three passages and to do paintings of the rest. I requested her to show me through her sketches what to do about these pictures. She said while touching her forehead:

I am blank. I do not see any pictures. Do them with the inspiration which I am giving you.

I said with disappointment, "Oh, if you can't, how can I do them?"

She replied with a soft laugh, nodding her head :

I know that you can do them. Simply sit in front of the boards and the inspiration will come.


The Mother looked intently into my eyes. Then she took my hands into hers and patted them.

I did the paintings according to her inspiration and instructions. In fact from time to time she corrected my paintings and explained to me in detail the colour-scheme.

The Mother saw all the fifty-four paintings of Sri Aurobindo's poems on 1st September 1967. She liked them very much and expressed her happiness and satisfaction. These paintings, along with some new ones I had done under the Mother's guidance, were exhibited on 20th February 1968. The Mother's message for this exhibition ran :

*Here are pictures inspired
by some of Sri Aurobindo's poems.*

*Those who appreciated the
illustrations of Savitri will surely
like to see these paintings.*

Blessings 



*"The night is leaning on a luminous cloud"
The Mother's sketch for the first painting of this series*



Songs to Myrtilla – Glaucus

When earth is full of whispers, when
No daily voice is heard of men,
But higher audience brings
The footsteps of invisible things,
When o'er the glimmering tree-tops bowed
The night is leaning on a luminous cloud,
And always a melodious breeze
Sings secret in the weird and charmèd trees,
Pleasant 'tis then heart-overawed to lie
Alone with that clear moonlight and that listening sky.

[SABCL 5:1]

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Here are pictures inspired by some of Sri Aurobindo's poems.
Those who appreciated the illustrations of Savitri
will surely like to see these paintings.

Blessings
The Mother

"Nature proves her collaboration
With a smile of flowers"
- The Mother

Love and Grace of our Divine Mother
are endless...

To express our gratitude, -

Let us all collaborate with Her
fully and sincerely with our
deepest love...

— Huta

20.2.68

My declaration ran :

"Nature proves her collaboration with a smile of
flowers"

- The Mother

The Love and Grace of our Divine Mother are endless ...
To express our gratitude, -

Let us all collaborate with her fully and sincerely
with our deepest love ...

20.2.68

Huta

The Mother was pleased with this declaration.

In 1970 slides were taken of these paintings along with the paintings of *Savitri*. The slides were shown in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Theatre in the months before the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobindo, 15th August 1972.

For the *Savitri* paintings the Mother recited the passages and I recorded them. The background music was her own organ-music. When the time came to recite the poems, her voice failed. So I recited them with her approval. I did the recording of my recitation at home. It took me almost six months. I did it late at night when everything was hushed. Later I went to the Projector Room to blend this recitation with the background music composed by Sunil Bhattacharya. I requested the Mother to hear the recitation before it was played to the audience. On 5th May 1972 at 10.40 am the Mother heard the first part of the recitation. Unfortunately the sound was not up to the mark and the background music was too loud. Later I came to know that the amplifier was not in order. Nevertheless the Mother said :

It is very good. It is all right, you have done better than I expected.

She encouraged me, but I was not satisfied. Once again on 12th May the Mother heard the second part of the recitation. She remarked :

It is very good. You have progressed.

The Mother asked me not to attend the slide-shows of the *Savitri* paintings nor those of the paintings of Sri Aurobindo's poems, but I learnt from people that everything was successful.

The paintings themselves were kept along with the *Savitri* paintings, and along with them have been entrusted to Savitri Bhavan. I am happy that reproductions of some of them are being exhibited at the Bhavan this August, and look forward to the day when all of them can be on permanent display there.

The Mother's Savitri Translations

A study by Shraddhavan

Regular readers of *Invocation* will be aware, from Huta's detailed accounts, of the work that the Mother did with her from 1961 onwards to create the "Meditations on Savitri" paintings, and the later work entitled "About Savitri", in which the Mother allowed Huta to record her comments and explanations on *Savitri*, starting from Book One, Canto One, and reaching the middle of Book One Canto Four before she had to suspend this work in August 1970.

But not many people are aware that during a similar span of time, from September 1962 up to 1971, the Mother devoted herself to translating selected passages from *Savitri*. We can trace the outlines of this work through references to it in *Mother's Agenda*, where some of the passages she translated are given.

Moreover, despite the fact that the Mother mentions in a talk which we shall quote below that she has no intention of publishing her translations, a collection of *Savitri* passages translated by her was published, in 1977, alongside the English originals, by Editions Auropress. That book, entitled *Sri Aurobindo, Savitri, passages traduits par la Mère* is long out of print, but Savitri Bhavan is fortunate to have in its Reading Room a single copy, which has been consulted in researching for this article. In addition to translations of 1661 lines from Book Ten, this little book contains other passages from *Savitri* translated by the Mother, from Book One, Cantos Three, Four and Five, as well as several passages from Book Nine Canto One, a very significant one from Book Seven Canto Two, and even Sri Aurobindo's "Author's Note". The publishers are careful to point out in their introduction that these constitute "first drafts" which the Mother intended to revise. Not all the passages given in the various volumes of *Mother's Agenda* are included in the Auropress collection, and some occur there which do not appear in the *Agenda*.

The Mother's intention to start translating *Savitri* into French is announced in a talk of September 18, 1962. She had been translating *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and it was nearing completion.

September 18, 1962

I don't have far to go on my translation of *The Synthesis of Yoga* (it's going very quickly), and I have found what I'll do next. ... I am going to take the whole section of *Savitri* (to start with, I'll see later) from "The Debate of Love and Death" to the point where the Supreme Lord makes his prophecy about the earth's future; it's long – several pages long. This is for my own satisfaction.

I am going to translate it line by line (not word by word – line by line), leaving a space between each line; and when I've finished I will try to recapture it in French (gesture of pulling down from above).

I am not doing it to show it to people or to have anyone read it, but to remain in Savitri's atmosphere, for I love that atmosphere. It will give me an hour of concentration, and I'll see if by chance.... I have no gift for poetry, but I'll see if it comes! (It surely won't come from a mentality developed in this present existence – there's no poetic gift!) So it's interesting, I'll see if anything comes. I am going to give it a try.

I know that light. I am immediately plunged into it each time I read *Savitri*. It is a very, very beautiful light.

So I am going to see.

First of all, I'll concentrate on it just as Sri Aurobindo said it in English, using French words. Then I'll see if something comes WITHOUT changing anything – that is, if the same inspiration he had comes in French. It will be an interesting thing to do. If I can do one, two, three lines a day, that's all I need; I will spend one hour every day like that.

I don't have anything in mind. All I know is that being in that light above gives me great joy. For it is a supramental light – a supramental light of aesthetic beauty, and very, very harmonious.

So now I don't mind finishing *The Synthesis*. I was a little bothered because I have no other books by Sri

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Aurobindo to translate that can help me in my sadhana: there was only *The Synthesis*. As I said, it always came right on time, just when it was needed for a particular experience.

When this new translation is finished (because I know *Savitri*, I know what it is), I know that when it's finished ... either I'll be there or else things will take a very long time

All his other books that could help me are already translated. And with *Savitri*, the idea isn't to make a translation, but to SEE. To try something. To give me the daily experience of that contact.

I had some magnificent experiences when I read it the first time (two years ago, I believe). Wonderful, wonderful experiences! And since then, each time I read those lines, the same thing happens – not the same experience, but I come in contact with the same realm.

It will be an interesting thing to do.

There are several points here that we might note.

The Mother mentions that her intention is not to create a translation to publish or to show to people, but to do the work as a concentration, and for her own joy being in the atmosphere of *Savitri*.

“I am not doing it to show it to people or to have anyone read it, but to remain in Savitri's atmosphere, for I love that atmosphere. ...”

“I know that light. I am immediately plunged into it each time I read Savitri. It is a very, very beautiful light. ...”

“I don't have anything in mind. All I know is that being in that light above gives me great joy. For it is a supramental light – a supramental light of aesthetic beauty, and very, very harmonious.”

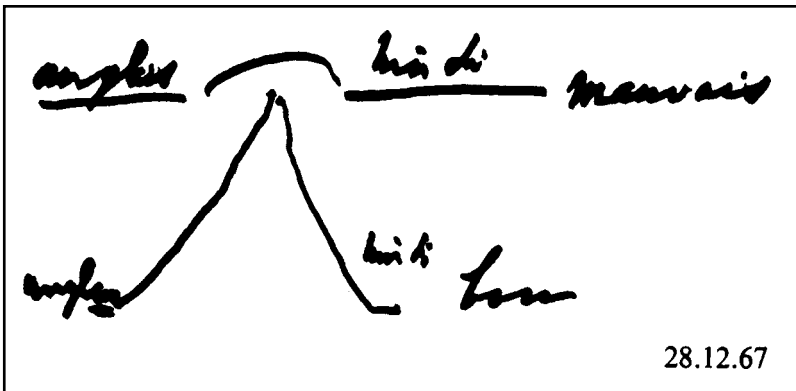
Secondly, the Mother mentions the method she intends to use:

“I am going to translate it line by line (not word by word – line by line), leaving a space between each line; and when I've finished I will try to recapture it in French (gesture of

pulling down from above). ...”

“First of all, I’ll concentrate on it just as Sri Aurobindo said it in English, using French words. Then I’ll see if something comes WITHOUT changing anything – that is, if the same inspiration he had comes in French.”

This reminds me of the answer given by the Mother in December 1967 to a question from Shyam Sundar, about translating Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s works into Hindi. He asked, “How to bring the true consciousness into the translation?” The Mother replied with a drawing, showing that the correct method was not to pass horizontally from the words of one language to the words of another, but to rise up to the level of the original inspiration, and from there to find the right words to express it in the target language.



*Sketch by the Mother, reproduced from
En route, On the Path: The Mother’s Correspondence with Shyam Sundar
Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1997, p.30*

Then the Mother elaborates:

“So now I don’t mind finishing The Synthesis. I was a little bothered because I have no other books by Sri Aurobindo to translate that can help me in my sadhana: there was only The Synthesis. As I said, it always came right on time, just when it was needed for a particular experience.” ...

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“All his other books that could help me are already translated. And with Savitri, the idea isn't to make a translation, but to SEE. To try something. To give me the daily experience of that contact.

I had some magnificent experiences when I read it the first time (two years ago, I believe). Wonderful, wonderful experiences! And since then, each time I read those lines, the same thing happens – not the same experience, but I come in contact with the same realm.

It will be an interesting thing to do.”

The Mother started translating from Book Ten some six months later, on March 13, 1963, and continued up to July 1970. There are many references to this work in the course of the *Agenda* and it is evident that, as she expected, it paralleled and illumined her sadhana. But before studying that process in more detail, let us take a look at some of the earlier passages from *Savitri* selected for translation by the Mother.

Sometimes passages from *Savitri* were given as messages on Darshan days, for example for her Birthday in 1964 :

February 22, 1964

(The day after Mother's eighty-sixth birthday. Mother first reads the translation of the message she gave on the 21st:)

It was translated in an interesting way.... I read it, then I concentrated (A. was sitting here, not moving or saying anything), so first I said a word or two to him to “establish the atmosphere.” Then I remained quiet, and it simply came – it isn't exactly a translation:

*Sa volonté solitaire affronta la loi du monde.
Pour arrêter la roue fatale, cette Splendeur se leva.*

*Her single will opposed the cosmic rule.
To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose.*

– Savitri, I.II.19

This translation is not included in the Auropress collection. The earliest

passage from the poem given there may possibly be the last one the Mother made. It is from Book One, Canto Three. In the Auropress collection no indication is given of when the translations were made. But in *Mother's Agenda* Volume 13, on April 8th, 1972, we find the following entry:

(Mother then listens to several texts from Sri Aurobindo for the message of April 24. Sujata suggests the following passage from Savitri, which Mother immediately accepts:)

He comes unseen into our darker parts
And, curtained by the darkness, does his work,
A subtle and all-knowing guest and guide,
Till they too feel the need and will to change.
All here must learn to obey a higher law,
Our body's cells must hold the Immortal's flame.

– *Savitri, I.III.35*

That's excellent.

Since the Darshan messages were usually given in both English and French, it seems likely that it was on this occasion and for this purpose that the Mother made the following translation of these lines.

*Invisible, il vient dans nos parties les plus sombres
Et, voilé par l'obscurité, fait son travail,
Un hôte subtil, un guide connaissant tout,
Jusqu'à ce qu'elles sentent aussi le besoin et la volonté de changer.
Tout ici-bas doit apprendre à obéir à une loi supérieure
Les cellules de notre corps doivent contenir la flamme de l'immortel.*

As mentioned above, the Mother started translating Book Ten of *Savitri* a few months after first expressing her intention to do so, in March 1963. But before that, at the end of January 1963, we find her translating some of the passages selected for the work she was doing with Huta, creating paintings to illustrate the whole of *Savitri*, which she called "Meditations on Savitri". Here are some extracts from the conversation given in the *Agenda* :

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January 30, 1963

What are you going to read to me today? Nothing?
Nothing at all?

Well, I have something, then.

...
... I've begun *Savitri* – ah! ... As you know, I prepare some illustrations with Huta and for her illustrations she has chosen some passages from *Savitri* (the choice isn't hers, it's Amal's and Purani's and made intelligently), so she gives me these passages one by one, neatly typed (which is easier for my eyes). It's from the Book I, Canto IV.

And then, as I expected, the experience is rather interesting.... I had noticed, while reading *Savitri*, that there was a sort of absolute understanding, that is to say, it can't mean this or that or this – it means THAT. It comes with an imperative. And that's what led me to think, "When I translate it, it will come in the same way." And it did. I take the text line by line and make a resolve (not personal) to translate it line by line, without the slightest regard for the literary point of view, but rendering what he meant in the clearest possible way.

The way it comes is both exclusive and positive – it's really interesting. There's none of the mind's ceaseless wavering, "Is this better? Is that better? Should it be like this? Should it be like that?" No – it is LIKE THIS (*Mother brings down her hand in a gesture of imperative descent*). And then in certain cases (without anything to do with the literary angle or even the sound of the word – neither sound nor anything, but meaning), Sri Aurobindo himself suggests a word. It's as if he were telling me, "Isn't this better French, tell me?" (!)

I am simply the recording machine.

It goes with fantastic speed, meaning that in ten minutes I translate ten lines. On the whole, only three or four times are there a couple of alternative possibilities, which I jot down immediately. Once, here (*Mother shows a passage*

with erasures in her manuscript), the correction came, absolute. “No,” he said, “not that – THIS.” So I erased what I had written.

Here, read the English first.

*Above the world the world-creators stand,
In the phenomenon see its mystic source.
These heed not the deceiving outward play,
They turn not to the moment's busy tramp,
But listen with the still patience of the Unborn
For the slow footsteps of far Destiny
Approaching through huge distances of Time,
Unmarked by the eye that sees effect and cause,
Unheard mid the clamour of the human plane.
Attentive to an unseen Truth they seize
A sound as of invisible augur wings....*

– Savitri, I.IV.p. 54

I didn't reread my translation, I am doing it now for the first time.

*(Mother reads aloud her translation up to:
“They turn not to the moment's busy tramp”)*

*Au dessus du monde se tiennent les créateurs de mondes,
Dans le phénomène ils voient sa source mystique.
Ceux-là ne se soucient pas du jeu extérieur décevant,
Ils ne se tournent pas vers le piétinement effaré du moment ...*

Here, there was some hesitation between *de l'instant* [the instant's] and *du moment* [the moment's]. Then he showed me (I can't explain how it takes place), he showed me both words, *moment* and *instant*, and he showed me how, compared to *moment*, *instant* is mechanical; he said, “It's the mechanism of time; *moment* is full and contains the event.” Things of that sort, inexpressible (I put it into words but it loses all its value). Inexpressible, but fantastic! There was some hesitation between *instant* and *moment*, I don't

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know why. Then he showed me *instant*: *instant* was dry, mechanical, empty, whereas *moment* contained all that takes place at every instant. So I wrote *moment*.

(Mother reads the end of her translation)

*Mais écoutent avec la patience immobile de Ce qui n'est pas né
Les pas lents de la Destinée lointaine
S'approchant à travers les immense distances du temps,
Inaperçus par l'oeil qui voit l'effet et la cause,
Inaudibles dans le vacarme du plan humain.
Attentifs à une Vérité invisible ils saisissent
Le bruit d'ailes d'un oracle inaperçu.*

It isn't thought out, it just comes. It's probably not poetry, not even free verse, but it does contain something.

So I made a resolve (because it's neither to be published nor to be shown, but it's a marvelous delight): I will simply keep it the way I keep the *Agenda*. I have a feeling that, later, perhaps (how can I put it?) ... when people can be less mental in their activity, it will put them in touch with that light [of *Savitri*] – you know, immediately I enter something purely white and silent, light and alive: a sort of beatitude.

This other passage is what I translated the first time:

*In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.*

– *Savitri*, I.IV. p. 55)

Here there were a few more erasures. It will probably go on improving. But what a wonder, this passage, what beauty!

*(Mother reads aloud her translation up to:
“God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep”)*

*La Matière s'illuminera de l'éclat de l'esprit
De corps en corps la naissance sacrée s'allumera;
La Nuit s'éveillera à l'hymne des étoiles,
Les jours deviendront une heureuse marche de pèlerin,
Notre volonté sera la force du Pouvoir éternel,
Et notre pensée les rayons du soleil spirituel.
Quelques-unes verront ce que personne ne comprend encore;
Dieu grandira tandis que les hommes sages parlent et dorment ...*

Splendid!

(Mother reads her translation of the last two lines.)

*Car l'homme ne connaîtra ce qui vient qu'à son heure
Et la foi n'existera pas jusqu'à ce que l'œuvre soit accomplie.*

Oh, I love this: “*God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep.*”

So, I'll continue.

The conversation continues, with many interesting insights into the way in which the Mother was receiving guidance from Sri Aurobindo as she worked. But let us for now just note that both these passages were, as she said, ones that had been selected for the “Meditations on Savitri” work. In fact they correspond to paintings nos. 13 and 15 of Book One, Canto Four.

The first passage is not included in the Auropress collection. But there we find that the Mother did in fact translate the entire passage which includes paintings nos. 14 and 15. This was a passage which she returned to time and time again. We find her referring to it no less than ten times in the *Agenda*. The first part of it was given as a message for her Birthday in 1967, and it was probably at that time that it was translated. Later she even recorded her translation of the last few

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lines given above, corresponding to the “Meditations on Savitri” painting no. 15, with the idea of it being set to music by Sunil. By that time the wording had been modified slightly. Here is the translation of the full passage as given in the Auropress collection :

*Quand l'obscurité s'approfondit et étouffe le coeur de la terre
Et que le mental corporel de l'homme est la seule lampe,
Cachant ses pas comme un voleur dans la nuit,
Quelqu'un entrera inaperçu dans sa maison.
Une Voix mal entendue parlera, l'âme obéira,
Un pouvoir se glissera dans la chambre intérieure du mental,
Un charme et une douceur ouvriront les portes closes de la vie
Et la beauté vaincra la résistance du monde,
La lumière de vérité capturera la Nature par surprise,
Furtivement Dieu contraindra les coeurs à la béatitude
Et sans s'y attendre la terre deviendra divine.
Dans la Matière s'allumera la radiancé de l'esprit,
En chaque corps brûlera la naissance sacrée,
La nuit s'éveillera à l'hymne des étoiles,
Les jours deviendront une joyeuse marche de pèlerin,
Notre volonté, une force du pouvoir de l'Eternel,
Et notre pensée, les rayons du soleil spirituel.
Peu d'êtres verront ce que nul encore ne comprend;
Dieu grandira tandis que les hommes sages parleront et
dormiront;
Car l'homme ne connaîtra la venue qu'à son heure
Et la foi ne viendra que lorsque le travail sera fait.*

*(When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp
As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread
Of one who steps unseen into his house.
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey
A Power into mind's inner chamber steal,
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors
And beauty conquer the resisting world,
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,*

*A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power;
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.*

– Savitri, I.IV. p. 55)

The next series of translated passages given in the Auropress collection all correspond to “Meditations on Savitri” paintings. There are 49 paintings of passages from Book One, Canto Four – more than of any other single canto. Of these we find translations by the Mother of passages 14 and **15**, as mentioned above, as well as of passages **31**, **32**, **33**, **34**, **35**, **38**, **39**, **40**, **44**, **45**, **46**, **47**, **48** and **49**. Not all of these are mentioned in the *Agenda*, but on two days in April 1969 we find there the Mother recording her translations of some of them, the ones printed in bold in the list above. In the printed version of the *Agenda* it is simply mentioned that these passages were intended to be set to music. But the recording of this part of the *Agenda* is introduced by Sujata mentioning that these recordings were meant “for Sunil-da”. Sunil-da, as Huta has told us, was given all her recordings of the Mother reading the “Meditations on Savitri” passages in English, and these were used as the base for his wonderful *Savitri* compositions. We know that when Sunil-da composed New Year’s Music for the Mother, her message was always included in French and in English. Possibly some similar arrangement was at one time considered for the *Savitri* passages.

In the Auropress collection we also find translations of all the 20 “Meditations on Savitri” passages from Book One Canto Five.

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Here is a list of references found in the *Mother's Agenda* to lines from Book One, Canto Four :

Date	Agenda ref.	Savitri ref.	Note
30.01.63	4:37-42	I.4 ls.294-304, p54, ls.332-341, p. 55	First translation : "Meditations on Savitri" passages 13, 15
15.02.63	4:45-47	I.4 ls.594-598, p.62	Translating "Meditations on Savitri" passage 21
11.05.63	4:135	I.4 ls.947-948, p.72	The Mother's sketch for MoS passage 47
14.11.64	5:283-84	I.4 l. 331, p.55	Allusion "... and earth grow unexpectedly divine"
25.05.66	7:119	I.4 l.331, p.55	Allusion "... and earth grow unexpectedly divine"
04.06.66	7:128	I.4 l.338, p.55	Allusion "A few shall see what none yet understand"
21.02.67	8:60-61	I.4 ls.321-331, p.55	Given as a message for the Mother's birthday
03.04.67	8:95	I.4 l.339, p.55	Allusion "... while the wise men talk and sleep"
03.05.67	8:130	I.4 l.339, p.55	Allusion "... while the wise men talk and sleep"
03.05.69	10:169-70	I.4 l.339, p 55	Allusion "... while the wise wise men talk and sleep."
12.04.69	10:128-29	I.4 p. 55-73	Recording MoS passages 15, 31, 35, 38.
05.04.69	10:118	I.4 p. 66-70	Recording MoS passages 33, 44, 46, 48, 49.

Two weeks after this first start, we find the Mother working on another of the “Meditations on Savitri” passages, also from Book One, Canto Four:

February 15, 1963

(Regarding a passage in Savitri in which Sri Aurobindo describes the universe as a play between He and She. “This whole wide world is only he and she,” He, the Supreme in love with her, her servitor; She, the creative Force.)

*As one too great for him he worships her;
He adores her as his regent of desire,
He yields to her as the mover of his will,
He burns the incense of his nights and days
Offering his life, a splendour of sacrifice...
In a thousand ways he serves her royal needs;
He makes the hours pivot around her will,
Makes all reflect her whims; all is their play:
This whole wide world is only he and she.*

– Savitri, I.IV. p. 62

What a marvelous work!

He goes into a completely different region, so much above thought! It’s constant vision, it isn’t something thought out – with thought everything becomes flat, hollow, empty, empty, just like a leaf; while this is full, the full content is there, alive.

It’s an explanation of why the world is as it is. At the start he says, He worships her (here again, there are no words in French: *Il lui rend un culte*, but that makes a whole sentence). He worships her as something far greater than Himself. And then you are almost a spectator of the Supreme projecting Himself to take on this creative aspect (necessarily, otherwise it couldn’t be done!), the Witness watching His own work of creation and falling in love with this power of manifestation – you see it all. And ... oh, He wants to give Her her fullest chance and see, watch all that

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is going to happen, all that can happen with this divine Power thrust free into the world. And Sri Aurobindo expresses it as though he had absolutely fallen in love with Her: whatever She wants, whatever She does, whatever She thinks, whatever She wills, all of it – it’s all wonderful! All is wonderful. It’s so lovely!

And, I must say, I was observing this because, originally, the first time I heard of it, this conception shocked me, in the sense that ... (I don’t know, it wasn’t an idea, it was a feeling), as though it meant lending reality to something which in my consciousness, for a very long time (at least ... millennia perhaps, I don’t know), had been the Falsehood to be conquered. The Falsehood that must cease to exist. It’s the aspect of Truth that must manifest itself, it’s not all that: doing anything whatsoever just for the fun of it, simply because you have the full power... You have the power to do everything, so you do everything, and knowing that there is a Truth behind, you don’t give a damn about consequences. That was something ... something which, as far back as I can remember, I have fought against. I have known it, but it seems to me it was such a long, long time ago and I rejected it so strongly, saying, “No, no!” and implored the Lord so intensely that things may be otherwise, beseeched Him that his all-powerful Truth, his all-powerful Purity and his all-powerful Beauty may manifest and put an end to all that mess. And at first I was shocked when Sri Aurobindo told me that; previously, in this life, it hadn’t even crossed my mind. In that sense Theon’s explanation had been much more (what should I say?) useful to me from the standpoint of action: the origin of disorder being the separation of the primal Powers – but that’s not it! HE is there, blissfully worshipping all this confusion!

And naturally this time around, when I started translating it came back. At first there was a shudder (Mother makes a gesture of stiffening). Then I told myself, “Haven’t you got beyond that!” And I let myself flow into the thing. Then I had

a series of nights with Sri Aurobindo ... so marvelous! You understand, I see him constantly and I go into that subtle physical world where he has his abode; the contact is almost permanent (at any rate, that's how I spend all my nights: he shows me the work, everything), but still, after this translation of *Savitri* he seemed to be smiling at me and telling me, "At last you have understood!" (*Mother laughs*) I said, "It isn't that I didn't understand, it's that I didn't want it!" I didn't want, I don't WANT things to be like that any more, for thousands of years I have wanted things to be otherwise!

...

Of course, it [*this vision or conception*] isn't allowed into action, because when you start accepting everything and loving everything and seeing Glory everywhere – why change!?! This is why the Force that had been in me for so long for the world to progress further made me reject precisely all that legitimized things as they are by putting you into contact with the inner joy of living – as he puts it, His Joy is there, everywhere, so nobody wants to leave the world....

In short, I was able to see the situation from above, a little higher than the creative Force – from the other side.

Here Satprem mentions in a footnote that he did not keep a note of the Mother's translation, and adds his own. Nor, unfortunately, is this passage to be found in the Auropress collection.

A few days later, in her talk of February 19, 1963 then Mother speaks again of her translation of *Savitri*

February 19, 1963

I do it exclusively for the joy of being in a world ... a world of overmental expression (I don't say supramental, I say overmental), a luminous, marvelous expression through which you can catch the Truth.

And it teaches me English without books! Now, whenever

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I have to write a letter, all the words come by themselves: the CONTENT of the word (just as I told you for *moment* and *instant*), now it works the same way with all words! Yesterday I wrote something in English for a doctor here (*Mother looks for a paper*):

The world progresses so rapidly that we must be ready at any moment to over pass what we knew in order to know better.

And you know, I never think: it just comes, either the sound or the written word (it depends on the case: now I'll see the written words, now I'll hear the sound). For instance, the word *advance* came first, and with it came *quick*, *quickly*, repeatedly [*“the world advances so quickly”*]. Then came *progress*, and *quickly* was out of the picture; and suddenly *rapidly* came forward. So I understood how it worked, how it works for all words! I understood: *progress* (the idea or inner meaning of progress) calls for *rapidly*; and *advance* calls for *quickly*. Putting it like this sounds like splitting hairs, but when I saw it, it was positively irrefutable! The word was alive, its content was alive, and along with it was its friend, the word that went with it; and the word that wasn't its friend was not to be seen, it wasn't in the mood! Oh, it was so funny! For that alone it is worth the trouble.

I have made some experiments with French too.

...

But it's amusing because I had never paid much attention to that [the questions of language], the experience is novel, almost the discovery of the truth behind expression. Before, my concern was to be as clear, exact and precise as possible; to say exactly what I meant and put each word in its proper place. But that's not it! Each word has its own life! Some are drawn together by affinity, others repel each other ... it's very funny!

Compiler's Note :

This article has emerged from an on-going study of all references to *Savitri* in *Mother's Agenda*. This research was very much helped by an Index of References to *Savitri* in *Mother's Agenda* prepared by Martin S. of the House of Mother's Agenda in Auroville. My thanks go to Martin and to Ganga Lakshmi for their assistance in obtaining research materials for this study.

Acknowledgement is made to L'Institut de Recherches Evolutives, Paris, publishers of *L'Agenda de Mère* and *Mother's Agenda*, for the excerpts quoted on pages 28 – 47 of this issue.

We should be aware that for this work the Mother was making use of the 1954 edition of *Savitri*.

Announcement

**History of India : a new approach
by Professor Kittu Reddy**

Standard Publishers, New Delhi, ISBN 81-87471-14-X, 504 pages,
Rs. 850.-, available from SABDA

Kittu Reddy has grown up in the Ashram from the age of five and received all his education at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. After graduating he was asked by the Mother to take up teaching in the Centre, which he has been doing since 1958, focussing specially on Sri Aurobindo's writings on history and social organisation, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *The Human Cycle*, and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. This book was written to fulfil a prompt from the Mother, and aimed specially at the young and the young in heart, giving a glimpse of the approach recommended by Sri Aurobindo, to view history not in terms of only external events and the play of economic forces, but from an inner and predominantly psychological angle.

It is an attempt to place in proper perspective the deeper psychological and spiritual elements even in the outer life of the Indian nation. It starts from the pulsating spiritual beginnings of the Vedic and Upanishadic times and traces the evolution of India to the building of empires; it is followed by a description of the invasions both Muslim and English and the psychological impact that they had on the people of India. Next there is a detailed description of the Freedom Movement with special emphasis on the psychological forces that were in play till the attainment of Independence in 1947. Finally it concludes with a vision for the future of India.

The book has a valuable foreword by Shri Kireet Joshi, Chairman of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, and of the Auroville Foundation.

More comments on Savitri

found in Mother's Agenda

January 22, 1961

Savitri is really a condensation, a concentration of the universal Mother – the eternal universal Mother, Mother of all universes from all eternity – in an earthly personality for the Earth's salvation. And Satyavan is the soul of the Earth, the Earth's *jiva*. So when the Lord says, 'he whom you love and whom you have chosen,' it means the earth. All the details are there! When she comes back down, when Death has yielded at last, when all has been settled and the Supreme tells her, 'Go, go with him, the one you have chosen,' how does Sri Aurobindo describe it? He says that she very carefully takes the SOUL of Satyavan into her arms, like a little child, to pass through all the realms and come back down to earth. Everything is there! He hasn't forgotten a single detail to make it easy to understand - for someone who knows how to understand. And it is when Savitri reaches the earth that Satyavan regains his full human stature.

July 4, 1961

Savitri is an exact description – not literature, not poetry (although the form is very poetical) – an exact description, step by step, paragraph by paragraph, page by page; as I read, I relived it all. Besides, many of my own experiences that I recounted to Sri Aurobindo seem to have been incorporated into *Savitri*. He has included many of them – Nolini says so; he was familiar with the first version Sri Aurobindo wrote long ago, and he said that an enormous number of experiences were added when it was taken up again. This explained to me why ... suddenly, as I read it, I live the experience – line by line, page by page. The realism of it is astounding.

September 23, 1961

This analogy between the ancient form of spiritual revelations and *Savitri*, this blossoming into poetry of his prophetic revelation is ... what could be called the most exceptional part of his work. And what is remarkable (I saw him do it) is that he changed *Savitri*: he went along changing it as his experience changed.

It is clearly the continuing expression of his experience.

There were whole sections he redid completely, which were like descriptions of what I had told him of my own experiences. Nolini said this. When I recently reread *Savitri*, some phrases were very familiar and I said to Nolini, ‘How odd, these are almost my very words!’ And he replied, ‘But this has been changed, it was written differently; it has BECOME like this.’ As the thing became more and more concrete for him, he changed it. The breath of revelatory prophecy is extraordinary! It has an extraordinary POWER!

What struck me is that he never wanted to write anything else. To write those articles for the *Bulletin* was really a heavy sacrifice for him. He had said he would complete certain parts of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, but when he was asked to do so, he replied, ‘No, I don’t want to go down to that mental level’! *Savitri* comes from somewhere else altogether. And I think that *Savitri* is the most important thing to speak about.

April 20, 1963

This *Savitri* is wonderful, he foresaw everything, saw everything, everything, absolutely everything, there isn’t one point he left unexplored!

June 6, 1970

Every time I read *Savitri*, I feel as if I am reading it for the first time, really. It’s not that I understand differently, it’s that its completely new: I never read it before! It’s odd. It’s at least the fourth time I read it.

And truly there’s everything in it. All the things I’ve discovered lately were there. And I hadn’t seen it. It’s odd.

The first time I read it was a revelation; it hung together perfectly well from beginning to end, and I felt I had understood (I did understand something). The second time I read it, I said to myself, “But this isn’t the same thing as what I read!...” It hung together, it made up a whole – and I understood something else. Then, recently when I read, at every passage I said to myself, “How new this is! And how the things I have found since are there!” Today again, that’s how it is, as if I read it for the first time! And it puts me into contact with the things I have just discovered.

It’s a miraculous book! (*Mother laughs*)

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of the world

that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

that will house all kinds of materials and activities
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Savitri Bhavan is entirely dependent on donations, and financial help from all well-wishers is most welcome. We invite everyone who feels the value of the work of Savitri Bhavan, to make this 125th Anniversary Year of the Mother the occasion to pledge their on-going support to the realisation of this Dream. Please consider in what way you could help the Dream of Savitri Bhavan to become a reality – whether by a lump-sum donation, or by commitment to a regular monthly or yearly amount.

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is a Mantra
for the transformation
of the world

The Mother