

*Savitri*

B H A V A N

*Study notes No. 21*

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# The Mother - An Eternal Birth

*Since the beginning of the earth,  
wherever and whenever there was the  
possibility of manifesting a ray of  
consciousness, I was there.*



*Since the beginning of the earth,  
wherever and whenever there was  
the possibility of manifesting  
a ray of consciousness,  
I was there.*

The Mother  
MCW 13:37

# *News from Savitri Bhavan*

## *A letter from the Editor*

### **Dear Readers,**

Again there has been a longer-than-usual wait before the appearance of this issue of *Invocation*. The last one came out in August 2003. In fact we have decided, for several reasons, to make this an "occasional publication" in future, rather than a regular quarterly. We shall still bring out several issues each year - but without committing ourselves to a strict periodicity.

In this issue there is some material about the Golden Day, which sees its 12th recurrence this year. We also share the proceedings of a weeklong study workshop held from September 27th to October 5th 2003, focussing on "The Secret Knowledge". This is the title of Canto Four, Book One of *Savitri*, which we found to be a key of great importance for a deeper understanding of the poem as a whole.

### **Nirodbaran's 100th Birthday**

November 17th 2003 marked the 100th birthday of our beloved eldest brother Nirodbaran. To mark the occasion, the Savitri Bhavan team had the happiness of presenting to him his full recorded reading of *Savitri* in the form of MP3 files on two CDs, suitable for public distribution. This recording of about 40 hours in length was made in the early 1980s. The work of putting it into digital form and enhancing the quality of the sound has been going on at Savitri Bhavan over the past year. As Sri Aurobindo's scribe for *Savitri*, Nirodbaran had to read out the dictated passages to Sri Aurobindo for confirmation and correction, so he is not only the sole person still living who heard Sri Aurobindo speaking the lines of *Savitri*; he is also the only one whose reading of *Savitri* was heard by Sri Aurobindo. It was an honour for our audio-visual team to be involved in this wonderful work.

## **New building**

November 24th is an important day for the family of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. On this day in 1926 Sri Aurobindo achieved a great siddhi, so that this day is considered the birth-date of his Ashram, and has been celebrated as a Darshan Day ever since. November 24th is also the birth-date of Savitri Bhavan. On this day in 1995, Nirodbaran laid the foundation stone of the whole complex and invoked the blessings of the Master and the Mother for the project. On November 24, 2003 a simple ceremony was held to initiate construction of the second stage of Savitri Bhavan. This new building is meant to house the "Meditations on Savitri" paintings prepared by the Mother with Huta, and we aspire for it to be completed in time for Sri Aurobindo's birthday in 2004. For this we request the help and support of all of you, in order to raise the needed Rs. 20 lakh in time.



### ***Prarthana* - a new publication in Tamil**

Another project which we have been working on for several months is the preparation of a Tamil journal, to appear at least once a year as a counterpart of *Invocation*. It has been given the name "*Prarthana*", and will appear parallel to this issue in February 2004. Our warmest thanks to all those who have helped us in this work.

### **Year-end and beginning**

Since September 2002, a group of Tamil teachers and young trainees from the villages around Auroville have been meeting at Savitri Bhavan once a week to read *Savitri*, wishing to immerse themselves in its mantric atmosphere, guided by senior Aurovilians Shyamala and Varadharajan. On December 31st 2003 they completed reading Book Twelve, the Epilogue. All who had participated in the programme gathered and each read a few lines. Afterwards, each spoke about their experience over the months of regular reading, about their life in 2003 and their hopes for the New Year. This made a sweet celebration to close the year and a good augury for 2004.

We wish all our readers a year of light and blessings throughout 2004.

**Shraddhavan**

# *The Golden Day*

Henceforth the 29<sup>th</sup> February will the day of the Lord.

*The Mother*  
*MCW 15:202*

The Mother announced the Supramental Manifestation of February 29, 1956 in two messages given for general distribution on March 29<sup>th</sup> and April 24<sup>th</sup> of that year, and published in the *Bulletin* of April 1956.

On March 29<sup>th</sup>, the 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of her first arrival in Pondicherry in 1914, the Mother gave this message:

*29 February - 29 March*

Lord, Thou has willed, and I execute:  
a new light breaks upon the earth,  
a new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.

*MCW 15:204*

This message is a modification of some lines in the Mother's Prayer of September 25, 1914, addressed to the Supreme Mother, which runs :

*The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:  
a new Light shall break upon the earth.  
A new world shall be born,  
and the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.*

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mother's final return to Pondicherry in 1920, she gave this message:

The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.  
It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.

*MCW 15:198*

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What happened during the meditation in the Ashram Playground on Wednesday February 29, 1956 was recorded by the Mother on the same night. Her note was made public four years later in the message distributed on the first recurrence of the Golden Day:

29 February 1956

*During the common meditation on Wednesday*

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

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

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

MCW 15:202

In *Savitri* we find some lines that seem to correspond to this momentous event :

*A victory was won for God in man,  
The deity revealed its hidden face.  
The great World-Mother now in her arose:  
A living choice reversed fate's cold dead turn,  
Affirmed the spirit's tread on Circumstance,  
Pressed back the senseless dire revolving Wheel  
And stopped the mute march of Necessity.  
A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks  
Empowered to force the door denied and closed*



*Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute  
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.*

*p. 21*

What the coming of the Supramental will mean for the world and men is described by Sri Aurobindo in Book Eleven of *Savitri* on pages 705-710. This wonderful passage is too long to reprint here in full, but we urge all our readers to read it closely. Here is a brief selection:

*The incarnate dual Power shall open God's door,  
Eternal supermind touch earthly Time.  
The superman shall wake in mortal man  
And manifest the hidden demigod  
Or grow into the God-Light and God-Force  
Revealing the secret deity in the cave.  
Then shall the earth be touched by the Supreme, ...*

*p. 705*

*All then shall change, a magic order come  
Overtopping this mechanical universe.  
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world.  
On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's ground,  
The superman shall reign as king of life,  
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven,  
And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart  
And lift towards godhead his mortality.*

*p. 706*

*Even the body shall remember God,*

*...*

*All earth shall be the Spirit's manifest home, ....*

*p. 707*

*When superman is born as Nature's king  
His presence shall transfigure Matter's world:*

*He shall light up Truth's fire in Nature's night,  
He shall lay upon the earth Truth's greater law;  
Man too shall turn towards the Spirit's call.*

*p. 708-709*

...

*The higher kind shall lean to lift up man.  
Man shall desire to climb to his own heights.  
The truth above shall wake a nether truth,  
Even the dumb earth become a sentient force.*

*The Spirit's tops and Nature's base shall draw  
Near to the secret of their separate truth  
And know each other as one deity.  
The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze  
And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face.  
Then man and superman shall be at one  
And all the earth become a single life.*

...

*Even the many shall some answer make  
And bear the splendour of the Divine's rush  
And his impetuous knock at unseen doors.*

*p. 709*

...

*The Truth shall be the leader of their lives,  
Truth shall dictate their thought and speech and act,  
They shall feel themselves lifted nearer to the sky,  
As if a little lower than the gods.*

...

*Thus shall the earth open to divinity  
And common natures feel the wide uplift,  
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray  
And meet the deity in common things.  
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,  
The Spirit shall take up the human play,  
This earthly life become the life divine.*

*p. 710*

# A Dual Power of God



*Two fires that burn towards that parent Sun,  
Two rays that travel to the original Light.  
To lead man's soul towards truth and God we are born,*  
p. 720

*To raise the world to God in deathless Light,  
To bring God down to the world on earth we came,  
To change the earthly life to life divine.*  
p. 692

# “The Secret Knowledge”

*Savitri, Book One, Canto Four*

*Study-Workshop at Savitri Bhavan*

*September 27 to October 5 2003*

In response to a query about the title of this Canto, Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1946 :

“As to the title of the three cantos about the Yoga of the King, I intended the repetition of the word “Yoga” to bring out and emphasis the fact that this part of Aswapati’s spiritual development consisted of two Yogic movements, one a psycho-spiritual transformation and the other a greater spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power.

... **In the second of these three cantos there is a pause between the two movements and a description of the secret knowledge to which he is led and of which the results are described in the last canto**, but there is no description of the Yoga itself or of the steps by which this knowledge came. This is only indicated, not narrated; so, to bring in “The Yoga of the King” as title of this canto would not be very apposite.”

*Sri Aurobindo*  
*SABCL 29:773*

Canto Four of Book One, “The Secret Knowledge” is, as its title indicates, a key to deeper understanding of the rest of the poem. As we can see from Sri Aurobindo’s letter above, this canto gives a description of the secret knowledge to which King Aswapati is led by his spiritual development. As a result of this knowledge, referred to at the beginning of the Canto Five,

*This knowledge first he had of time-born men. p.74*

Aswapati is led to his great quest :

*A Will, a hope immense now seized his heart,  
And to discern the superhuman's form  
He raised his eyes to unseen spiritual heights,  
Aspiring to bring down a greater world.* p.76

Becoming aware of the importance of this key canto, we organised a weeklong study camp to focus on it. We had been inspired by Jhumur Bhattacharya's wonderful reading of the first section and her comments (published in *Invocation* 20). Now we invited Sraddhalu Ranade to open the camp with an overview of the entire canto, and asked Jhumur-di to close it with a reading of section 6. Edited transcripts of their talks are published here.

In addition to these illuminating talks, we were able to take advantage of two books by M.P. Pandit : *The Book of Beginnings* – a study which deals with the whole of Book One; and his *Readings in Savitri Vol. 2* which is entirely devoted to a sentence by sentence reading of the canto. In addition we were able to listen to a series of recorded talks by Madhav-ji, covering most of the canto, kindly lent by his family. We also had the benefit of three articles by Dr. Nadkarni, which had been published in *The Oriya Aurovilian*, dealing with different aspects discovered in this canto.

The Mother guided Huta to make paintings of more passages from this canto than from any other in *Savitri*. We were able to look at reproductions of these 49 paintings, along with the Mother's sketches for them, and to hear her readings of the corresponding passages, recorded by Huta, as well as the music composed for them by Sunilda, the Mother's musician.

This immersion in *The Secret Knowledge* was a profoundly enriching experience, which has deepened our insight into many other sections of the poem. We were particularly fascinated to find how the insights hinted at in Book One Canto Four are developed and made yet more explicit and powerful in Savitri's responses to the god of Death in Books Nine and Ten, which were being read in the Sunday-morning Study Circle gatherings in the autumn months of 2003.

# *Agni – the Flame within*

*Talk by Sraddhalu Ranade at Savitri Bhavan  
on September 29th 2003*

The canto entitled *The Secret Knowledge* is one of the more mystical cantos in *Savitri*, and though many of the passages seem simple enough in appearance one senses a deeper meaning running through the diverse images and ideas and descriptions of the universe from different perspectives, various forces which act unseen on the surface events. One senses a common thread behind all these, and obviously that thread is not too visible, because after all it is the secret knowledge and the thread has to be secret. What I thought would be worthwhile to present here would be an insight into this common thread, first dwelling on an explanation of what that thread is, and Sri Aurobindo's own description of that thread in his other writings, and then taking up certain selected passages, particularly in the first half of the canto.

You will find that the second half is almost entirely devoted to a description of the play of He and She, Ishwara, Ishwari, Purusha, Prakriti, soul, material nature. One can all see these symbols simultaneously. But the first half is dominated by images of flame, of light, of brilliance, of intensity, which give us a hint of what that secret thread within might be. The question to ask is not: "What is the secret knowledge?" but "Who is the secret knowledge?" Then we find the clue of this hidden thread running through the whole canto.

That common thread which we find running through so many of the passages in the first half of this canto, is called, in the Vedic symbolism, Agni. Sri Aurobindo explains the origin of the word Agni.

*The name of this flaming Godhead Agni derives from a root-sound AG, whose quality of significance is pre-eminent force or intensity.*

I'll skip a few lines, but the quality essential, its significance can vary.

*It means a burning brightness.*

So it is used for fire.

*It means movement, a curving serpentine movement. It means strength, force, beauty and splendour; leading and pre-eminence. It develops into certain emotional values which have perished in Sanskrit, but remain in Greek: angry passion on one side, on the other delight and love.*

We will recall a more commonly used word from Greek, Agape, which means divine love. That also comes from the same root-sound Ag from which Agni comes. All these characteristics are present in Agni. There is also this side which is an angry passion, the roaring fire. And on the other side the delight and the love which brings peace and joy and bliss. The ancient rishis saw in this symbolism, not a correspondence between physical fire and the spiritual Agni, so that they said, “Let’s make fire the symbol of the spirit.” No. What they saw was that the physical fire itself is an expression of the spiritual force of Agni. When that force descends through the different worlds, in each of the worlds it expresses itself in corresponding forms of intensity, brilliance, leading, purifying force. And in the material world its representation is the physical flame. And that is why the physical flame has these characteristics: that it gives off intense light, intense heat, it burns, it purifies, it leads.

The physics of fire are not all entirely understood. It is oxygen combining with molecules. But why does fire rise? Why can’t it move downwards or sideways? It always wants to rise upwards. The character of fire is that it breaks down all poisonous molecules and it breaks them down into their simpler, purer, natural forms. Why does not it turn simple structures into poison? It only turns poison into purity. These particular physical characteristics are found because that is the psychological force behind the flame. But the deity of Agni is much more than one of the deities. Sri Aurobindo says

*The Vedic deity Agni is the first of the Powers, the pristine and preeminent, that have issued from the vast and secret Godhead. By conscious force of the Godhead the worlds*

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*have been created and are governed from within by that hidden and inner Control;"*

SABCL 10 : 358

You will find throughout this canto references to the inner influence, the hidden control behind forms which governs the evolution on the surface. That is the inner control of the Godhead who has created the worlds.

*Agni is the form, the fire, the forceful heat and flaming will of this Divinity. As a flaming Force of knowledge he descends to build up the worlds and seated within them, a secret deity, initiates movement and action.*

The secret divinity within: in this canto you will find so many passages referring to that influence. You can interpret that influence of the soul, of the psychic, the self, in different ways, at different points; but always the front, the form, the fire, the forceful heat, the flaming will of that divinity, that is Agni. So wherever the influence comes as a will, the influence of will is Agni. Wherever it comes as knowledge, as a flaming revelation, it is Agni. Wherever it is the sight of the future, the seer-will as Agni is called, it is always Agni. So this is the one common thread that links all the lines in the canto.

But there is further, a deeper insight into Agni's role and his character, without which we cannot fully appreciate this canto, so let's complete the description of Agni.

*This divine Conscious Force contains all the other godheads in itself as the nave of a wheel contains its spokes.*

In Agni are latent all possible forms of divinity, all the Godheads waiting. And as Agni purifies and cuts the way, these different Godheads hidden within begin to reveal themselves. And it is only when Agni has completed the purification that they take their full form and full force of revelation. You will find in the canto also this movement developing: when that initial struggle of evolution is completed, then the Gods above who are waiting, serving the Divine, impassive, unmoved, uninvolved in creation, who help by being separate and pure above, only when the world is made ready, on the



command of the Lord they descend and transform the world. We will touch upon this later as we read. So all these deities are held within.

*All puissance of action, strength in the being, beauty of form, splendour of light and knowledge, glory and greatness are the manifestation of Agni.*

On different levels even in our material experience, when you look at the beauty in a flower, it is a manifestation of Agni. When you look at the light coming from a bulb, the heat and intensity, it also is the material manifestation of Agni. When you observe the brilliance of a thought or an intensity of a will in action, or even the will as desire driving the animal or the human, these too are the action of Agni.

*And when he is entirely delivered and fulfilled out of the envelope of the world's crookednesses, this deity of flame and force is revealed as the solar godhead of love and harmony and light, Mitra, who leads men towards the Truth.*

Agni is bound in the envelope of the world's crookedness. He has descended into the depth of the inconscience. And he struggles through the journey out, freeing himself, changing the very material itself that binds him as he frees himself, and when he is entirely delivered then we say, "a God is born". There is another long passage of Sri Aurobindo's translation from the Vedic hymns which is entitled: "A God is born." And you'll see a similar idea repeated here in "The Secret Knowledge." Then he reveals himself as the solar Godhead of love, harmony, and light: all these are within him.

*But in the Vedic cosmos Agni appears first as a front of divine Force compact of burning heat and light which forms, assails, enters into, envelops, devours, rebuilds all things in Matter.*

When the divine Force is put out into action on any level, including matter, the front of that force, so to say the tip of God's finger, which touches, the first contact that is made, is the burning heat and light which enters into matter, reforms it, recasts it, devours it, rebuilds everything.

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*He is no random fire; his is a flame of force instinct with the light of divine knowledge. Agni is the seer-will in the universe unerring in all its works.*

Because Agni is a direct child of Chit -Tapas, which is Chit intensifying itself, preparing for manifestation, he is a child of the divine Mother.

He being native there, comes here with all knowledge: knowledge in action, which is will. So wherever he is, that is right knowledge of what is right action, and the force by which that knowledge constantly insists and compels the right action. There is something we call instinct, whether in the atom, in plant, animal or in human. What is instinct? Something which knows. Not only which knows what is right, but it has the compulsion to express in action what it knows is right. We can't explain it. That is Agni. Only the instinct is Agni's will subconscious, hidden. That same will as it rises and awakens in the human, organises in us the conscious will. A conscious will more and more freed from the ego, and attuned to the higher truth, is Agni himself awakening to full awareness. But even when he is subconscious, he knows the right action. So he is no ordinary chaotic flame.

*Whatever he does in his passion and power is guided by the light of the silent Truth within him. He is a truth-conscious soul, a seer; a priest and a worker,—the immortal worker in man.*

You will find all these descriptions appearing in different passages of this canto. The cowed-worker, several times in Savitri, including in this canto. The seer also, the conscious soul. Many of the passages which you have read are obviously references to the conscious soul. Agni is also seen as the truth-conscious soul. So that is the connecting thread.

*His mission is to purify all that he works upon and to raise up the soul struggling in Nature from obscurity to the light, from the strife and the suffering to love and joy, from the heat and the labour to the peace and the bliss.*

All these movements you will find in different parts of this canto. But throughout you have this movement of the struggle upwards, repeatedly described, because that is his task: to help the soul rise out.

*He is, then, the Will, the Knowledge-Force of the Deva; secret inhabitant of Matter and its forms, visible and beloved guest of man, it is he that guards the law of the Truth of things in the apparent aberrations and confusions of the world. The other gods awake with the Dawn, ...*

When the world is full of unconsciousness and ignorance, the other Gods are quietly asleep. They don't have much to do, they wait.

*... but Agni wakes also in the Night; he keeps his divine vision even in the darkness where there is neither moon nor star; the flame of the divine will and knowledge is visible even in the densest obscurity of inconscient or half-conscient things. The infallible worker is there even when we see nowhere the conscious light of the guiding mind*

If not for him, the awakening out of Inconscience and the creation of forms, and from there the awakening of desire, and from there the awakening of mind, none of these would have been possible. That is why he is constantly referred as the pre-eminent, the first, the most significant of the Gods. He works even at night and that is why he is called the secret worker. He is hidden even in matter behind the form.

And then Sri Aurobindo says:

*No sacrifice is possible without Agni.*

Sacrifice here, in the true sense of the word, is not the ritual sacrifice but all movement of will. All will, the impulse to will itself, originates from the divine. The will itself, pushing forward, is the divine. And what it moves to, the action it moves to, is also the Divine. So in the Vedic terminology the word 'sacrifice' has this very special sense, of God himself, moving in action towards himself. And it is in this sense that sacrifice is referred to here. Any action or manifestation of will is possible only with Agni. He is after all the will.

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*He is at once the flame on the altar and the priest of the oblation. When man, awakened from his night, ...*

That is, when we are grown out from our inconstancy and our ignorance,

*... wills to offer his inner and outer activities to the gods of a truer and higher existence ...*

That is the effort of Yoga.

*... and so to arise out of mortality into the far-off immortality, his goal and his desire, it is this flame of upward aspiring Force and Will that he must kindle; into this fire he must cast the sacrifice.*

Isn't that the very movement of yoga? That we awaken, deep within us, the flame of aspiration, intensify it, and all our actions, the will, the thought, the desires, everything we are and we do is poured into that flame, either within, or into its representation outside.

*Into this fire he must cast the sacrifice. For it is this that offers to the gods and brings down in return all spiritual riches,—the divine waters, the light, the strength, the rain of heaven.*

*The divine waters*, representing the seven principles, Sat, Chit, Ananda, Vignana, Manas, Prana, and Annam. The seven divine waters, *the light*: the illumination and revelation of divine light; *the strength, the rain of heaven*.

*This calls, this carries the gods to the house of the sacrifice. Agni is the priest man puts in front as his spiritual representative (purohita), a Will, a Force greater, higher, more infallible than his own doing for him the works of the sacrifice, purifying the materials of the oblation, offering them to the gods whom it has summoned to the divine ritual, determining the right order and season of its works, conducting the progress, the march of the sacrificial development. These and other various functions of the*

*symbolic priesthood represented in the outward sacrifice by different officiating priests, are discharged by the single Agni.*

Now this is the role of Agni. Further on Sri Aurobindo writes:

*Agni is the leader of the sacrifice and protects it in the great journey against the powers of darkness. The knowledge and purpose of this divine Puissance can be entirely trusted; he is the friend and lover of the soul and will not betray it to evil gods..*

You will find a similar idea in later passages in *Savitri*.

And then he says:

*It is true that here the light is concealed. Agni, like other gods, figures here as a child of the universal parents, Heaven and Earth, Mind and Body, Soul and material Nature.*

Here we get a hint of the second half of the canto and the prominence Sri Aurobindo has given to the play of He and She as the basis sustaining this whole creation. Agni is the child of the universal parents. The universal parents you can see in the symbolism in different ways. Heaven and Earth and their interplay create the whole cosmos in between; mind and body and their play create the whole experience of personality and life; soul and material nature, which is the divine himself entered here into material nature, into Ignorance, so Purusha and Prakriti and their play. At first,

*This earth holds him concealed in her own materiality and does not release him for the conscious works of the Father. She hides him in all her growths, her plants, herbs, trees — the forms full of her heats, the objects that keep for the soul its delights. But at last she shall yield him up; she is the lower tinder, the mental being is the upper tinder; by the pressure of the upper on the lower the flame of Agni shall be born. But it is by pressure, by a sort of churning that he is born. Therefore he is called the Son of Force.*

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You will see here in The Secret Knowledge this idea: that earth holds the growing soul in man, and will not let him free. And it is only after repeated revelations, which also represent movements of revelation of Agni, that finally she sees the Gods and then she reaches out openly for the further movement, and she finally allows the soul to free itself. And the churning of the He and She, the passages in the second half of the Canto, which is the pressure, the churning from which Agni is born, the Son of Force.

*Even when Agni emerges, he is outwardly obscure in his workings. He becomes, first, not a pure Will, though really he is always pure, but a vital Will, the desire of the Life in us, a smoke-obscured flame, son of our crookednesses, a Beast grazing in its pasture, a force of devouring desire that feeds upon earth's growths, tears and ravages all upon which it feeds and leaves a black and charred line to mark its path where there was the joy and glory of earth's woodlands. But in all this there is a work of purification, which becomes conscious for the man of sacrifice. Agni destroys and purifies. His very hunger and desire, infinite in its scope, prepares the establishment of a higher universal order.*

This smoke, this smoky desire which is the character of life that we see, is infinite. Desire never stops, you feed it, it is temporarily satisfied and then it wants more. It is an attempt of this instinct to embrace and acquire all infinity, but it prepares. So it is light in darkness, it prepares for a higher order.

*The smoke of his passion is overcome and this vital Will, this burning desire in the Life becomes the Steed that carries us up to the highest levels,—the white Steed that gallops in the front of the Dawns*

The steed: the horse. In this canto we find two references to horses:

*Earth's winged chimaeras are Truth's steeds in heaven.*

And this reference to a horse, the steed, cannot be fully understood unless you get this insight. So he continues on his journey:

*Delivered from his smoke-enveloped activity he burns high  
in our skies, scales the ether of the pure mind and mounts  
upon the back of heaven.*

Again the idea of climbing on a horse. There he becomes the *high-flaming force* and the weapon which protects the illumination of knowledge – the Herds of the Sun. And from there, where he has attained his immortality, he again descends and draws up earth nature. There is a rising from below, and then another descent from above once he has established his position there,

*The Immortal conquers in the mortal and by his sacrifice.  
Man, the thinker, fighter, toiler, becomes a seer, self-ruler  
and king over Nature.*

Now this being the movement of Agni, what are the images used to describe him? Again it is important to understand that Agni can be expressed in a variety of images, and that is where we will get the picture of how all these different ideas in The Secret Knowledge are linked together by this one thread.

*The Veda speaks of this divine Flame in a series of splendid  
and opulent images. He is the rapturous priest of the  
sacrifice, ...*

That is one image.

*... the God-Will intoxicated with its own delight, the young  
sage, the sleepless envoy, the ever-wakeful flame in the  
house, ...*

This body itself is a house. Every object is a house in which he is the flame.

We can elaborate this a little. Mother observes that in every object that exists in the universe, whether it is an atom, whether it is an animal, a plant, or a planet, in every object that exists there is to begin with a spark of the divine presence. It is that which sustains, of which the object is an expression. That spark, through evolution, grows, becomes brighter, becomes a flame. And in the human it

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becomes the psychic being. And we see in this journey of growing and awakening the journey of Agni himself. In its essence that spark impels all things unconsciously; as it grows it becomes the psychic being, the psychic personality even. The intensity of the psychic aspiration, or its will to action, its will to manifest, is Agni. In between, in the outer nature, at the level of the emotions, it is the impulse of desire, and all the impulses of emotions which reach out. In mind it is the conscious will, and though every movement, every strata of consciousness, it is Agni growing from below. So he is :

*... the ever-wakeful flame in the house, the master of our gated dwelling-place, the beloved guest, the lord in the creature, the seer of the flaming tresses, the divine child, ...*

We will see images of that later.

*the pure and virgin God, the invincible warrior, the leader on the path who marches in front of the human peoples, the immortal in mortals, the worker established in man by the gods, the unobstructed in knowledge, the infinite in being,...*

Because that is his home, that is his character, so he always seeks the infinity.

*... the vast and flaming sun of the Truth, the sustainer of the sacrifice and discerner of its steps, the divine perception, the light, the vision, the firm foundation.*

All these images are used in the Veda to refer to Agni. So now let us take up one of the passages in this canto where many images come up in succession. Many of them are similar to what we have just seen. But Sri Aurobindo does not bind himself to the Vedic images. He expresses in his own way his perception of Agni. He says:

*It is the origin and the master-clue,*

So the clue which unlocks the secret.

*A silence overhead, an inner voice.  
A living image, seated in the heart.*



Very close to the Vedic symbol.

*An unwalled wideness, ...*

Recall the infinite being from the Vedic description.

*An unwalled wideness, a fathomless point,*

You will understand this ‘*fathomless point*’ better when you remember that Agni is carrying in himself all other Godheads, as the nave of a wheel contains its spokes. In that point are contained all the possibilities of the Godheads, that is why it is fathomless.

*The truth of all these cryptic shows in space.*

The cryptic images are the play which are taking place, all around us. They are cryptic because they hide a mystery, we don’t know their meaning. So the truth behind the cryptic image is He.

*The real toward which our strivings move.  
The secret grandiose meaning of our lives.  
A treasure of honey in the combs of God.*

What is the image of the honey combs? Many different cells. In each cell of the honey-comb is the honey, the sweetness, the nectar. So “*A treasure of honey in the combs of God.*” What are the combs of God? Obviously the honey of God is the delight, the Ananda, and the treasury of that delight is the combs of God. One can look at it from several levels. Even in the human being, deep within us, is that secret delight. Preserved, but sealed as in the honey comb. And each one of us is like a cell of the honey-comb, in which the Gods have preserved their delight, waiting for it to be revealed. One can look at it as the cells of the body even, or the atoms of matter. In the very foundation of every unit by which this creation has aggregated, in every unit, that honey, that ananda is secretly waiting.

*A splendour burning in a tenebrous cloak.*

This is an obvious image of Agni. The splendour within burning, but surrounded by a dark cloak which hides it.

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*It is our glory of the flame of God.*

Another obvious image.

*Our golden fountain of the world's delight.*

This needs more elaboration. In the very first Rik of the Rig Veda, Agni is described as ‘*ratna dhataman*’: he who measures out, or distributes the delight of God. He knows how to express the Ananda by right action, and it is he who distributes the delight most perfectly. That is why he is “*a golden fountain of the world's delight.*” You see Sri Aurobindo’s images are very different from the Vedic images, yet both convey the experience.

*An immortality cowed in the cape of death,  
The shape of our unborn divinity.*

He carries within him the shape of that divinity which is working to its full splendour of revelation.

*It guards for us our fate in depths within  
Where sleeps the eternal seed of transient things.  
Always we bear in us a magic key  
Concealed in life's hermetic envelope.*

We recall that Agni is the protector of truth, and he guards our true destiny deep within.

*A burning Witness in the sanctuary  
Regards through Time and the blind walls of Form;  
A timeless Light is in his hidden eyes.*

So obviously this is the seer will, the Agni, a burning witness looking forward, with a timeless light in his eyes, he sees through the blind eyes of form. That is why he is a seer. What does he see?

*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.*

Because he sees, and because he knows, and every step his will, his impulse, even in the darkness of instinct, is always sure. This is just a sampling of the correspondence we can find between the evocation of the secret divine presence within, as given by Sri Aurobindo in this canto, and the images used by the Vedas to evoke Agni. We see how the images are used in the Veda, and we find a similar usage here in *Savitri*.

*The variety and flexible use of these images—they are sometimes employed in a rapid succession in the same hymn—belongs to a period of conscious symbolism in which the image has not hardened and crystallised into the myth but is constantly a figure and a parable whose sense still lives and is still plastic in the originating imagination.*

So just as in the sample we have read now, you see the variety of images, because with each we are drawn to the deeper meaning of the same one principle. And then Sri Aurobindo explains how, through the years, while other Vedic deities have been hardened in form and operation through different Puranic parables, we don't find any legends relating to Agni. And the reason he gives is this:

*His own activity is universal but in spite of his supreme greatness or perhaps because of it he seeks no separate end and claims no primacy over the other gods. He is content to be a worker for man and the helpful deities. He is the doer of the great Aryan work and the pure and sublime mediator between earth and heaven.*

You will see again these similar descriptions. 'The great Aryan work', Sri Aurobindo explains elsewhere the character of the one we call the Aryan.

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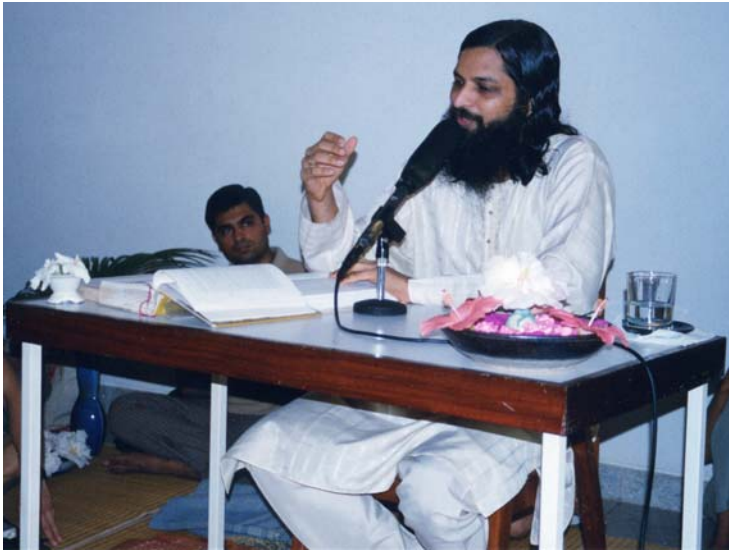
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*He is one who is a fighter against ignorance, whose entire life is a great battle and an adventure and a journey towards the discovery of his own divinity. It is such a person who is called an Aryan, who does not shrink from the challenge of the battle ahead towards God.*

So this is the great Aryan work which is what we call Yoga, and Agni is the doer of the great Aryan work.

*Disinterested, sleepless, invincible this divine Will-force works in the world as a universal Soul of power housed in all beings, Agni Vaishwanara, the greatest, most powerful, most brilliant and most impersonal of all the cosmic Deities.*

In his Vedic translations Sri Aurobindo has translated the word Agni as Power, Strength, Will, the God-will or the Flame, according to the context. You will see all these words also used in the canto we are studying. So let us rapidly look at some of these images.



Ashwapati has already risen to great heights.

*On a height he stood, that looked towards greater heights.*

This is the character of yoga, of evolution, that each time you rise to a height you discover that what is yet to be known is far greater. It is only the petty vision, the petty mind, the small narrow consciousness which can think it knows everything. As one proceeds to greater heights, each height opens still wider vistas.

*Our early approaches to the infinite  
Are sunrise splendours on a marvellous verge.  
What now we see is a shadow of what must come.  
This world is a beginning and a base  
Where life and mind erect their structured dreams.  
An unborn power must build reality.*

What have life and mind done? Life and mind have organised appearances, forms from the Inconscience. What they do they seek? A dream which they have never found. Life is seeking beauty, immortality, perfection. Mind is also seeking perfect knowledge, truth. But where have they ever found it? Never in the history of this creation have they ever managed to find it, but everything they have done is an attempt to capture this dream that they see. So they have erected these structured dreams. The conversion of those structured dreams into reality, where what we seek will finally be manifest, for that “*An unborn power must build reality*”. That is the spiritual force. Life, Mind, and above them is the Spirit which knows and holds in itself perfect beauty, perfect truth, perfect knowledge, immortality. Only that can complete the formation of reality here.

The passage continues on to the high peaks to which we have to move. But then he says:

*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,  
Deep in us a forgotten kinship points*

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*And a faint voice of ecstasy and prayer  
Calls to those lucent lost immensities.*

This is the Agni deep within us. There is a passage describing something similar, in similar words, in *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*. Sri Aurobindo writes:

*The flames of the divine activity in us are pointing upwards towards heaven, mounting up from the lower levels of our being to the heights of the pure mind. And their rising is like the wide gushing up into manifestation of waters that have been hidden. For it is a great God that has been released out of the darkness.*

The same movement of something within which knows, which also has the will, the force to point. See these lines:

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

You will find in these lines two profound truths, that we have been discussing in the last two months in our study of *The Synthesis of Yoga* on Fridays: the will and the faith. Faith is a secret stress of a higher knowledge. Knowledge, will, is the character of Agni. In this description you will find Agni, his two specific movements of knowledge, of faith and will are described. The forgotten kinship within us points to those lofty heights, it knows where they are, it has the impulse to reach towards them, and the faint voice of ecstasy and prayer. Again Agni, as we have seen, is the priest, as well as the flame of the sacrifice, but ecstasy is his characteristic, because he is described as the one who exults in ecstasy with the truth. It is he who finding the truth pulls out ecstasy. So that is also there: *the faint voice of ecstasy and prayer which calls to those lucent lost immensities*. As in the sacrifice that takes place which calls down the higher truths.

The passage goes on,

*Still have we parts that grow towards the light,  
Yet are there luminous tracts and heavens serene  
And Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy  
And temples to the godhead none can see.*

These again evoke the images of Agni as we studied awhile back.  
We move on a little further :

*Our souls can visit in great lonely hours  
Still regions of imperishable Light,  
All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power  
And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss  
And calm immensities of spirit space.*

These regions are the home of Agni.

*In the unfolding process of the Self,  
Sometimes the inexpressible Mystery  
Elects a human vessel of descent.*

What follows are two movements of the revealing consciousness, the divine presence descending into the human vessel, two different movements which can occur, sometimes successively, sometimes a person experiences only one of them. First,

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

I think in all these three ideas you will now find echoes of what we have read of Agni.

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

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This is what happens when the Presence comes with its particular aspect of peace. The entire body feels as if it has become like a marble statue. And as the stillness comes over all the surface parts, the guiding Light within awakes and then a presence is born. This is one kind of experience of the descent of a higher consciousness. Then the second:

*Or a revealing force sweeps blazing in;  
Out of some vast superior continent  
Knowledge breaks through trailing its radiant seas,  
And nature trembles with the power, the flame.*

This is the dramatic forceful revelation of Agni's action as he brings the revealing knowledge.

And the result of all these experiences is that the higher self takes charge.

*The small bodily ego thins and falls.*

And then comes the result.

*In moments when the inner lamps are lit  
And the life's cherished guests are left outside  
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.*

The inner flame of aspiration consciously lit, life's cherished guests, our desires and constant involvements with surface appearances, are left outside, and then we commune with our depths. And the result:

*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.*

Following that communion with the inner divinity, this is the result. The glory which has stooped for awhile, takes up the clay, seizes it,



illuminates it, and leaves behind an impress. Every movement of meditation, however brief, leaves an impact, which changes us, even if we are not conscious of it later.

And further, the description continues. Something deeper is revealed, and finally it says:

*A Voice calls from the chambers of the soul.  
We meet the ecstasy of the godhead's touch  
In golden privacies of immortal fire.*

The Godhead's touch, and the voice from within, the golden privacy, the immortal fire, are again obviously the Agni, conscious as a deity within.

And then as we go on,

*Sometimes a holier influence comes,  
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives,  
And a diviner Presence moves the soul.  
Or through the earthly coverings something breaks,  
A grace and beauty of spiritual light,  
The murmuring tongue of a celestial fire.*

The arrival and descent of the holier influence, and the tide coming within from above, or breaking out from within, and it is the murmuring tongue of the celestial fire.

*Ourselves 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.*

There are passages, both in *The Secret of the Veda*, and *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, which relate to similar ideas. In one of them Agni is described like this:

*He is the father of things, but in us appears as the child of  
our souls and our evolution.*

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So this is the same feeling: *'ourselves and a higher stranger'*. He is both, like a father as well as ourselves. And *It acts unseen, as if it were not*. As if it does not exist, from behind an impulse comes, and we think this impulse is ourselves. And *It follows the line of sempiternal birth*. It continues across lives, as a psychic flame growing, intensifying, connecting the different births. It waits patiently.

*Great, patient, calm it sees the centuries pass,  
Awaiting the slow miracle of our change*

How can he wait patiently? Because he can see ahead. He knows where everything is moving. And what is it? Then comes the passage we read earlier:

*It is the origin and the master-clue,  
A silence overhead, an inner voice,  
A living image seated in the heart,  
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.*

Further on comes:

*An aspiration in the Night's profound,  
Seed of a perishing body and half-lit mind,  
Uplifts its lonely tongue of conscious fire  
Towards an undying Light for ever lost;  
Only it hears, sole echo of its call,  
The dim reply in man's unknowing heart ...*

Though it is there, *An aspiration in the Night's profound*, it is there as a seed, *a lonely tongue of conscious fire*: ... because there is no one else to help: Agni is the only god who can operate in the middle of the darkness of Inconscience.

*Along a path of aeons serpentine  
In the coiled blackness of her nescient course  
The Earth-Goddess toils across the sands of Time.*

This is the condition of the world as it grows.

*A Being is in her whom she hopes to know,  
A Word speaks to her heart she cannot hear,  
A Fate compels whose form she cannot see.  
In her unconscious orbit through the Void  
Out of her mindless depths she strives to rise,  
A perilous life her gain, a struggling joy;*

This movement, the impulse which makes her struggle and strive to rise, is again the will of Agni. And that is why *A Word speaks to her heart she cannot hear*. She is not conscious of the will of God there present, the Seer-Will, Agni pushing her. *A Fate compels whose form she cannot see*: Again, she is not aware of the Agni although it compels her. But she hopes to know this Being. The divine presence waiting within goads her onwards. So what happens in evolution, the journey of the Earth-Goddess as she grows and creates all these forms, is at the same time a search for the God whom she senses far beyond her, wanting to manifest him in the forms she creates. At the same time it is also the self-revelation of the hidden divinity within her, which is goading her, without which she would not have come so far. So although she is trying to capture something above, far away from her, at the same time she ends up revealing that same thing working from within her — the cowed worker.

*A faith she craves that can survive defeat,  
The sweetness of a love that knows not death,  
The radiance of a truth for ever sure.*

And as she struggles on,

*A light grows in her, she assumes a voice,  
Her state she learns to read and the act she has done,*

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*But the one needed truth eludes her grasp,  
Herself and all of which she is the sign.*

Now this is the awakening of consciousness, as the journey of evolution proceeds. Yes, she is able to express herself in the voice of the birds, the animals, the human. So she has found a voice by which she can express her joy, or sorrow. But she does not know who she is, or what she is a sign of, the divinity above.

What happens there, in this journey now?

*An inarticulate whisper drives her steps  
Of which she feels the force but not the sense;*

Again this is the Agni within. This is the instinct. The instinct makes you do something although you don't know why you are doing it. You just feel the compulsion of the force.

*A few rare intimations come as guides,*

This is the next stage. Rarely an intimation comes and you have some sense: "Oh, this is what it is pushing me to." But this is rare. There is a third movement which is still greater.

*Immense divining flashes cleave her brain,  
And sometimes in her hours of dream and muse  
The truth that she has missed looks out on her  
As if far off and yet within her soul.*

Isn't this the gradual revelation of Agni? First an inarticulate whisper, then rare intimations, then the divining flashes, and then gradually *The truth that she has missed looks out on her*. It is far off, because she does not know it yet, and yet it is within her soul.

*A change comes near that flees from her surmise  
And, ever postponed, compels attempt and hope,  
Yet seems too great for mortal hope to dare.*

Remember the earlier passage we read telling us that Agni's task is to help the soul to return to his home. So it has to lead. In between it gives you revelations of what is, what can be, and then again holds back, so that you are compelled to move forward because you know it is possible. So it *compels attempt and hope*. But what is revealed, is postponed.

Now the last stage :

*A vision meets her of supernal Powers  
That draw her as if mighty kinsmen lost  
Approaching with estranged great luminous gaze.*

It is as if she is kin of all these Gods, but somehow that connection has been broken, there has been an estrangement, a separation. At last she sees that great luminous gaze of the Gods, and she knows she can be one with them, she belongs there with them. This is the last stage when through Agni the different deities begin to prepare to reveal themselves. At that point she knows her deeper purpose.

*Then is she moved to all that she is not  
And stretches arms to what was never hers.  
Outstretching arms to the unconscious Void,  
Passionate she prays to invisible forms of Gods  
Soliciting from dumb Fate and toiling Time  
What most she needs, what most exceeds her scope, ...*

What is she looking for ?

*A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,  
A Will expressive of soul's deity,  
A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,  
A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade.  
For these she yearns and feels them destined hers:  
Heaven's privilege she claims as her own right.  
Just is her claim the all-witnessing Gods approve,*

They know, they have been waiting for her also.

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There is a passage from *The Secret of the Veda*, corresponding to these lines:

*The flames of Agni the divine Will, home and meeting-place of all our increasing and advancing life-powers, are imaged as galloping on our human journey to the supreme good. Divine Will creates in us the divine strength of impulsion, an illumined and undecaying force and flame described as the steed of the plenitude, which brings us that good and carries us to that goal.*

SABCL 10 : 378

This corresponds with the line that follows :

*Earth's winged chimaeras are truth's steeds in heaven.*

These are the flames of Agni, the steeds of plenitude.

*The impossible God's sign of things to be.*

A beautiful deep insight. Whenever we see something impossible, Sri Aurobindo tells us that it is God's sign of things to be. How can it be, it seems a contradiction? If something is not meant to be, if it cannot be, for that matter, then we could not have foreseen it, we could not have imagined it. That's the secret. Something which is impossible to be in creation, we cannot imagine. If we can imagine it is because there is already something there which holds in latency that possibility. So whenever you see something impossible, the fact that you see it or imagine it, is a promise that it will be one day. But to see that you need a deeper sight:

*But few can look beyond the present state  
Or overleap this matted hedge of sense.*

We are bound to our senses and we need to see beyond the senses.

*All that transpires on earth and all beyond  
Are parts of an illimitable plan*

*The One keeps in his heart and knows alone.*

If we want to know that plan, than we try to identify ourselves with his Oneness, then only will we know the full plan.

*The events that shape the appearance of our lives  
 Are a cipher of subliminal quiverings  
 Which rarely we surprise or vaguely feel,  
 Are an outcome of suppressed realities  
 That hardly rise into material day:  
 They are born from the spirit's sun of hidden powers  
 Digging a tunnel through emergency.*

So the spirit's hidden powers are there within, which push their way out through the many layers between the sun inside and the surface darkness. And as it emerges through that tunnel it digs out, it creates an impression or push, or moulds a form. These are all movements as we have seen, of Agni's action, of which the surface forms are reflections. That is why, because they do not express entirely what is coming from within, they are like a code, a representation and a symbol. They *hardly rise*, because what is pushing out from within does not always succeed entirely. So at best we sense a deep push, a subliminal quivering, something is pushing you, something which indicates a direction.

Yet, in spite of this condition,

*Yet a foreseeing Knowledge might be ours,  
 If we could take our spirit's stand within,  
 If we could hear the muffled daemon voice.*

This is the inner voice. One can see it always as the soul's voice, but remember that all the actions, the will-expression of the soul, is Agni. That voice itself is Agni. The foreseeing knowledge is his knowledge.

*Too seldom is the shadow of what must come  
 Cast in an instant on the secret sense*

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*Which feels the shock of the invisible,*

Further on, the condition of man is described. Remember the passage where I said: she does not release the human soul born and growing through nature. This is the passage we come to:

*We cannot free our gaze to reach wisdom's sun.  
Inheritor of the brief animal mind,  
Man, still a child in Nature's mighty hands,  
In the succession of the moments lives;  
To a changing present is his narrow right;  
His memory stares back at a phantom past,  
The future flees before him as he moves;  
He sees imagined garments, not a face.*

The entire struggle of life is described, as we try to save the results of our labour from the hands of chance or at adverse fate. We know not what can be achieved, we don't know whether we will survive, we are ignorant of the meaning of life.

*He is ignorant of the meaning of his life,  
He is ignorant of his high and splendid fate.  
Only the Immortals on their deathless heights  
Dwelling beyond the walls of Time and Space,  
Masters of living, free from the bonds of Thought,  
Who are overseers of Fate and Chance and Will  
And experts of the theorem of world-need,  
Can see the Idea, the Might that change Time's course,  
Come maned with light from undiscovered worlds,*

Only those Immortals above, impassive, they can know what is to be and they can see the power descending.

*Hear, while the world toils on with its deep blind heart,  
The galloping hooves of the unforeseen event,  
Bearing the superhuman Rider, near*



*And, impassive to earth's din and startled cry,  
Return to the silence of the hills of God;  
As lightning leaps, as thunder sweeps, they pass  
And leave their mark on the trampled breast of Life.*

This passage one can see in many ways. We have seen the representation, the symbol of Truth's steeds in the symbolism of Agni. So yes, one can see them as some of the great manifestations of those powers. Or more naturally to the form of our understanding, these are vibhūtis, or more correctly the avatar. The superhuman Rider with a capital R, comes on the galloping hooves of the unforeseen event. The avatar's coming is rarely foreseen by humanity. Because he comes at a time when conditions in humanity are at their darkest. And that is the promise Sri Krishna makes in the Bhagavad Gita. When *adharmā*, untruth, falsehood, is at its peak, that is when he manifests to liberate and save the *dharma*. So from the superhuman Rider comes something which is always unforeseen. Earth is busy in its din, it is startled by some strange event, and before it realizes what is happening the event is past, the Rider returns, or the hooves, the galloping hooves return to the silence of the hills of God. But they have left their mark and their impress on the breast of life. It is such a great event which has taken place, and as part of his task the superhuman Rider has turned the direction of human destiny.

But above these Gods watch, impassive. They are described in a very strange way, for human mind it is difficult to understand, that they are not troubled by what happens on earth.

*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.*

They see the future far ahead. But further on in the canto, Sri Aurobindo says that these Immortals are :

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*Unmoved by cry of revolt and ignorant prayer  
They reckon not our virtue and our sin;  
They bend not to the voices that implore,  
They hold no traffic with error and its reign;  
They are guardians of the silence of the Truth, ... (p. 57)*

Their strength, the source of their might is a deep surrender to the Lord, and they only obey His will, and they live in His inalienable bliss.

*Immaculate in self-knowledge and self-power,  
Calm they repose on the eternal Will.  
Only his law they count and him obey;  
They have no goal to reach, no aim to serve.  
Implacable in their timeless purity,  
All barter or bribe of worship they refuse; ... (p. 57)*

These are the elder Gods and their role. In Sanskrit we have a word to describe what is described here: ‘they have no goal to reach, no aim to serve’ - *ahaituka*. *Tu* is interest, purpose. They are without personal interest, without personal purpose. And they are the elder, the higher Gods above. So they are the ones watching all this. From there they watch the movements of this inner influence on the outer. They hear what we don’t hear. So the description continues:

*Attentive to an unseen Truth they seize  
A sound as of invisible augur wings,  
Voices of an unplumbed significance,  
Mutterings that brood in the core of Matter’s sleep. (p.54)*

Now each of these which follow are the movements of Agni: “Mutterings that brood in the core of Matter’s sleep”: when Inconscience sleeps, this muttering is the action of Agni.

*In the heart’s profound audition they can catch  
The murmurs lost by Life’s uncaring ear,*

*A prophet-speech in Thought's omniscient trance.*

Each of these three, in matter, life and thought, these are the operations of Agni at all these three levels.

Far ahead they see the road on which the earth moves:

*They watch the Bliss for which earth's heart has cried  
On the long road which cannot see its end  
Winding undetected through the sceptic days  
And to meet it guide the unheedful moving world.*

Then comes this great prophetic passage: Sri Aurobindo says,

*Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne.*  
The Transcendent, here descended in the mask of Ignorance, Inconscience, will mount his throne, representing the rule of truth. When and how this will happen?

*When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast  
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,*

Now this is a condition of extreme chaos: a darkness in which all other lights fail, so that the only light remaining is the corporeal mind of man and earth itself suffocates by the weight of that darkness. Such are the descriptions in the Puranas of the conditions, when an Avatar is compelled to come. They speak of the rule of an asura which led the earth to find itself suffocating and sinking into Nescience. Then God had to descend as the Avatar to save the earth. There are many such stories, but this is a similar description::

*When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast  
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,*

What happens then?

*As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread  
Of one who steps unseen into his house.*

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This is his house. The Isha Upanishad says, '*Isha vasyam idam sarvam*' - '*All this is for habitation by the Lord*'. This is the home he is building for himself. But he has to steal into his own home because the home is locked against him, he is not permitted to enter. So like a thief he has to break in quietly in the dead of night when nobody is watching.

*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.*

So he is coming in, and his force is working, the soul is compelled to obey. His powers steal into mind's chamber, causing life's doors which are closed to open, so that beauty can conquer the world — which resists. The Truth-Light is the one force which can overcome this opposition. It will *capture nature by surprise, / A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss / And earth grow unexpectedly divine.*

Then comes the result of this change:

*In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,  
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;*

The sacred birth of God, or as we have seen in earlier similar passages, the awakening of the conscious will of God Agni. In each body, in every atom of matter there will be lit the glow of the spirit, that Light which so far is hidden, working unconsciously then revealing its full splendour.

*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.*

Recall the passage we saw earlier, describing Agni finally revealed and freed. What does he become?

*And when he is entirely delivered and fulfilled out of the envelope of the world's crookednesses, this deity of flame and force is revealed as the solar godhead of love and harmony and light, Mitra, who leads men towards the Truth.*

SABCL 10 : 359

So here is this is description: love, harmony, light ... our *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.*

This is the condition of the mass of humanity, which is so deeply entrenched in a mechanical meaningless life, compelled by the instinct of survival. And a few who are conscious. Talking about it now, reading and studying it, we are conscious that there is a deeper purpose to life, that something is happening now. We get a glimpse of what none yet understands. While the world is busy, and while the wise men are discussing what to do with the world and how to make it right, God grows up secretly within. So this is prophecy of the change to come: that it will not be by any dramatic announcement, but it will take place in a small space, surprising much of humanity. And thereafter will be a new phase, a new movement.

You will recall in 1956 when the Supramental Manifestation took place, the message that the Mother had given on the New Year's Day:

*The greatest victories are the least noisy.  
The manifestation of a new world is not proclaimed by beat of drum.*

MCW15:184

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The same idea, that when very quietly, without anybody knowing, the great event takes place. And that is one of the events which is referred to here . This description speaks of the divine appearing from within. That is what took place in 1956. The consciousness established itself on earth and works from behind the scenes. And that is what Mother said: it is working even in matter, and of course it will be more obvious in those who are more conscious of it. And that is why he says here: “*A voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey*” It is working from within, but it has already established itself. And God is growing up.

\* \* \*

Now begins another paragraph which takes a very different perspective. So far it was all the influence working from within. The next paragraph shows an influence from above. These are the great Gods. We already read a passage about them.

*Far from the original Dusk, the final Flame*

This is the consciousness of today which is working in a mixed range of light and darkness.

*A vagrant hunter of misleading dawns,  
Between the being's dark and luminous ends  
Moves here in a half-light that seems the whole:*

This is the “*Consciousness that knows not its own truth.*” This *vagrant hunter of misleading dawns*, is a Vedic image. In the Veda, the Dawns are the revelations of the Divine, the divine revelations of light, of knowledge, which come successively. Misleading dawns are those movements of consciousness which seem to be revelations but actually are not. And in this realm there is a mixture of light and darkness, constantly, there is the half light, or wrong light, which

pretends to be a dawn, but it is not. So this is the condition of the consciousness here, stuck. And he says that the only way to free it, is to make it realise its origin and its goal. So he says the present existence is

*... a fragment of the universal word.  
It leaves two giant letters void of sense  
While without sanction turns the middle sign  
Carrying an enigmatic universe,  
As if a present without future or past  
Repeating the same revolution's whirl  
Turned on its axis in its own Inane.*

This is the consciousness between the human state where we are half conscious of ourselves, we do not know the true consciousness, which is our full revelation of consciousness, our true identity. Nor are we entirely in the mechanical, inconscient, subconscious life. Either of these would have been good enough. But here, stuck in between, we have lost our way completely. *Repeating the same revolutions whirl* without any meaning. The only way, he says, is if we can link all three:

*Re-wed the closed finite's lonely consonant  
With the open vowels of Infinity,*

Because the two extremes, below and above, inconscience and superconscience, are the open vowels of infinity.

*A hyphen must connect Matter and Mind,  
The narrow isthmus of the ascending soul:*

If the soul is to make the transition to a higher state, there is a very narrow point where the two continents, one from above one from below, have their extension. But there is a gap in between, that is what is called the isthmus. This gap has to be linked, it has to be bridged.

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*We must renew the secret bond in things,  
Our hearts recall the lost divine Idea,  
Reconstitute the perfect word, unite  
The Alpha and the Omega in one sound;  
Then shall the Spirit and Nature be at one.  
Two are the ends of the mysterious plan.  
In the wide signless ether of the Self,*

This is again a Vedic image, a term used in the Veda.

*In the unchanging Silence white and nude,  
Aloof, resplendent like gold dazzling suns  
Veiled by the ray no mortal eye can bear,  
The Spirit's bare and absolute potencies  
Burn in the solitude of the thoughts of God.*

These are the higher Gods, which we discussed earlier. We cannot reach them as long as we are in this divided consciousness. But because they are there, they compel us to rise, they compel hope within us.

*As the height draws the low ever to climb,  
As the breadths draw the small to adventure vast,  
Their aloofness drives man to surpass himself.  
Our passion heaves to wed the Eternal's calm,  
Our dwarf-search mind to meet the Omniscient's light,  
Our helpless hearts to enshrine the Omnipotent's force.*

That is their role at the moment. And if they were to come down and stoop and try to help by touch, then their strength would be marred and they would not be able to save. When someone is drowning in water, if the water is too turbulent the only way you can save them is by standing outside, and showing the way, or reaching and throwing a rope. But you must remain outside. If you enter the water you are stuck there also. Because they are there, they uphold the world, and



constantly provoke it to rise and exceed itself. But only because they remain separate can they maintain the purity of the ideal. And that purity maintained is a promise of success. If once the purity is soiled, then you can be sure there will be a failure. So they must remain aloof, that is their task — at least at the moment.

*While a tardy Evolution's coils wind on  
And Nature hews her way through adamant  
A divine intervention thrones above.*

...

*One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:  
Our errors are his steps upon the way;  
He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,  
He works through the hard breath of battle and toil,  
He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,  
His knowledge overrules our nescience;*

These are again descriptions you will now understand as his action as or through Agni.

And finally two more passages.

*The conscious Force that acts in Nature's breast,  
A dark-robed labourer in the cosmic scheme  
Carrying clay images of unborn gods,  
Executrix of the inevitable Idea  
Hampered, enveloped by the hoops of Fate,  
Patient trustee of slow eternal Time,  
Absolves from hour to hour her secret charge.*

This is the Power of Nature, The conscious force put out that acts in Nature's breast. But that conscious force, its front is Agni.

*A dark-robed labourer in the cosmic scheme  
Carrying clay images of unborn gods.*

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Within him are all the unborn gods, waiting. So these are all passages where you will find Agni obviously there.

\* \* \*

Then in the next section Sri Aurobindo takes up the play by which this world is sustained.

*One came upon the dubious whirling globe  
To hide from her pursuit in force and form.*

Force and form are both associated with Agni.

*A secret spirit in the Inconscient's sleep,  
A shapeless Energy, a voiceless Word,  
He was here before the elements could emerge,  
Before there was light of mind or life could breathe.  
Accomplice of her cosmic huge pretence,  
His semblances he turns to real shapes  
And makes the symbol equal with the truth:  
He gives to his timeless thoughts a form in Time.  
He is the substance, he the self of things;  
She has forged from him her works of skill and might:  
She wraps him in the magic of her moods  
And makes of his myriad truths her countless dreams.  
The Master of being has come down to her,  
An immortal child born in the fugitive years.  
In objects wrought, in the persons she conceives,  
Dreaming she chases her idea of him,  
And catches here a look and there a gest:  
Ever he repeats in them his ceaseless births.*

Now here you find the Lord descending to play, Ishvara descending, Shakti becoming Prakriti, and he is the conscious soul within, bound in the play. But we can also see images of Agni throughout: the force,

form, he is *'the immortal child born in the fugitive years.'* And he gives shape to her moods.

But as the soul within grows, there is a play of He and She, taking place above, between Ishwara and Shakti, as well as between soul and nature, Purusha-Prakriti. The poem moves on through a very beautiful passage which I won't read now. You will be studying it and I am sure you will re-read it many times. Let us just look at a few fragments.

*He is the Maker and the world he made,  
He is the vision and he is the Seer;  
He is himself the actor and the act,  
He is himself the knower and the known,  
He is himself the dreamer and the dream.*

Each of these lines has profound implications. I will just touch upon the last one. But you will that the others each dwell on a similar parallel. The clue to them all will be got from this last line. *He is the dreamer and the dream.* In many traditions the whole creation is described as a dream of God, and so it is considered to be unreal. As a consequence, life is to be abandoned, an illusion to be dissolved in order to merge back into God. That is not entirely true. He is the dream, yes. But he is also the dreamer. And because he is the dreamer he is the one who watches the dream. His objectifying of the dream is what gives the world a reality. Yes, this creation is his dream, but it is also his reality dreamt. And so this world is meant to be transformed and not to be abandoned — because he is the observer and gives it a value and a meaning. Similarly, if you think of the knower and the known, the actor and the act, the vision and the seer, in a similar relationship, in each you will find the deep ideas.

*There are Two who are One and play in many worlds;  
In Knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met  
And light and darkness are their eyes' interchange;  
Our pleasure and pain are their wrestle and embrace,*

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*Our deeds, our hopes are intimate to their tale;  
They are married secretly in our thought and life.*

Now this is the meaning of the passage that we have read earlier. The pressure of their Play is what kindles Agni, and that why he is called the Son of Force. It is this play of the two which through play creates the forms in between, and the whole universe appears there. And everything taking place in the whole universe is possible because of this play. There is a kind of intensity of the pressure in their play which is the *tapas* that creates the form and pushes the forms forward through evolution. And that is why in this long passage, the importance of this play is developed, and part by part how their play moves the world and forms things and compels evolution, and the relationship of the two and how that relationship is played out in its detail. I won't read it, it covers too many pages, but only the conclusion:

*This is the knot that ties together the stars:  
The Two who are one are the secret of all power,  
The Two who are one are the might and right in things.*

See: power, might, right, all associated with the truth, and the will.

*His soul, silent, supports the world and her,  
His acts are her commandment's registers.  
Happy, inert, he lies beneath her feet:  
His breast he offers for her cosmic dance  
Of which our lives are the quivering theatre,  
And none could bear but for his strength within,  
Yet none would leave because of his delight.*

This is the image, in the traditions, of Shiva offering his chest for Shakti to play out the game of the manifestation of the world. And it is the movement that takes place within us also: because he supports us from within we have the strength to bear the play of life, and

because his delight is there, no one wants to leave this game. So whenever you find, even today, people who speak of abandoning the world, everyone says, "Yes, yes, I will do that after I retire. Not now. I want to enjoy life." Because everything in us enjoys. Even in our deepest pain and suffering you will find deep inside that something is enjoying. Or we happily tell others of how much we have suffered. We enjoy complaining to others of our pain. But it is still a kind of enjoyment, something takes delight, that enjoyment perverted by the ego is what leads us into depression and otherwise.

\* \* \*

And finally, we will end with some brief passages which relate to Agni.

*The Godhead breaks out through the human mould:  
Her highest heights she un.masks and is his mate.*

Further, in skipping a few lines:

*The master of existence lurks in us  
And plays at hide-and-see.k with his own Force;  
In Nature's instrument loiters secret God.*

He is loitering right now. His purpose is not yet fully expressed.

*The Immanent lives in man as in his house;  
He has made the universe his pastime's field,  
A vast gymnasium of his works of might.  
All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,  
Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;  
Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time,  
Immortal, dallies with mortality.  
The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance,  
The All-Blissful bore to be insensible.*

This venture into ignorance again is a Vedic and Upanishadic image. He is the Lord, the All-conscious, who went forth. So there is this idea of moving out into expression into the world of ignorance.

*Incarinate in a world of strife and pain,  
He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe*

Robes can be discarded. Both joy and sorrow are expressions of his delight.

*And drinks experience like a strengthening wine.*

He, as the soul, through the journey of life, through all the contraries of that experience, grows and becomes stronger. In the Vedic imagery Agni is invoked and told: “*Drink, enjoy with us the experiences of life. That you may grow with those experiences, drink the soma wine with us.*”

*He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts,  
Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,  
A luminous individual Power, alone.*

So through all these passages you can see the common thread is that of the indwelling divine presence imaged as Agni. So many Agni images are used to express him. That is the Secret Knowledge. He is the secret knowledge. This is Canto Four from a deeper and different perspective.

# *The Master of Existence*

*The Secret Knowledge, Section Six :*

*Talk by Jhumur Bhattacharya*

*at Savitri Bhavan on October 5, 2003*

*The master of existence lurks in us  
And plays at hide-and-peek with his own Force;  
In Nature's instrument loiters secret God.  
The Immanent lives in man as in his house;  
He has made the universe his pastime's field,  
A vast gymnasium of his works of might.  
All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,  
Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;  
Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time,  
Immortal, dallies with mortality.*

Here Sri Aurobindo has, to my understanding, given a certain progression, a certain ascension, even in the choice of words. He starts by saying that '*The master of existence lurks ...*', as if he is there hiding behind darkness, in the darkness and is very very well hidden, except here and there, now and then, when he makes his presence felt. Therefore the state of the Creation at the beginning is almost completely unaware of this Presence that is there. The Presence accepts to hide, stays behind the darkness, waits - and sometimes waits too long perhaps, because in the next line Sri Aurobindo uses the word '*loiters*'. When you loiter you take a long time to move on. So there is a certain play of light and shade, hide-and-peek, lurking and loitering to start with, in the Divine's relationship with his Creation. He is not manifested clearly, he hides. And therefore Sri Aurobindo completes the sentence, saying '*He has made the universe his pastime's field*': he plays at hide-and-peek, he does not want to be seen so easily.

'*A vast gymnasium of his works of might ...*' In this line there is a certain change, because to be able to take up these substances of darkness, and to shape them into something that is a little more capable

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of expressing consciousness, a great deal of strength, a great deal of mastery is required, whereas when it is said that he loiters and he lurks, that strength is not evident. But through it all he is working his way towards a greater manifestation. And so at the end of the sentence the poet suggests that this whole creation is a field of manifestation for his force. And as he has to deal with elements and substances that do not accept his presence so easily, he has to deal with them in all his strength, in all his power. And so the universe has become 'A vast gymnasium of his works of might'.

All this he accepts: '*All-knowing he accepts our darkened state*'. It is this aspect of the Divine who has entered into the play, knowing exactly what he has to expect because he has created the game. And therefore there is never, one might say, any discouragement or any sorrow. Whereas in us there may be moments when we feel discouraged at how there are so many forces that seem to oppose light, how long it takes for men to change, in him there is this huge tolerance, a vastness: he accepts all things because he knows all things

*All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,  
Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;*

He not only accepts, he **is** them. That darkness also is he, that animal also is he, the force that resists is also he. Therefore in him there is no contradiction between this world of manifestation and the Supreme Consciousness. For one who is not aware of the whole there is an opposition between the manifestation and the Origin, but in one who is the whole there is no opposition, he takes everything into a single vision, a single existence rather. '*Divine, wears shapes of animal or man*' – therefore the animal and the man is merely a mask, a shape, a robe. It is not the essence. The outer densities of darkness or distortions or deformities are part of his play, are part of his work, which is both play and the working out of the principle of all the latent possibilities that are there in him, that have to be worked out in all their fullness and their multiplicities. Therefore he wears all the forms, that may seem to our narrow vision not divine but are essentially divine; nothing is not divine.



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*'Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time ...'* Again this line seems to express oppositions, because Fate seems to be a kind of a fixity into which the small, weak spirit has to bind itself, a certain law of causality. He, as the Supreme, is eternally free and he is not obliged to submit to Fate; but he has accepted to play the game so I suppose he abides by the rules of the game that he has made; and in this game he accepts to follow the rules: *'... he assents to Fate and Time'*.

*'Immortal, dallies with mortality'*: Again there is a sense of play. When he dallies, he takes long, he has fun. He loiters and dallies — and at the same time his works of might work themselves out. So you have this image of what in the Indian context is described as *Lila*, the game that he plays. He plays a game with himself because Creation is himself; it may seem other than himself but it is himself. The One becomes the many, and each part of the many has its own individuality, because the Infinite can become infinitely various. He gives to each its form, its shape, its individuality, its rhythm. Each thing moves and grows in its own time, at its own pace; and all this is a long process, or a game of hide-and-seek or a dalliance. It may seem like loitering and dalliance and wasting of time to the kind of person who is impatient and wants to finish or cover his journey as swiftly as possible. I suppose in human beings there is a sense of opposition between human and divine, a feeling that you have to grow out of one state and leave something behind you and move forward towards something that you are not yet. But in the One who has created the All, this opposition is not there. It is after all part of his concept and his creation. And he moves through it all at his own pace, following his own rhythm and manifesting himself now and then in different moments, in different ways, sometimes as an animal, sometimes as a man, sometimes perhaps in some form of nature other than man or animal. Because he does not create any opposition. The only thing is that both animal and man have forgotten, all of these have forgotten, that they are divine. So we have to recover our lost heritage, we have to go back to becoming what we were at the beginning, we have to unite ourselves with what is really ourselves. Somewhere a division has taken place and limitations have come, and that is perhaps what we call Time and Fate, a certain fixity, a

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certain narrowness into which we have fallen because of our ignorance. But he assents to all this. Because once the process starts it follows its own curve. He has started the process and there is no jumping out of the line suddenly — that wouldn't be fair.

*The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance,  
The All-Blissful bore to be insensible.  
Incarnate in a world of strife and pain,  
He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe  
And drinks experience like a strengthening wine.  
He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts,  
Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,  
A luminous individual Power, alone.*

'*The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance*': he dared. It is a supreme daring that he came. He, Delight, all that is Consciousness, all that is Luminosity, enters into a state which apparently is the contradiction of himself - because he created a multiplicity, and in that multiplicity he created conditions that are not replicas of himself. Therefore since he is Light and Consciousness, he creates conditions where Light seems absent and Consciousness is rudimentary or exists only in seed-form. He creates conditions that do not seem to be replicas of himself, but still they are essentially himself.

That is why I often feel helped by the statement Mother made when she said: "We have to become what we already are". She says: "In the end it is very simple. This change is not something that is impossible, because we already are That." But we have lost touch with That in the play of the many. That is also a condition that he has created and we have to find our way back. Therefore the hide-and-seek, therefore the finding of that which we had and which we have lost, and which we have to become once again. It is not something impossible. It is not something which is beyond our grasp, because we have it right within us. So he created a condition, he created a situation, in which he seems to have plunged into something that is completely the contradiction of himself. And only the Supreme would

dare to make that plunge. The Supreme would have the supreme daring. So he ‘ventured’ – venturing is also daring – ‘into Ignorance’.

‘*The All-Blissful bore to be insensible*’ I believe the opposite of Bliss is not so much pain as insensitivity and indifference, which is a much more unconscious state, where there is a sense of becoming totally impervious to everything. There is a certain inner torpor of such an intensity nothing wakes us up. It is not pain. Pain is a sign of consciousness; but insensitivity is much worse. And therefore he has to enter into that state of total torpor from where a gradual reawakening can come. So ‘*The All-Blissful bore*’ to enter into that state of apparent nescience, apparent insensitivity, apparent unconsciousness. He ‘*bore to be insensible*’. It must be a terrible burden for him, but he can bear that. It is not possible for us to willingly give up all that we had apparently, to enter a state where we seem to have lost all consciousness or all knowledge or all joy. It is not something one would willingly do. Only he can take up this willingly, voluntarily.

*Incarnate ...*

He wears flesh, he puts on a body.

*...in a world of strife and pain  
He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe*

These are the conditions of the physical and the vital. We live in the world of opposites, in the vital, in the mind ... This is the world of dualities: where there is joy, there is pain; where there is life, there is death. He accepts this; these are the conditions of the game.

*And drinks experience like a strengthening wine.*

He grows through these experiences, through the body, through the life, through the mind. There is a sense of divine intoxication, a delight, in that game — because games can not be played unless one

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really takes joy in them, otherwise it becomes a kind of a burden. So he has opted to play and he plays it to the full, to the maximum.

*He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts,  
Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,  
A luminous individual Power, alone.*

He who is the Beyond, who is the Transcendent, ‘rules the pregnant Vasts’ — ‘pregnant’ because all the possibilities of manifestation, of existence, are there in the beyond from which everything has come. And therefore that supreme Transcendence is not simply a vast emptiness. It is a kind of fullness of manifestation and the possibilities of existence. He lives within us; ‘prescient’, knowing, foreseeing the end of the long journey, ‘prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths’ – deep within. He is the One, he is the Beyond who is the One, he is the All, and he is the each. In each individual, at each step of the journey, he has his Presence, he has created a different expression for himself.



The passage that follows is for me one of the most beautiful passages, because it is so strong and mantric. It is a kind of a formulation of an Absolute, and it is an absolute expression of the Absolute. There is something that is totally inevitable in this expression:

*The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone  
Has called out of the Silence his mute Force  
Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush  
Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep  
The ineffable puissance of his solitude.  
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone  
Has entered with his silence into space:  
He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;  
He has built a million figures of his power;  
He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone;  
Space is himself and Time is only he.  
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,  
One who is in us as our secret self,  
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,  
He has made this tenement of flesh his own,  
His image in the human measure cast  
That to his divine measure we might rise;*

So the three aspects or the three poises of the Divine are spoken of here. First the Transcendent, next the Universal, and the Individual after that. The Absolute, the Supreme, is beyond all relativities - as he is described elsewhere in the book: '*The One by whom all live, who lives by none*'. He is dependent on nothing, he is complete in himself. He is the Absolute, he is the Perfect, the Total, there is nothing that can enrich or improve or perfect him. There is just He, '*the Alone*'. He is the Transcendent. He '*has called out of the Silence his mute Force*'. As long as the creation had not begun this Force was mute. She is an expression or a portion of himself which he had kept dormant, quiet, because she was not required to express herself.

This reminds me of one of the Mother's talks, I think in 1953, where the Mother tells us the story of Creation. She speaks of how the Lord

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who was the Vast, the Alone, the Supreme, at some point decides to create the multiplicity, the play of the many. And so he calls forth his Shakti, his Force. Until then she was not required, she was there, an expression of himself. He calls her and he says to her - Mother put it very simply because she spoke to us as children - he says, "Now you go and make a world, make a universe". So he projected his Force out of himself, and she projected out of herself four principles, of Life and Consciousness, of Joy and Truth. And she gave them the charge of creating the universe. These four principles received all her Power — so much so that they became very full of themselves, they felt very aware that they had a lot of power and that they were the authors of their play, of their creation. This sense of the ego was what cut them off from Her. And the moment they felt cut off from Her, Joy became Suffering, Life became Death, Truth became Falsehood and Consciousness became Inconscience. So then she turned to the Lord and said, "It did not work. Now what do I do?" He told her, "Start again. But this time hold on to them. Don't give them so much power." So those are the first line of her children, they are the Titans, they are the Asuras. And then she created another second line, these are the Gods. They have more Light but they are more docile and they don't have so much energy since she holds their energy in check. Perhaps that is the reason why, so long as the world is still ruled by Ignorance the Gods don't seem to have such a foothold. It is the Titans that rule, that conquer, because they have so much more power. But that's part of the game. So it is this creative Force which is spoken of here.

Until then, she guarded Him from Time '*by her immobile sleep*'. The moment there is Time, the moment there is Space, the play of existence begins. Beyond Time, beyond Space there is no manifestation. We can't think of something timeless and spaceless. So as long as we want existence, the conditions of time and space must apply. In the Transcendent there is no Time, there is no Space, there is only He. That is the first sentence. He is the Absolute, the Ineffable, he cannot be described, he cannot be defined. The moment you have a definition or a description you put a limitation; the moment you put a limitation

it's no longer the Transcendent. By her sleep she has been guarding the '*The ineffable puissance of his solitude.*' He is the One, he is the Absolute and the Beyond.

*The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone  
Has entered with his silence into space*

Now there is a dynamic verb. From that state of stillness he **enters**; there is a play, there is a movement: He '*Has entered with his silence into space*'. The conditions of manifestation are set: Time and Space, a framework of existence. '*He has fashioned these countless persons ...*' or she has fashioned, it's the same thing '*... of one self*'. She has taken the substance of his consciousness and shaped it into many forms but always, centrally, it is He.

*He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;  
He has built a million figures of his power,*

His power, his Shakti has entered into play and it is this force that is the creative energy that has created this universe. The universe is he in many forms and many shapes. It is the multiplicity. The One becomes the many. But the many is essentially the One, wearing the forms of the many.

*He has built a million figures of his power,  
He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone;*

You see the past verb '*lived*' is replaced by the present tense '*lives*': he was the Beyond, he is the Universe. He has entered into another, new state.

*The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,*

Here Sri Aurobindo has changed the form of the line: the Alone is replaced by the Immune. The Alone has entered into the many. In the many there are conditions of darkness, imperfection, ugliness, dirt.

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He enters into these conditions, which are often filthy, unconscious; and yet he is not touched by them. He is the Soul, the Spirit, that enters into each form however dense and dark, however unconscious and imperfect it may be. I suppose this is the reason why Sri Aurobindo has chosen the adjective 'Immune'. Nothing affects Him: however dark our nature may be, deep within there is He. And this is never darkened, this is never dirty, this is always perfect. That is the soul. It is because of This, that we are. We could not have been, without That. But we have lost touch with That because we live on the surface. Between that inner person and the surface there are so many layers of darkness, ignorance, semi-consciousness, so many prides also: each part is proud of itself, conscious of itself, thinks it is the most important. The vital is aware of itself, the mind is very conscious of its powers. So that inner Presence remains unknown. It does not disturb, it waits. It waits for the time when all the other parts will realise their insufficiency and imperfection, and bring forth this inner Presence.

That is why the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is not something other-worldly: it is not something that is impossible for average people; it is not that you have to be a special being, a saint or some kind of a Rishi. It is there for all of us to do, because all of us are already, in our essence, the Divine. We have forgotten, we live in Ignorance. He has accepted this condition, and yet this Ignorance does not touch him, he is Immune to it.

*One who is in us as our secret self,*

That is the essence of the Secret Knowledge: that this Presence is there and that it is therefore for us not only to acknowledge this Presence but to identify our existence with that Presence, to give up all that comes in the way, or to change them in order that they become expressions of that Presence, whether the bodily activities or the life or the mind. Everything can become an expression of that Presence. And that I think is central to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. It is not a giving up of the physical or the vital or the mental life in order to live in your spirit and your soul, which is what so many Yogas advise, but



to make that inner Presence expressed in every part of the being, down to the very cells of the body. This is not an impossibility, it is not a miracle, it is just what is essential to ourselves.

This imperfection is a mask. At the end of the book Sri Aurobindo will say '*Death was a mask.*' All imperfection leads to death. All this is of the surface, it is a condition of Ignorance, it is a consequence of Ignorance. If Ignorance, the root-cause, is eliminated, then all this imperfection will be eliminated. There is no sin, as Mother said, the only sin is Ignorance. From that Ignorance all the rest has followed.

*One who is in us as our secret self,  
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,  
He has made this tenement of flesh his own,*

This body, if it is not aware of the Divine, is something perishable, something weak, something faulty, like a house which is not beautiful, which is not a permanent home, a tenement. Also a tenement is a house that is not beautiful, that is broken down, that is a bit dirty, it is not a beautiful mansion. In the same way we have this house which is our body, which is prone to illness, which is prone to decay, which is prone to death ultimately, it crumbles and falls in the end. The mask of imperfection has become, has caused this, for us to realise that our bodily existence is a perishable one. The body will die as long as this imperfection and inconscience dominates. When the consciousness is reawakened in every particle of the body, then death will have no room; it will have no foothold, it will have to leave. And that is the essence of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

*He has made this tenement of flesh his own,  
His image in the human measure cast*

Now this is also what Sri Aurobindo says: he, the Divine, has made this '*his own*'. He has become this imperfection, he has become this inconscience, he has joined us in our weaknesses. Now it is up to us to join him in his perfection. That is the right thing to do, it's proper

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and fair. That is what we owe him. He has done so much, he has entered into the state of darkness and ignorance for our sake. So now it is up to us to go back to him for his sake. And then the barter will be fair. Sri Aurobindo mentions this debt repeatedly in this poem, saying that we owe it to him, this change. It is not something that will happen when it will happen. We have to make it happen. It is our duty, the business of our existence.

*... His image in the human measure cast  
That to his divine measure we might rise;*

He has come down into our limited field so that we may grow out of our limitation into the essence of his Divinity and his Infinity. It is a voluntary choice that he has made: he has freely limited himself. And so we have to freely become the infinite.

*Then in a figure of divinity  
The Maker shall recast us and impose  
A plan of godhead on the mortal's mould*

This is the divine man. Again this is the essence of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, that the human man has to become the divine man. If we choose to make it happen, if we give him our allegiance, if we give him our cooperation, then this is what is in store for us.

*Lifting our finite minds to his infinite,  
Touching the moment with eternity.  
This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:*

This is what we owe him. It is not a total change, it is not the same as transformation; it is not becoming other than we are, it is to become what we are in our essential reality. A transfiguration is really rising to something more beautiful, a change of form into something that we can become without breaking the outer or the individual being. The being remains but it is heightened, it is raised to something marvellously beautiful, something that is luminous. This is what earth

owes to the Divine. Earth and Heaven are not two diametrical poles separated from one another. I think later Sri Aurobindo speaks of the consanguinity of Earth and Heaven: we are of the same blood, we are of the same family, the divine family; we are children of God. And this is what he will say now:

*A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:  
His nature we must put on as he put ours;*

Since he could make this sacrifice and come down to our level, we have to sacrifice our imperfection and our ego and go up to his level. The problem is that we love our ego, we love our imperfection, we are in love with all that makes us identified as ourselves; each of us has our own individuality which is very precious to us, and this individuality is made up around the ego. But we owe it to him to replace it by the true individuality which is an expression of the Supreme.

*We are sons of God and must be even as he*

It is very simple, it is very essential. There is absolutely no difference, no distance between him and us. We are part and portion of himself: 'His human portion'. For the sake of manifestation he has put on a different expression of his nature, the human expression, for a while, which has to grow out of itself into something that is divine.

*... we must grow divine.  
Our life is a paradox with God for key.*

This is the whole evolutionary process: from the totally unconscious to the totally conscious identified with the Divine. The unconscious becomes the supremely conscious. It seems paradoxical but it is not. That is always the nature of the paradox, that a paradox has a clue. If we know it, then the opposition is simplified and we see that there is no opposition, there is no contradiction. We don't have to give up the world to go to heaven. We don't have to give up life in order to find

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the spirit. It is here on earth that one can establish the Kingdom of God. Men have sensed it I believe long long ago. There has always been this idea of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, not the Kingdom of God in heaven. The Kingdom of God in heaven is easy; the Kingdom of God on earth is not so easy, but that's the game divine, that's the challenge, the '*wager wonderful*' — to establish this perfection here, in the fields where there is the dense inertia of matter, where there is all the confusion and the opposition of the vital, its passions, its impulses, its caprices, its violences, in the world of mind which is so little aware of light and yet is so sure it knows everything. In all these fields, through all these, we have to work our way and go back to our origin.

So this is the part which, I suppose, sums up in short the essence of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. This is the Secret Knowledge.

*But meanwhile all is a shadow cast by a dream*

'*But meanwhile...*': Until that is achieved, we don't realise the Divine, we don't know who we are, we don't know where the Divine is. We just see the surface play in a field of half-darkness, half-light, with a sense of shadows. They lengthen, they shorten, these shadows. They are cast by some contact perhaps, vague, faint, transitory, illusory often, with truth. Therefore there is the sense of living in a world of constantly changing, shifting images, '*...cast by a dream*'.

*And to the musing and immobile spirit ...*

To that inner presence, this surface, play and movement of light and shade, of change and activity, as opposed to that silent all-conscious spirit:

*... Life and himself don the aspect of a myth.*

Mother also says that without the Divine, life is a painful illusion. When we do not have the sense of that Presence, naturally everything seems so transitory: What was, is no longer, what will be we don't know. And when we reach something, we don't want it any more.

We are always running after things we don't realise have very little and very short-lived value for us. So there is a sense of constantly moving, shifting, like a sense of living removed from reality, as Plato puts it. We are really removed from reality. There is a form but this form is so unstable, so incomplete, it is really a myth,

*The burden of a long unmeaning tale.*

Because if the story has a purpose, contains something, a truth that it is trying to unfold, it is not unmeaning. But if we have lost touch with that central purpose, and yet one day follows another and one month and then one year follows another to lead us nowhere, what are we living for? Where are we going? To grasp a happiness which doesn't seem so happy when we get it? It seems to make very little sense - unless we have some inner certitude that there is a light and we are moving towards that light. Then life takes a certain direction, there is a meaning, there is a significance. Otherwise it is like turning round and round in circles: there is an illusion of movement and there is a reaching nowhere. We reach nothing and nowhere. It is really unmeaning. 'Burden' – I believe the ancient meaning of 'burden' is also significance, the content of a story. And this content of the story is without significance; that is the paradox. The significance has no significance. Unless we have come in touch with the source of all truth, nothing has any meaning. It becomes a dead weight, life becomes a dead weight, then it is also a burden that we have to carry on our shoulders, the burden of time, the burden of age, the burden of responsibilities. We think we are the ones who are carrying our life forward, it is a big responsibility, it leads us nowhere. In the end we find ourselves incapable of holding on and we give up.

*For the key is hid and by the Inconscient kept;  
The secret God beneath the threshold dwells.*

He is there but he is hidden. We have therefore to look deep within. It is in the Inconscient that the supreme Consciousness has entered. Only he can make this huge descent. We can't consciously make this

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descent because we would lose ourselves; we don't dare. We descend without knowing, without controlling our descent. But he has made this descent and he has brought down this key of light into the heart of darkness.

This reminds me of the experience Mother had in the end of 1958, which led her to give the message of January 1st 1959. In 1958, at the end of September I think, Mother was apparently very ill. To the outer eye it seemed as if she was withdrawing deeper and deeper, as if she was slowly giving up her body. But later she spoke of this experience which she did perfectly consciously. She said that she was going down into the Inconscient absolutely purposely. And there she had the experience, which she formulated in a very beautiful New Year message, in which she says:

*'At the bottom of the Inconscient most hard and rigid and narrow and stifling ...'*,

She felt almost stifled, -

*... I struck an almighty spring that cast me up forthwith into a formless, limitless Vast vibrating with the seeds of a new world.*  
MCW 15 : 186

So she went right down into the Inconscient, and there she touched that spring, that force, that key, that Sri Aurobindo speaks of here, of such power and such intensity that it launched her into the new world, showed her that formless, limitless vast, the transcendent consciousness vibrating with all the possibilities, the seeds of the new creation, the new world. But to experience that, she had to venture. Only she could have dared to go down consciously, only the Divine can make this plunge, go down right into the heart of darkness and there touch that cord, that spring — she speaks of it as a spring that threw her up. Later she spoke to us in the class about this experience that she had, and she made this the New Year message of 1959. It is very powerfully spoken by her, in her own voice. And this

is where she, I suppose, experienced the beginning of the new world. And from there on, her journey as we have read, she has spoken about it at length, was to find out how gradually this experience can be translated in the body. In every part of the cells of the body there is this presence, this consciousness, and the flame has to be lit. Through that fire everything has to be purified and changed. And the possibility is there in the Inconscient.

Here Sri Aurobindo puts it like this:

*For the key is hid and by the Inconscient kept*

Until we are ready to make it, this plunge is very difficult and dangerous. So he will guard this key very carefully until the person has sufficient consciousness to lift up this force to its ultimate expression. The secret God has to become the manifest God.

*The secret God beneath the threshold dwells.*

Now the passage that follows is a description of the secret God. Because the secret God is there, we can make ourselves into evident divinities, manifest what is already secret.

*In a body obscuring the immortal Spirit*

The outer layers are still dark and obscure.

*A nameless Resident vesting unseen powers*

He is there very secret, very quiet and yet he has all the powers. He doesn't seem to interfere. The Spirit doesn't seem to speak much or interfere with the workings of the surface parts of the being - just like the Resident we used to have. It's a term Sri Aurobindo may have borrowed from the colonial times in India when there were Princely States. Officially the Princely States were independent and not part of the British Empire. India had many Princely States and there were Kings who ruled them. The British said "We are not ruling

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them.” And yet in each of these states there was a Resident. The Resident was a British officer who used to stay there and who, without saying anything, would actually control the working of the state. He had to be kept happy. The king’s decisions were always made with reference to the Resident. In the same way I think Sri Aurobindo uses this image of the controlling power, which doesn’t seem to control, but actually controls everything very quietly from behind the scenes. He is there as a Resident. He lives inside the state. He lives inside our body. The Being lives within us. You don’t have to address a God who is far away from you, you have to just turn inwards. He has powers, and yet these powers are extremely subtly held, just like the British Resident, who used to hold his powers very subtly and unobtrusively. So the image has this layer of suggestion.

*A nameless Resident vesting unseen powers  
With Matter’s shapes and motives beyond thought  
And the hazard of an unguessed consequence,*

This is the world of matter, of ignorance, of inconscience, ‘*motives beyond thought*’, where life is lived completely without any conscious purpose. If you have a consciousness you have the beginnings of a motive, you lead your life in a particular direction, for a particular purpose or a motive. But this is a state where inconscience seems to dominate, ‘*And the hazard of an unguessed consequence.*’ And yet the motives are there beyond thought, beyond our understanding. Consequence means effect, and also consequence means importance. We don’t realise how important this stage is. He is there, he is waiting, he is working out his process, without seeming to. This is the early stage of the evolution in the material play. But since this world of matter prepares all the other stages there is an infinite consequence that is being worked out at this level.

*An omnipotent indiscernible Influence,*

The resident is also an influence, everything flows from him. Without us realising it , all our existence flows from the Spirit. If the Spirit



leaves, then the existence stops. It's an omnipotent influence. It is indiscernible for most of us, we don't see it, we don't realise it, but if it is not there, then the person has gone. When the soul leaves the body the man dies. It is then that we realise the importance of the presence of the soul. For the most part it allows itself to be forgotten. We get caught up in all the outer activities and it is not even remembered, let alone discerned. In order to discern it we have to try to look for it, but we don't even try.

*He sits, unfelt by the form in which he lives  
And veils his knowledge by the groping mind.*

He is there deep inside, but he veils himself - or the mind veils him, whichever way you want to look at it. The mind has a certain arrogance, the mind is an instrument of knowledge, it is an instrument of light, it thinks, but it can not function without conditions of error. If you know what is wrong, then you start understanding what is right. If there is darkness, then only mind recognises light. So there has to be a duality, as far as mind is concerned. Good versus bad and right versus wrong and light versus darkness: these twonesses have to be there. Mind can't move straight to the truth. It gropes. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the lameness of the mind. It moves in a lame way, one step at a time, it gropes. And it is this groping mind that is the guide and the leader of our life. Reason, for instance, seems to be almighty, it dictates everything. And the supreme Resident within allows mind to take over, for a while. He sits quietly possessing all the light and does not insist, whereas the mind makes a big show of whatever little bit of knowledge it has. But the mind is not only an instrument that reaches out to light; in its arrogance it has become an instrument that dodges light also. It makes excuses for error, it finds all kinds of ways and means of not accepting the truth: justifications, explanations ... All these are different approaches that the mind thinks should help man, and it is this that retards his journey very often, slows him down. So it is a groping force.

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*A wanderer in a world his thoughts have made,  
He turns in a chiaroscuro of error and truth*

This Being, this Spirit, this secret God, is the one who has allowed this game. It is a game of hide-and-seek, and he is developing this theme of a game of hide-and-seek in so many different situations, in so many different conditions.

*He turns in a chiaroscuro of error and truth*

(a mixture of light and shade)

*To find a wisdom that on high is his.*

So you have the whole evolutionary curve. He becomes what he always was. Gradually, Man or God - essentially it is the same, the Spirit puts on humanity, puts on darkness, puts on effort and striving, falling and rising, ultimately becoming what was always there, what he was from the beginning.

*As one forgetting he searches for himself;  
As if he had lost an inner light he seeks:*

He is this divine Being; as if he had lost this light he looks, he seeks, he has forgotten, he gets back his desire to find out.

*As a sojourner lingering amid alien scenes  
He journeys to a home he knows no more.*

So this is the Divine who has become the human, who works his way through all the human situations, through all its long peripatetic journeys, back to the Divine.

*His own self's truth he seeks who is the Truth;  
He is the Player who became the play,  
He is the Thinker who became the thought;  
He is the many who was the silent One.*

So this is the game, the cosmic game, the individual's evolutionary game also.

*In the symbol figures of the cosmic Force  
And in her living and inanimate signs  
And in her complex tracery of events  
He explores the ceaseless miracle of himself,  
Till the thousandfold enigma has been solved  
In the single light of an all-witnessing Soul.*

The One becomes the many, and the many have to find their way, each one according to his own rhythm, in his own way, back to the One.

*He is the Player who became the play,*

He created the play, he enters into the play; he seems to have forgotten that he is the one who created the play. We have lost touch with ourselves, we get involved in all the externalities of life, and slowly through shocks, through experiences, we grow back into our real being. And this is himself, this is just himself.

*He is the Thinker who became the thought;  
He is the many who was the silent One.*

The One, the one light enters into everything in all its many rays, in all its many forms, and he has to find his way back to that. Each person is he, he is the many and yet he is the One. There is the unity in diversity.

There are certain themes in Sri Aurobindo which I think are constantly referred to. One of them is the evolutionary and the involutory process, Another is the concept of unity and diversity. Unity is not uniformity, unity is manyness, and yet it is an essential Oneness: One in essence, many in the forms of expression, and yet the essential unity is there at the core of all things. So there is the silent One, and yet there is the play of the multiplicity. Each thing is an expression of that One. The symbol is always an expression of something much more than it shows. If you have any symbol, it is a

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shape, it is a form, but the significance of that shape is much more than the shape. That is always true of any symbol. If we realise that we are each of us a symbol, there is a significance in the outer aspects of our existence. Each one is different and each thing is a symbol. Each is an expression of the Reality that is One, and yet in the expression it is many, it is various, it is different. And there should be no imposition that one should be like another; because one is the other in its essence, and yet not in its expression. That is the core of the play of manifestation. So each is one expression of the Infinite. The Infinite is infinitely various. He has put on infinite expressions of himself in this universe. Therefore each of us is an expression of some aspect of the Divine, and each aspect of the Infinite is infinite also, and is the One.

*In the symbol figures of the cosmic Force  
And in her living and inanimate signs*

— whether it is living or inanimate,

*And in her complex tracery of events  
He explores...*

— all these are the conditions of the play,

*... the ceaseless miracle of himself,*

— how different he can become, how various and complex are his expressions.

*He explores the ceaseless miracle of himself,  
Till the thousandfold enigma has been solved*

— that the many is not opposite to the One. The many has to be an expression of the One:

*In the single light of an all-witnessing Soul.*

— that supreme undisturbed Presence that is there within, that is there beyond, and allows the play, the game of games that he has created. And in that play there have to be so many expressions - because otherwise there is no play. If everybody repeated the same cycle there would be no play. There have to be so many shades, so many characters. It's a long, vast, complex game. And this game was created by his Force. So here again he uses the image of the Lord, the Witness Consciousness, and his active Power, his Shakti. He asks her to manifest herself in all things. So it becomes a play between him and her. In this last part it is this game of him and her. She is the Force, he is the Consciousness. He remains the all-witnessing silent presence, she is the one who is active, who works her way through all things, leading creation back to the origin. So the evolutionary force, the involutory force, the play of the many, ignorance or superconscience, all this is Mother, whereas the Lord is the Presence, the silent One. They are there and it is as if a game played by these two.

There is a beautiful poem by Sri Aurobindo, he wrote it as one of his last poems, which he calls "The World Game". It is a love poem actually. The Lord speaks to the Shakti, saying how it is for her that he had created this world, for her to play in. It is as if out of love for her he had built this universe. It's a very beautiful poem. The subtitle is "Ishwara to Ishwari" : "The World Game – Ishwara to Ishwari". He speaks to her. And it is very similar to this last part.

*This was his compact with his mighty mate,*

It was a game that was decided at the beginning, a compact.

*For love of her and joined to her for ever  
To follow the course of Time's eternity,  
Amid magic dramas of her sudden moods  
And the surprises of her masked Idea*

Idea is always the Presence, the Divine Consciousness. He is the Idea. But she puts on all the different masks in front of him and

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makes him enter into all the different situations like in a play. And he allows this. He seems to allow her to take over. He is the Supreme, she is his emanation, but for a long time he becomes a slave of his Force. He allows himself to be dominated. In India we have the image of Kali dancing on the breast of Shiva. She is standing on his chest. He allows it, he is quiet and happy, he is not at all disturbed. He is lying below her feet. That is also part of the compact: that the Lord allows the Force to take over. And for a long time the Force may seem dark. Without conflict, without opposition you can't have a drama, can you? If everyone moved in the same direction straightaway, harmoniously, there would be no drama. A play has to have conflicts; there have to be protagonists and antagonists and oppositions and clashes, and out of all this something has to emerge; it's a long story. That's what makes it a game. So here he describes this game. He allows himself to follow her course of Time's eternity. He who is timeless enters into Time. Time also has its own eternity, which is a relative eternity as opposed to the absolute transcendental timelessness.

*Amid magic dramas of her sudden moods*

– there has to be the unexpected. The hour of the unexpected constantly has to be present.

*And the surprises of her masked Idea*

In the fields of darkness now and then there are always flashes of light. In the world of ignorance and pain there are moments of perfect joy that we can touch, we can glimpse.

*And the vicissitudes of her vast caprice.*

The ups and downs, the changes, the unexpected turns - and this is what makes for the joy of the game, the adventure of the game.

*Two seem his goals ...*

– because he is the Beyond, she is the one who seems to have created this world of manyness where he is hidden. So one is the world of Ignorance and the other is the world of Light, apparently,

*...yet ever are they one  
And gaze at each other over bourneless Time;*

These two goals ultimately are the world of Inertia or Matter and a world of absolute Light, which is Spirit. And they seem to have become contradictory to one another, opposed to one another.

*Spirit and Matter are their end and source.*

– they may seem so.

*A seeker of hidden meanings in life's forms,  
Of the great Mother's wide uncharted will  
And the rude enigma of her terrestrial ways  
He is the explorer and the mariner*

Through all this the Consciousness works his way, through all these enigmas and the vicissitudes, the surprises, the magic drama of her terrestrial ways. Gradually the Consciousness has to find his way out of all these. This was what was spoken of in the very beginning of this section, where the poet speaks of a game of hide-and-seek. In order to seek one has to hide. So he has to find his way out of all this darkness.

*He is the explorer and the mariner*

In man this need to find, this need to explore, the need to come out of darkness to something more beautiful, more bright — this is a sign of the Consciousness that is really working within the human being. If the darkness were not there then there would be no need to change.

Mother once explained to us the story of Adam and Eve and how they were happy or they thought they were happy, at least they were

# Invocation

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not unhappy, it was griefless for them. But they never changed, they lived in a state of absolute changelessness. They knew no pain, they knew no death; they just were. And then into that world comes a being, described as a snake, that shakes them out of that state. In the Bible this is presented as the Devil. Mother says this is the evolutionary force, this is the great helper. If he had not come, then there would have been no evolution, no change, no breaking out of that temporary static happiness, falling from there into a state where you lose all happiness, you lose all joy. The need to grow out of that into something higher, something more permanent, would never have been. So it is the evolutionary force that is the guidance, that is the help from the Divine that comes. So there are falls that are required in order for us to want to climb beyond. If we did not fall we would not rise, we would remain static, and then there would be no game, there would be no manifestation, it would just die out. So this is ‘... *the rude enigma of her terrestrial ways*’.

*He is the explorer and the mariner*

Life is very often compared to water, the sea, the symbol of the vital consciousness. Therefore the mariner has to sail; there are storms, there are dangers, through which one has to work out one’s way back to the shore, a new shore, a new land, that’s what the explorer looks for.

*On a secret inner ocean without bourn:*

*He is the adventurer and cosmologist*

*Of a magic earth’s obscure geography.*

*In her material order’s fixed design*

*Where all seems sure and, even when changed, the same, ...*

– that’s the problem, in the world of matter everything changes and everything follows the same routine, cycles.

*Even though the end is left for ever unknown*



*And ever unstable is life's shifting flow,  
His paths are found for him by silent fate;*

That guidance within, in the world of Ignorance, is here described as Fate. Because this is his destiny. The destiny of man is to become more than man. And he would never become that if he did not face the difficulties, face the play of manifestation and realise through shocks his inadequacies, strengthen himself, become more conscious, venture forward. And then life becomes a continuous adventure. It is then truly an adventure of consciousness. Gradually one moves forward in consciousness.

*His paths are found for him by silent fate;*

– that presence is there, that guidance is there.

*As stations in the ages' weltering flood  
Firm lands appear that tempt and stay awhile,*

There are temporary realisations. On man's long journey he covers many stages and sometimes some of them are very satisfying. A certain situation, a certain realisation, a certain experience is sometimes so rewarding, at least for a time, that you say, 'This is it, I found what I was looking for.' These are the 'firm lands' that one is looking for, as one is always moving on the ocean, one looks for solid ground. But sometimes the solid ground becomes a hindrance, because there is something more to attain. Every realisation is a milestone, it's not an end — until we go back to the absolute origin. So only for a while –

*Firm lands appear that tempt and stay awhile,  
Then new horizons lure the mind's advance.*

There is no end to the journey of knowledge, there is no end to the journey of truth. And so to the sincere seeker after a while there are

always some questions that remain unanswered, and one has to proceed further in one's journey towards light.

*There is no last certitude in which thought can pause*

That is the problem of mind, because one thing that mind asks is really certitude, it's a finality of truth. And mind can never be sure. It is always only a probability that it can capture. Because mind is not a field of experience; it cannot experience. For experience you have to go to something other than mind. And therefore there is something that keeps on needling, that keeps on disturbing.

*There is no last certitude in which thought can pause  
And no terminus to the soul's experience.*

Because the soul is infinite and therefore you cannot put a stop.

*A limit, a farness never wholly reached,  
An unattained perfection calls to him  
From distant boundaries in the Unseen:*

Thus in short Sri Aurobindo sums up the whole process of Yoga here:

*A long beginning only has been made.*

It is always a beginning until there is a complete transformation of all that is ignorant and one becomes identified with the Supreme. It is always a movement on a journey, and there is so much to achieve that every stage could be called a beginning, part of the beginning. There is much more left to achieve than has been achieved already. So there is always a sense of incompleteness until one becomes that Supreme.

# *The World Game*

## *The Ishwara to the Ishwari*

In god-years yet unmeasured by a man's thought or by the earth's dance or the moon's spin  
I have guarded the law of the Invisible for the sake of thy smile, O sweet;  
While lives followed innumerable winged lives, as if birds crossing a wide sea,  
I have watched on the path of the centuries for the light of thy running feet.

The earth's dancing with the sun in his fire-ropes, was it not thou circling my flame-soul?  
The gazings of the moon in its nectar-joy were my look questing for thee through Space.  
The world's haste and the racing of the tense mind and the long gallop of the fleet years  
Were my speed to arrive through the flux of things and to neighbour at last thy face.

The earth's seeking is mine and the immense scope of the slow aeons my heart's way;  
For I follow a secret and sublime Will and the steps of thy Mother-might.  
In the dim brute and the peering of man's brain and the calm sight in a god's eyes  
It is I who am questing in Life's broken ways for thy laughter and love and light.

When Time moved not yet nor Space was unrolled wide, for thy game of the worlds I gave  
Myself to thy delightful hands of power to govern me and move and drive;  
To earth's dumbness I fell for thy desire's sport weaving my spirit stuff  
In a million pattern-shapes of souls made with me alive.

The worlds are only a playfield of Thou-I and a hued masque of the Two-One,  
I am in thee as thou art in me, O Love; we are closer than heart and breast;  
From thee I leaped forth struck to a spirit spark, I mount back in the soul's fire;  
To our motion the stars whirl in the swing of Time, our oneness is Nature's rest.

When Light first from the unconscious Immense broke to create nebula and sun  
Twas the meeting of our hands through the empty Night that enkindled the fateful blaze;  
The huge systems abandoned their inert trance and this green crater of life rose  
That we might look on each other form on form from the depths of a living gaze.

The Mind travelled in its ranges tier on tier with its wide-eyed or its rapt thought,  
My thought toiling laboured to know all myself in thee to our atoms and widths and deeps,  
My all yearned to thy all to be held close, to the heart heart and to self self,  
As a sea with a sea joins or limbs with limbs, and as waking's delight with sleep's.

When mind pinnacled is lost in thy Light-Vasts and the man drowns in the god,  
Thy Truth shall ungirdle its golden flames and thy diamond whiteness blaze;  
My souls lumined shall discover their joy-self, they shall clasp all in the near One,  
And the sorrow of the heart shall turn to bliss and thy sweetness possess earth's days.

Then shall Life be thy arms drawing thy own clasped to thy breast's rapture or calm peace,  
With thy joy for the spirit's immortal flame and thy peace for its deathless base.  
Our eyes meeting the long love shut in deep eyes and our beings held fast and one,  
I shall know that the game was well worth the toil whose end is thy divine embrace.

*SABCL 5: 791-92*

# “Light” in *Savitri*

By Varsha Vora

Article read at the Sri Aurobindo Bhavan,  
Nairobi, during the Deepavali festival.

This year, 2003, the Deepavali day fell on Saturday, 25th October - our evening of studies on *Savitri* and *Collected Works of The Mother*. Indeed, this was a boon, because we could celebrate our Deepavali evening at Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, with our brothers and sisters, reciting and contemplating some lines on Light in *Savitri*, The Light of all Lights.

Something in us is fond of traditions and forms a habit of celebrating such occasions. The celebrations become an external form and the true significance is covered by the forms. Hence, the full intensity of the light does not shine forth and it becomes a material-vital movement where people convene to perform poojas, rituals; have fireworks display, light candles, have dinners and a getting together for the exchange of greetings and gifts. The forefathers of the Indian spiritual heritage, rishis and seers of civilisations, have left us witnesses to the search of this divine light, its manifestation in order to make it a living Truth, so that it can spread forth dynamically to accelerate the growth of Consciousness and Enlightenment in humanity. Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is such Flame of Aspiration.

Sri Aurobindo uses the word 'light' five-hundred and thirty times in *Savitri*. As He has explained; Light is primarily a spiritual manifestation of the Divine Reality, illuminative and creative - the whole of *Savitri* is exactly that. He uses the word 'light' on every second page, in various modes and aspects throughout *Savitri*, to identify Higher Consciousness, Force, divinity and purity. The very first canto 'The Symbol Dawn', in the fourth line describes Inconscience as an 'unlit temple of Eternity'. And in the last book of *Savitri*, the new age is heralded by the lines:

*O woman soul, what light, what power revealed,  
Working the rapid marvels of this day  
Opens for us by thee a happier age?*

Thus, the play of Darkness and Light is there throughout *Savitri*.

Savitri is the Sun-God, Savitri is the daughter of Savitr, who came down on this earth to save the soul of man. Sri Aurobindo describes the birth of Savitri as a lamp which was lit:

*In this high signal moment of the gods  
Answering earth's yearning and her cry for bliss,  
A greatness from our other countries came.....  
A mightier influx filled the oblivious clay:  
A lamp was lit, a sacred image made.*

And when Death is vanquished, Sri Aurobindo uses Light as the medium:

*He called to his strength, but it refused his call.  
His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured.*

Sri Aurobindo describes the future of humanity thus:

*Life's tops shall flame with the Immortal's thoughts,  
Light shall invade the darkness of its base.*

Further, He writes:

*The supermind shall claim the world of Light  
And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart  
And place Light's crown on Nature's lifted head  
And found Light's reign on her unshaking base.*

# Invocation

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And he describes the future life divine thus:

*Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come  
Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind;...*

And how does Sri Aurobindo reveal to us the key to come in contact with our true self, which is the Light?

*In moments when the inner lamps are lit  
And the life's cherished guests are left outside,  
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.*

Deep within us sits He, resplendent in the glorious light, a tongue of mystic fire: Agni, darting forward and upward, much like a lighted deepak. Only when we leave this outer circumference of thoughts, desires, sensations, could we celebrate this inner Diwali. And not only will it illumine our minds, our emotions - eventually this inner flame will kindle each and every cell of our bodies as well:

*In matter shall be lit the spirit's glow  
In body and body kindled the sacred birth.*

This is then the real significance of Deepavali. Let us ourselves become such lighted deepaks of The Divine.

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Nirodbaran joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry in 1930s. In 1938 he was called upon to attend on Sri Aurobindo as a medical man, but later was asked to help him in his literary work and correspondence by taking down dictation. It was in this capacity that he became Sri Aurobindo's scribe for the later stages of the composition of his revelatory epic poem *Savitri*. Since Nirodbaran had to read out the dictated passages to Sri Aurobindo for confirmation and correction, he is not only the sole person still living who heard Sri Aurobindo speaking the lines of *Savitri*; he is also the only one whose reading of *Savitri* was heard by Sri Aurobindo. This recording of about 40 hours in length was done in the early 1980s, and has now been put into digital form by the audiovisual team of Savitri Bhavan, Auroville in commemoration of Nirodbaran's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 17th November 2003.

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