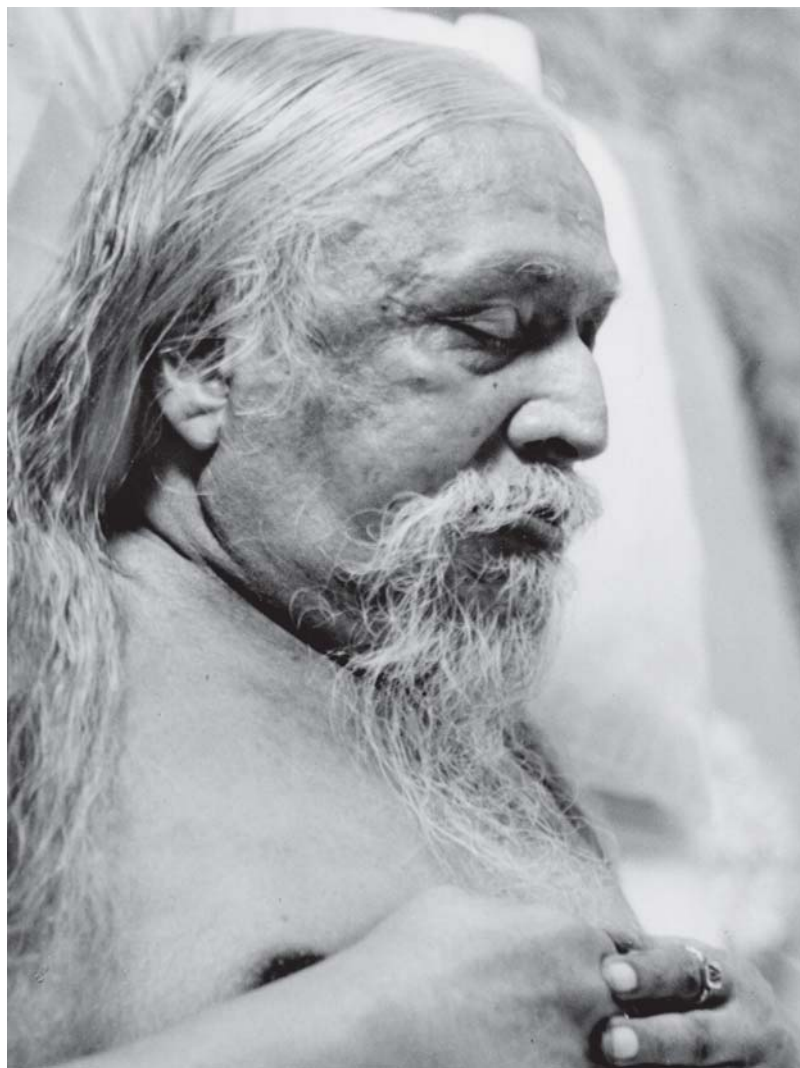


C O N T E N T S

About <i>Savitri</i> with some paintings: Part Three,	4
Introduction by Huta	5
The Finding of the Soul	9
<i>Savitri</i> , Book Seven, Canto Five	10
Talk by Jhumur Bhattacharya	11
A Meditation and a Prayer of the Mother	27
The Finding of the Soul	
Talk by Prof. S. Kandaswami`	28
The Mighty Mother	39
News of Savitri Bhavan	49
Some allusions to Classical Mythology in <i>Savitri</i>	57
About Savitri Bhavan	64



*To Thee who hast been the
material envelope of our Master,
to Thee our infinite gratitude.
Before Thee who hast done so much for us,
who hast worked, struggled, suffered,
hoped, endured so much,
before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all,
prepared, achieved all for us,
before Thee we bow down and implore
that we may never forget,
even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.*

*The Mother
9 December 1950*

About Savitri with some paintings - Part Three,
compiled and designed by Huta, Pondicherry, Havyavahana
Trust, August 2005, Rs. 300.-; available from SABDA.

This book contains the text of Canto Three of Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic poem Savitri : a legend and a symbol, accompanied by an illuminating commentary from the Mother which reveals not only the inner sense of the poem, but also Her prophetic vision of the New World of the Future. The Mother's recitations of Sri Aurobindo's poems and her comments were tape-recorded by Huta, whose transcripts were corrected for publication by the Mother. Corresponding to the Mother's commentary are 42 full-colour plates of paintings made by Huta according to the Mother's instructions and inspiration.

A uniquely valuable new book on *Savitri* came out in August 2005 : Part Three of "About Savitri" , the Mother's explanations and comments on *Savitri*, given to Huta during the period 1969 to 1971. Part One of the series, covering Canto One of the first book of *Savitri*, "The Symbol Dawn" appeared in 1972 and is long out of print. Part Two, covering Canto Two, "The Issue" was published in the year 2000. Now we have part Three, covering Canto Three, "The Yoga of the King : the Yoga of the Soul's Release". This is the longest of the four parts, with 41 sections, each containing a passage from *Savitri* followed by the Mother's comment on it and a painting by Huta inspired by the Mother's words. The fourth and last part, with 18 sections, covering the first half of Canto Four "The Secret Knowledge" is now in preparation and should appear shortly. To remind our readers of how this unique work came into existence we are reprinting here Huta's account of the work.

About Savitri

Introduction by Huta

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

Have you brought anything to show me?

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

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

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

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

Savitri is occult knowledge and spiritual experience. Some part of it can be understood mentally, but much of it needs the same knowledge and experience for understanding it.

Nobody here except myself can explain Savitri. One day I hope to explain it in its true sense.

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

All the comments by the Mother are wonderful. Here I would like to present one of them from Book One, Canto Three, which appeals to me very much. She recited this passage :

*Only a while at first these heavenlier states,
These large wide-poised upliftings could endure.
The high and luminous tension breaks too soon,
The body's stone stillness and the life's hushed trance,
The breathless might and calm of silent mind;
Or slowly they fail as sets a golden day.
The restless nether members tire of peace;
A nostalgia of old little works and joys,
A need to call back small familiar selves,
To tread the accustomed and inferior way,
The need to rest in a natural poise of fall,
As a child who learns to walk can walk not long,
Replace the titan will for ever to climb,
On the heart's altar dim the sacred fire.
An old pull of subconscious cords renews;
It draws the unwilling spirit from the heights,
Or a dull gravitation drags us down
To the blind driven inertia of our base.
This too the supreme Diplomat can use,
He makes our fall a means for greater rise.*

The Mother's comment runs :

This is the great difficulty in the physical life. It is the strength of old habit that pulls the body down to its old way. Then comes the struggle, and if the faith is sufficient, if the ardour for progress is there, then out of this fall we can rise to a higher receptivity and a better achievement.

In fact, there is nothing in this experimental life that is not meant to push the whole creation towards the luminous, marvellous Divine End that is promised to our effort and to our faith.

Never despair. Never lose courage. Never, never lose faith. The Grace is there and marvellously uses everything to reach, as quickly as possible, the Goal that is promised to our effort.

If we can enlarge our consciousness sufficiently, we see that even the apparent defeats are marvellous steps towards the final Victory.

As we went on, the Mother uncovered Sri Aurobindo's vision and hers of the New World, expressing the Supramental Light, Consciousness, Force and Delight. She disclosed their effect on the cells of the body. She took only the theme of *Savitri* as starting-point and when the right time came spoke about the action of the New Consciousness which had been manifesting since the beginning of the year 1969.

One day the Mother revealed :

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

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

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

There are four parts of *About Savitri*. The Mother arranged for her explanations of Book One, Canto One to be published in February 1972 along with the paintings corresponding to each of her comments which I had made according to her instructions and inspiration. For this book she gave the message :

Savitri

*The supreme revelation of
Sri Aurobindo's
vision.*

Savitri

The supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision

About Savitri – Part Two was published in the year 2000. Now here is *About Savitri – Part Three*, consisting of the Mother's explanations of *Savitri* Book One, Canto Three. This is the longest of the parts, with 176 pages and 42 full-colour plates. Part Four is in preparation, and will appear in due time.

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

Huta

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The Finding of the Soul

In March 2005 we were privileged to receive a visit from Professor S. Kandaswami, retired professor of English Literature, now resident in Bombay, who attributes his love of *Savitri* to the influence of his teacher Professor M.V. Seetaraman. Professor Kandaswami was in the area for only a short time, but nevertheless agreed to give a talk at Savitri Bhavan. He chose the topic “The Finding of the Soul : Book Seven, Canto Five of *Savitri*”. The Professor was accompanied by a group of friends, and the occasion was made vivid and delightful by his infectious enthusiasm for his topic, as well as the varied insights gained from his wide and deep knowledge of English poetry and Indian traditions.

Several of those who were present to hear him speak on March 16th had their appetites whetted for further exploration of this canto. At their request, once the greatest summer heats were over, we invited Jhumur Bhattacharya, who reads *Savitri* with students of the Higher Course in the Ashram School and has shared her insights with us on other occasions, to give a reading of the same canto. She kindly accepted, and we enjoyed a very special morning together in the New Hall on Sunday August 14th.

Edited transcripts of both the talks are given here.

Savitri Book Seven, Canto Five

*A reading by Jhumur Bhattacharya
at Savitri Bhavan, August 14 2005*

Perhaps the title of this canto refers not only to the finding of the soul of a particular person, but rather to a representative Finding of the Soul, by the representative of the Divine who has come down on the earth and become a human being, who has put on herself the garb of humanity, its oblivion, its darkness, its ignorance. For, as Sri Aurobindo has said elsewhere, how can the Divine heal the pain he never felt? So the Divine must know the pain, must know the darkness, must experience the ignorance, and then work the way back to the essential Self that he or she represents – on behalf of us all. This is exactly the mission of Savitri. So in order to start “The Finding of the Soul”, perhaps we ought to go back to “The Entry into the Inner Countries”. Because that is where the Voice tells her :

*For man thou seekst, not for thyself alone.
Only if God assumes the human mind
And puts on mortal ignorance for his cloak
And makes himself the Dwarf with triple stride,
Can he help man to grow into the God.* p.488

and again :

*Remember why thou cam'st:
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,
Then mortal nature change to the divine.* p. 476

The Divine becomes mortal, and for a while seems to lose his purpose. Savitri has to follow this curve because she is not just an individual, she is the universal consciousness-force that has entered into or involved herself into the Inconscient and has to work her way back to what she represents essentially. And because she is that, the finding of the soul has to follow that same curve. In the message that the

Voice had given her, it had said “You must become God’s Vast”, you must become nothing. So Savitri has to become an empty state. The empty state is, I suppose, the wiping off totally of the ego.

The beginning of this canto reminds me very much of Mother’s description of what she experienced when she met Sri Aurobindo for the first time. She, who had, as she says in her *Prayers and Meditations*, already experienced identity with the divine Self, writes about herself “I am a blank page, I am nothing, I am an absolute zero, I am a newborn baby ...”, absolutely wiping off everything she was before, in order to become the All. This first page of the canto strongly reminds me of those lines of the Mother.

After receiving that message from the Voice, Savitri moves on her journey. She enters the inner countries, she meets the three soul-aspects she embodies: the aspect of the Divine Love, the Divine Force, the Divine Light, the Triple soul-forces; and now she continues further.

*Onward she passed seeking the soul’s mystic cave.
At first she stepped into a night of God.
The light was quenched that helps the labouring world,
The power that struggles and stumbles in our life;
This inefficient mind gave up its thoughts,
The striving heart its unavailing hopes.* p.522

The surface person with its mind and heart, the surface personality, is wiped off. Usually we live by this personality. Now it is not there, nothing is there, the ego is not there. All that has been obtained or experienced in the past is not there any longer.

*All knowledge failed and the Idea’s forms
And Wisdom screened in awe her lowly head
Feeling a Truth too great for thought or speech,
Formless, ineffable, for ever the same.*

She is going slowly deeper. The surface being is no longer there; its wisdom – for she has already so much wisdom – she knows that this wisdom is nothing, compared to the essence that she has to find – which in the end is really herself. She is the Wisdom, she is the Power,

she is the Love. These are not just portions, she is the Essence of all these. And therefore it is perennial, it is eternal, forever the same.

An innocent and holy Ignorance ...

This is a very beautiful phrase.

There is no person. The surface person by which we live is not there, therefore it is an absence of any personal wisdom. That is perhaps the reason why the word ‘ignorance’ is used here. But it is not a darkness – it is simply the absence of our own individual light. Each of us proceeds through life by whatever light we have, whatever consciousness, whatever aspiration even. The person lives by his own powers as long as he has not been able to be taken over by a greater power. Then that person no longer thinks, no longer acts – that greater power moves through him. As Mother also has said in her later talks “For the last 50 years I didn’t think.” Thought passed through her – everything passed through her. You have to become a kind of channel.

*An innocent and holy Ignorance
Adored like one who worships formless God
The unseen Light she could not claim nor own.*

That Light cannot be claimed or owned because it is an impersonal and universal presence. It is nobody’s. She is universal. She is also the vast impersonal, as well as the personal essence of all things.

*In a simple purity of emptiness
Her mind knelt down before the unknowable.*

This is an exact transcription of what the Mother felt when she first saw Sri Aurobindo. She was completely empty, surrendered. Her being had ceased to have any separate value, and she knelt before him.

All was abolished save her naked self

Her naked self, because all the coverings of the being, all that we have acquired, all the knowledge, the personal acquisitions of life and mind, all this is wiped off.

And the prostrate yearning of her surrendered heart : ...

This is again exactly what Sri Aurobindo has said about the Mother. When Mother came before him, he experienced a surrender that until then he had thought not possible. She prostrated before him, she did something that she did not know was done – with her Western education, she had never seen or herself done a prostration, but she found herself doing it, and the surrender that she had was absolute.

And here also, there is no person, no ego, no shred of any separate self.

*There was no strength in her, no pride of force;
The lofty burning of desire had sunk
Ashamed, a vanity of separate self,
The hope of spiritual greatness fled,
Salvation she asked not nor a heavenly crown:*

Because all these are expressions, even the hope of spiritual greatness is a form of ego, the spiritual ego, which is one of the most difficult to conquer.

*Humility seemed now too proud a state.
Her self was nothing, God alone was all,*

The transference of her consciousness into That. She as a separate person is no longer there, that consciousness is all. And because the dynamic force of knowledge is not there, therefore :

Yet God she knew not ...

She did not know, she did not try, or even want perhaps to know what He was, why He was,

*... but only knew he was.
A sacred darkness brooded now within,
The world was a deep darkness great and nude.*

This is the reason perhaps of the involution, the deep consciousness that has gone into the very heart of things. When all the rest, all our personal attributes, our capacities, when all these are put aside, we

know that at the very heart of what we call darkness He is there “*He is seated within it immense and alone*” : that Presence is there.



This Finding of the Soul is a universal effort. This is not just a matter of Savitri’s individual soul. Her soul is the soul of the universe. She has to realise, as the Voice had told her, who she is, why she is. She is the Consciousness-Force of the Divine. Therefore her sadhana is the sadhana of this world, of the universe. It is a universal movement. As an individual she is gradually growing into who she truly is, because she had for a while seemed to have forgotten it.

*This void held more than all the teeming worlds,
This blank felt more than all that Time has borne,
This dark knew dumbly, immensely the Unknown.*

This is the deep Presence that is at the very core of things, beyond all description. But in the beginning, before it starts to work its way out, it does seem to be absolutely formless, it doesn’t take any direction, any form.

*But all was formless, voiceless, infinite.
As might a shadow walk in a shadowy scene,
A small nought passing through a mightier Nought,*

Nought with a capital N, because this nought, this nothing is everything. The Zero is the All. It contains the universe – and more.

A night of person in a bare outline

It is the person who is wiped out.

*Crossing a fathomless impersonal Night,
Silent she moved, empty and absolute.
In endless Time her soul reached a wide end,
The spaceless Vast became her spirit's place.*

That is the first realisation.

This is where she belongs, where she begins, she is part of this original Force, this Force that is at the very core of all things, this Force that is a Vast.

It is not yet expressed as a force because it has not yet started to manifest itself. It is simply a latent immensity which contains all things before all things have started to be born. She is the original Presence.

*At last a change approached, the emptiness broke;
A wave rippled within, the world had stirred;
Once more her inner self became her space.*

From that impersonal experience, she reverts to her personal existence, she the individual who is also the Universal and the Transcendent. But now, as the individual, she makes the journey, so that it becomes a kind of example for all the other journeys for us to make.

*Once more her inner self became her space.
There was felt a blissful nearness to the goal;
Heaven leaned low to kiss the sacred hill,*

Because she is the Divine embodiment who has become human, the human who rises to her highest. When earth raises its aspiration in

the form of a mountain, it touches the skies. *Neighbours of Heaven are Nature's altitudes*, as Sri Aurobindo says in the beginning. In the same way Savitri represents the highest that the human being attains. Here we feel the communion, the closeness, between the heights and what is born in the depths.

*The air trembled with passion and delight.
A rose of splendour on a tree of dreams,
The face of Dawn out of mooned twilight grew.*

A very beautiful few lines.

Just as every day out of the darkness the day is born, she who had become a mental human being – and the mind is usually associated with the moon because it receives light from elsewhere – out of that slowly the face of Dawn – of Savitri, who really means the Dawn – slowly came : the realisation of who she is. And from the Dawn comes the day. The Dawn was really the beginning, the Day is the fullness.

*Day came, priest of a sacrifice of joy
Into the worshipping silence of her world;*

The priest is the one who really should link the heights with the depths. He is the one who brings the higher worlds down into our realm, and raises our aspiration towards the heights.

Day, the consciousness that has become completely luminous, having sacrificed all the darkness, all the semi-consciousness, now becomes only an expression of the opportunity of delight, of beauty, of light and harmony. And all these are now the conditions of her spirit, her spirit which essentially is now totally silent. She has wiped off, as I said, her separate self, but now the true individual is emerging.

Day came, ...

A full luminousness came ...

*... into the worshipping silence of her world;
He carried immortal lustre as his robe,
Trailed heaven like a purple scarf ...*

A sign of imperial greatness, absolute unchallenged power ...

... and wore

As his vermilion caste-mark a red sun.

The image of the priest with his caste mark, which is the sun that has entered into the physical world – red as a symbol of the physical world. It is in the physical world that the manifestation of the divine begins.

As if an old remembered dream come true,

She recognised in her prophetic mind

The imperishable lustre of that sky,

Sri Aurobindo here very interestingly combines the past with the future, the remembrance and the prophecy – because in the deepest depths as on the highest heights where the mind is not, where divisions between small strips of time no longer matter, all becomes one time. It is the mental person who needs to divide the present from the past and the past from the future, because our unconsciousness is so narrow it can take in only a little experience at one time. But when one reaches the very heights, or similarly the deepest depths, these divisions which the mind requires are not there, so the past is part of the future, it is one continuous eternal present. And in that *She recognised the imperishable lustre of that sky*. She recognised that sky because that sky is hers, that light is hers, she belongs to that, or it belongs to her, both ways. Because she is the force that has created the sky.

The tremulous sweetness of that happy air

And, covered from mind's view and life's approach,

The mystic cavern in the sacred hill

Deep within, in the very heart of things, the secret presence that dwells in the cave, as it is said in our ancient texts, *hridayasya guhayam* – deep in the cavern of the heart, that very core of things, that Presence is there, it is the cause of all creation. And she recognises that because she is that.

And knew the dwelling of her secret soul.

As if in some Elysian occult depth,

Truth's last retreat from thought's profaning touch,

You see, it is as if that Presence hides, needs to hide from the mind. The mind with its thoughts, its arrogance, its need to analyse, to break up everything, to put its stamp of opinion on all things: the Supreme withdraws from all that. Again 'Elysian' and depth – the heights and the depths are really one in that world. The deeper you go, the higher you go. They are not, as in the mental world, opposite directions. In the spiritual life, one is concomitant with the other. So the highest consciousness is lodged in the deepest depths.

And then begins a whole long analogy: how the Divine hides himself in the very heart of Matter – the universal Presence. The Finding of the Soul, the journey really begins to be described systematically from here onwards – but it is the soul of all things, which is she, truly. She makes this journey, and it starts with the world of Matter, the rock temple.

*As if in a rock-temple's solitude hid,
God's refuge from an ignorant worshipping world,
It lay withdrawn even from life's inner sense,
Receding from the entangled heart's desire.*

The analogy is that of a temple which is cut out of a rock, the world of Matter, and the Presence is there, not in the ignorant worshipping – all the movements of our prayers, our hopes, the external expression of our devotion. The Essence remains in a way distant from all that, quiet, away from all the movements of life. And it sustains all things, it supports all things. It remains constant, hidden, deep in the heart of Matter. She enters this temple : the universal creation, the whole cosmos is a temple.

A marvellous brooding twilight met the eyes

The twilight is a condition when you leave one state and enter another, an in-between, transitional state. The mind does not work any more. What is supposed to be the darkness of Matter, is not dark really. There is a light hidden at the core of this darkness. There is a brooding light, deep in the heart of Matter that she finds, that she recognises. So that Matter is holy.

*And a holy stillness held that voiceless space.
An awful dimness wrapped the great rock-doors*

Because on the outside Matter is really dense and inert.

Carved in the massive stone of Matter's trance.

The consciousness is withdrawn from the surface, and lodged deep within.

*Two golden serpents round the lintel curled,
Enveloping it with their pure and dreadful strength,
Looked out with wisdom's deep and luminous eyes.*

Around the doors the snakes, as Mother says, symbols of the material evolutionary energy, the energy which makes evolution possible. Evolution is so systematic, so regulated, there has to be wisdom, there has to be consciousness within it. It is not just energy. So the two snakes, curling around, I suppose implying the involution and the evolution, which are two movements, *Enveloping it with their pure and dreadful strength*, because they sustain all things. The huge power of the two snakes that uphold the whole progress and evolution of consciousness. They *Looked out with wisdom's deep and luminous eyes*. And over the door

An eagle covered it with wide conquering wings:

And slowly now we are entering the world of power. Out of matter, moving towards the vital which is the next stage. The eagle is the bird of power, with its *wide conquering wings*. She moves into the vital plane.

*Flames of self-lost immobile reverie,
Doves crowded the grey musing cornices*

Continuing the image of the temple, she moves into the next stage of the temple, the higher vital world. The dove is the symbol of love, of peace, expressions of the higher vital.

*Like sculptured postures of white-bosomed peace.
Across the threshold's sleep she entered in
And found herself amid great figures of gods*

*Conscious in stone and living without breath,
Watching with fixed regard the soul of man,
Executive figures of the cosmic self,
World-symbols of immutable potency.*

Now comes the play of the universal principles and powers, which are what we usually term gods. The gods are the permanent principles that are at work in the universe. They are the perfect embodiments of the different forces. We have within us something of each of them, not completely and not in a purified way. But each god is like a universal power, and the universe is a playfield of infinite forces. So now she enters into this world of principles and powers and forces – the beginnings of the play of a much more conscious and one might say ‘mental’ world. These powers are there, *Conscious in stone*, because they are part of this temple, which is the world of matter. In the world of matter, the forces of consciousness are at work.

*... and living without breath,
Watching with fixed regard the soul of man,*

They have to remain fixed, because otherwise the human being would have no standard by which to move. If these powers leaned down to our level we would never raise our level. So they remain unmoving, they represent standards of perfection towards which the evolving human being can slowly rise. They work out the cosmic development of consciousness, *Executive figures of the cosmic self*. By just being what they are, being those absolutes – for each one in his own way is an absolute – they work out the progressive evolution of existence, and therefore they are *World-symbols of immutable potency*.

*On the walls covered with significant shapes
Looked at her the life-scene of man and beast*

As is often done in temples : you have the whole world carved on the outer walls.

And the high meaning of the life of gods,

Gradually she is moving towards a more mental plane where a certain

amount of clarity appears and the significance begins to become a little more obvious.

*The power and necessity of these numberless worlds,
And faces of beings and stretches of world-space
Spoke the succinct and inexhaustible
Hieratic message of the climbing planes.*

It is succinct because it is in one temple that she has the experience. It is caught in one moment of experience and yet it is an infinite message. It is a continuous message, it is there in the essence of all things, the force that is slowly working its way upwards. And therefore, stage by stage, it is a hieratic message – not only a graded but a sacred and secret message *of the climbing planes* – the planes that from matter through life to mind are leading the way to the beyond.

*In their immensitude signing infinity
They were the extension of the self of God*

The Supreme extending himself in creation : the creation is the body of the Lord. It is a gradual extension in space, in time, of the original consciousness that stretches into manifestation.

*And housed, impassively receiving all,
His figures and his small and mighty acts
And his passion and his birth and life and death*

All these that the Lord puts on, these stages of experience, she realises: his pain, his passion, his birth, his death, his life,

And his return to immortality.

This is what we do. We are born, we suffer, we live, we die, and we return to immortality. That is the purpose of our existence : to end where we begin. We begin from the Eternal, we realise that That is what we are and that we have to return to that eternal existence which is us, which is not just ours, but which is us. In the temple, these figures said that.

To the abiding and eternal is their climb,

*To the pure existence everywhere the same,
To the sheer consciousness and the absolute force*

The sheer consciousness is the Lord, the absolute force is his emanation, that is Her, that is She.

And the unimaginable and formless bliss,

Sat-Chit-Ananda: existence, consciousness-force, bliss – the trinity, the triple truth, from which this world of multiplicity, the whole manifestation, has really come out. It has come out from the Sat-Chit-Ananda.

*To the mirth in Time and the timeless mystery
Of the triune being who is all and one
And yet is no one but himself apart.*

All the different aspects of the Divine, the Divine as Sat-Chit-Ananda, the Divine as the Transcendent, the Divine as the Cosmos, the Cosmic Being, and yet the Divine as the supreme Individual : all this is slowly acquired by her, she realises this. As she moves, she imbibes, she becomes.

*There was no step of breathing men, no sound,
Only the living nearness of the soul.*

The knowledge by identity. She becomes that.

Yet all the worlds and God himself were there,

Because the worlds and God are one and the same.

For every symbol was a reality

And that is what it is always. Every shape is a symbol, and every symbol contains a truth much greater than the outer form reveals.

And brought the presence which had given it life.

In that temple which is a symbol of the universe or of creation, all this is very very condensed and very intense.

*All this she saw and inly felt and knew
Not by some thought of mind but by the self.*

This is the only valid knowledge really – the knowledge by identity. She becomes the knowledge, and therefore she has it. She becomes this world of Matter, and Life, and Mind, because she is that. It is she who has worked her way through all manifestation.

A light not born of sun or moon or fire,

Because sun or moon or fire are born of that Light – She. That Light is beyond all things.

A light that dwelt within and saw within

She has not got that knowledge by any external force, it is not born by any help from outside. It is a knowledge which she acquires by becoming that Truth.

Shedding an intimate visibility

Made secrecy more revealing than the word:

It is simply identification with that Truth – no expression, just identification.

Our sight and sense are a fallible gaze and touch

As long as we are on the outside of what we know, we approach it through our senses, through our mind. These are naturally fallible, they are dependent on our consciousness which is always at best semi-conscious, on our instruments of knowledge which are imperfect – so whatever we know is in relation to our instruments of knowledge. The only way to know something truly is to become that. And so she becomes the whole truth of that temple.

And only the spirit's vision is wholly true.

The spirit is one with the Spirit.

As thus she passed in that mysterious place

Through room and room, through door and rock-hewn door,

That temple is founded firmly in Matter, which is really an expression of the Supreme Spirit. There is no opposition between one and the other.

*She felt herself made one with all she saw.
A sealed identity within her woke;
She knew herself the Beloved of the Supreme:
These Gods and Goddesses were he and she:
The Mother was she of Beauty and Delight,
The Word in Brahma's vast creating clasp,
The World-Puissance on almighty Shiva's lap,—
The Master and the Mother of all lives
Watching the worlds their twin regard had made,
And Krishna and Radha for ever entwined in bliss,
The Adorer and Adored self-lost and one.*

This is the next realisation. She is the creative force, the energy that the Supreme has loosed out of himself, and this energy has gone into play. So she knew herself to be that Force, the Beloved of the Supreme. This has been extensively described by Sri Aurobindo in his poem 'The World Game' – the Ishwara speaking to the Ishwari. It is she who is the cause of all, she works out everything. She is really his Force, his Spouse, his Shakti. And so here Sri Aurobindo mentions different aspects of the Mother. *These Gods and Goddesses* – the gods representing the consciousness, the goddesses representing the force of manifestation and evolution:

The Mother was she of Beauty and Delight,

If he is the Lord Vishnu that sustains all things, she is Lakshmi, Mahalakshmi, the Mother of Beauty, the Mother of Delight. Or another aspect – the Word : the Word is a projection of consciousness that has come out, emanated, from Brahma, the Creator. His spouse is Vani, Saraswati, the Word.

The World-Puissance ...

That is Durga, or Parvati,

... on almighty Shiva's lap,

Different aspects of the dynamic divine, or the divine that supports all things in the form of Vishnu, or the creative divine, in his different

moments and his different states. He has his force that works, each time in a different way, but it is the same force, expressed in the different aspects of the Mother.

*The Master and the Mother of all lives
Watching the worlds their twin regard had made,*

The play of their conscious-force. The regard is not simply the consciousness but the projection of that consciousness through their sight,

And Krishna and Radha for ever entwined in bliss,

Another aspect of the play of the Divine: Krishna who is the Adored, and Radha who is the Adorer, the embodiment of the human surrender, of self-giving. The Divine gives himself totally to the one who has given himself to him, and so they are essentially two aspects of the Absolute, two aspects of the same, both equally divine. When the human is totally surrendered to the Divine there is no distinction left between the human and the divine. The Creation and the Creator are one and the same. Matter and Spirit are one and the same, in their essence. So these different principles, these different forms of manifestation now she sees.

Then :

*In the last chamber on a golden seat
One sat whose shape no vision could define;
Only one felt the world's unattainable fount,
A Power of which she was a straying Force,*

The Supreme Origin, she realises that she is an emanation of that origin.

An invisible Beauty, goal of the world's desire,

Because it is towards perfection that all manifestation yearns, in its own way – towards this absolute.

*A Sun of which all knowledge is a beam,
A Greatness without whom no life could be.*

This is the Supreme Godhead. Then comes the Transcendent, where there is not even any form.

*Thence all departed into silent self,
And all became formless and pure and bare.*

The mind has been left behind long ago, it has gone into the Sat-Chit-Ananda. Now even that is left behind, now it is the Transcendent.

*Then through a tunnel dug in the last rock
She came out where there shone a deathless sun.
A house was there all made of flame and light
And crossing a wall of doorless living fire
There suddenly she met her secret soul.*

This Supreme Energy of living fire which contains all light, all love, all sweetness, all knowledge, all power, all beauty, this is She, at the very height and heart of all things.

(Having reached the end of the first section of the Canto, we requested Jhumur to read the remaining lines to close the session.)

A Meditation and a Prayer of the Mother

April 3, 1914

It seems to me that I am being born to a new life and all the methods, the habits of the past can no longer be of any use. It seems to me that what I thought were results is nothing more than a preparation. I feel as though I have done nothing yet, as though I have not lived the spiritual life, only entered the path that leads to it, it seems to me that I know nothing, that I am incapable of formulating anything, that all experience is yet to begin. It is as though I were stripped of my entire past, of its errors as well as its conquests, as though all that has vanished and made room for a new-born child whose whole existence is yet to be lived, who has no Karma, no experience to learn from, but no error either which has to be set right. My head is empty of all knowledge and all certitude, but also of all vain thought. I feel that if I learn how to surrender without any resistance to this state, if I do not try to know or understand, if I consent to be completely like an ignorant and candid child, some new possibility will open before me. I know that I must now definitively give myself up and be like an absolutely blank page on which Thy thought, Thy will, O Lord, can be inscribed freely without danger of any deformation.

An immense gratitude rises from my heart, it seems to me that I have at last reached the threshold I sought so much.

Grant, O Lord, that I may be sufficiently pure, impersonal, animated with Thy divine love to be able to cross it definitively.

Oh, to belong to Thee without any darkness, without any restriction!

MCW Vol. 1, p.116-17

The Finding of the Soul

Professor S. Kandaswami

Edited transcript of a talk at Savitri Bhavan,

March 16 2005

Our subject today is *Savitri* – a poem which I have loved over everything else in the world.

The first full edition was printed in the year 1951 when I was in the 11th standard, and my brother purchased one of the first few copies. The book went to the Mother for her autograph. So this book bears my brother's name and the Mother's autograph and it is the precious life-blood of the Master's spirit, embalmed, – a treasure for life beyond life. I owe my interest in *Savitri* to this particular autographed copy. And secondly I must acknowledge that I was very lucky to be a student of a great Aurobindonian, Professor M.V. Seetaraman. At least three of his books are with me here, and others are out of print and I am not able to supply copies, although daily I am getting four or five letters asking me to give a copy of this or that book of his.

Professor Seetaraman wrote a series of articles on *Savitri* which have literally shaped and moulded my life – and not only my life, but the lives of my students: I have guided some 20 PhD dissertations and a dozen of them are on Sri Aurobindo. For example, just recently one of them has completed a UGC project entitled 'Sringara rasa in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*' – a very difficult, very delicate subject. In *Savitri* this rasa has been handled with the utmost delicacy and refinement, which Sri Aurobindo alone was capable of. I have yet to come across another poet, right from the days when poetry first started being composed up to the present date, who can write about love with such delicacy and with such refinement, and with such wonderful harmony.

Our subject for today is 'The Finding of the Soul': Book Seven, The Book of Yoga, Canto Five. A deep insight into this book of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* has been given by Professor M.V. Seetaraman in a series of articles published originally in the *Advent* and later

collected as a book entitled *Essays on Savitri : The Book of Yoga*.¹ Professor Seetaraman identified Savitri with the Divine Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. With relevant quotations he has established a correspondence and parallelism between the sadhana of Savitri as outlined in Sri Aurobindo's poem and that of the Divine Mother as outlined by her in her book *Prayers and Meditations*. That parallelism and correspondence is brilliantly demonstrated with remarkable insight by Professor Seetaraman.

Book Seven, Canto Five of *Savitri* is crucial to an understanding of the poem since it deals with the central experience of Savitri's finding of her soul. This is also a very crucial thing in our life : we have to find our soul – then only life begins. So if you want to discover your soul, go to school with Sri Aurobindo Book Seven, Canto Five of *Savitri*.

By the time we come to Canto Five, Savitri has already reached the overmental World-Mother's triple soul-forces and realised them as emanations from her secret soul. She realises that the Madonna of Pity and Love, the Madonna of Might, and the Madonna of Wisdom – the overmental goddesses – are in fact aspects of herself in her capacity as the World-Mother, the Mother of the entire universe.

Often Christian students have asked me – because *Savitri* was a prescribed book for study – 'Was she really the Mother of the Universe?' The students asked, and then I had to tell them 'Undoubtedly she was.' Sri Aurobindo in his book entitled *The Mother* speaks about the three levels at which the Mother functions: number one, the Transcendent, number two, the Universal, number three, the Individual.

This is very important. Transcendent means that it is all there beyond manifestation, and you have to go there, you have to go ascending there. Therefore if you are saying that you are a follower of Sri Aurobindo, if you are a practitioner of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana, when

¹ This book is currently in the course of preparation for republication by Savitri Bhavan, as part of our Study Aids to *Savitri* collection.

you are in trouble simply raise your hands like this in supplication and send a sincere request, shoot the problem up – that's all : the problems are solved, because the transcendental region has got the secret.

In the mind's silence the Transcendent acts p. 315

In the mind's silence – how to silence the mind? Read *Savitri* – the mind will fall silent automatically. If it does not – go on reading *Savitri*. Read it aloud – for example, this wonderful passage :

*Into the fallen human sphere they came,
Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,
Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,
Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,
Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways
And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth
And justify the light on Nature's face.* p. 344

Go on reading – the mind will fall silent automatically. Because every line in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is a mantra. And the mantra of soul-realisation is to be found in Book Seven, Canto Five. I am telling you, if you call yourself a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, a sadhak doing the sadhana of Sri Aurobindo, and you read *Savitri* seriously, you will get the keys by which you can open the doors of ultimate ecstasy; you will conquer fate, and troubles shall not come your way.

I was talking to you about the three levels of reality, the Transcendent, the Universal and the Individual. *Savitri* has come here to establish the Supramental Light and Consciousness and make it part and parcel of the Earth consciousness. And she realises that these various aspects

of the World-Mother are herself. They are faithful instruments of Savitri, the Supramental Ishwari-Shakti. So the World-Mother in her three forms – the triple soul-forces – together with Aswapati the Lord of Earthly Life, have been yearning for the Life Divine. He begs with an ardent aspiration and prayer, calls for the avatar of the supermind. The prayer is answered, and Savitri the Divine Mother comes to bring down the Supramental.

Each avatar chooses the most difficult, the most intense of the resistances and determinisms of this world and makes victory over these possible for all. Because the avatar, by definition, is the transcendental divine assuming a body and a name and accepting the limitations of the earth-consciousness, although not bound by them. Savitri as the purna-avatar chooses the most central of them, the fate of death, and forces Death to come and show his power in all its intensity. Savitri's spiritual sadhana enables her precisely to meet, confront and overcome Death, the unconscious force of negation.

As a part of her preparation she has already experienced an entry into her subliminal self. This is another important thing which we have to take seriously. Because between the psychic being in man, the immortal in mortals, and the surface being, there lies the subliminal being. That is not at all difficult to reach. A little inwardness will enable you to go into the subliminal. All that is needed is a little spiritual practice as advocated by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo; and the Ashram atmosphere is excellent, this Auroville atmosphere is excellent, to go into the inner countries, that is to enter into the subliminal self. Then the invisible becomes visible, the inaudible becomes audible, you will hear unheard melodies, you will enter into the management of the invisible things of life, which are a must for spiritual sadhana.

Savitri now steps into the dark night of the soul for a while. This enables her to get at the secret of ascending to the highest altitude of consciousness. She realises the wideness needed for the supramental ascent – the ascent to the supramental plane. Darkness gives place to Dawn, the prelude to the Day. The Day, symbolising the

superconscient, brings with it the Sun – *surya*, with whom wisdom and truth-consciousness are natural and inborn : *jatavedas*. She has the vision of her own home, *svam dama*, she glimpses the mystic cavern in the sacred hill of consciousness.

We have a psychic being. The Mother throughout her life went on telling her children ‘Discover your psychic being, bring the psychic to the front. The rest is done for you.’ This is the key.

Now this psychic being is only a delegated power here. Its original is in the transcendental world, for all of us. And all that is required on our part is to make the ascent similar to the one made by Savitri. All of you may remember a small booklet, *Sweet Mother*, and there you will find a talk by the Mother on the significance of birthdays. During your birthday your psychic being goes up to the transcendental world. The original of the psychic being is there. It goes and merges with that and reestablishes its identity. But if this takes place consciously then you will be developing a new kind of being called the gnostic being. That is, the being endowed with what the Greeks called ‘gnosis’, and what the Indians call *gnana*, *vignana sagitam* – integral and all-encompassing knowledge. You become a gnostic purusha. For that, the finding of the soul is a must. That is what Savitri has to do. She is very serious about that business, and how serious she is is demonstrated by this canto.

The cavern is an inmost sanctuary – *garbha griha* – where the Supermind is installed. The door to the Supermind is a plane of absolute immobility – of concentrated peace, total peace. If you want to know the kind of immobility of that experience, establish this in you, you must go to another poem of Sri Aurobindo called ‘The Word of Silence’

A bare impersonal hush is now my mind ... SABCL 5:141

If you go on reciting that poem you will find that immobility will descend on you, you will forget your name, I tell you! I forgot my name when I was practicing this. Then another line that is also a mantra :

Immobility – absolute immobility. So that kind of immobility is experienced in that region on the threshold of the Supermind.

On the stone pillars on either side, two golden serpents are curled there. They are the Mahakundalini, the great dynamic wisdom forces which correspond to the life-energy of a human being. People do not know what to do to recover their energy. Turn to the *mahakundalini* force above, the supramental power, the supramental might. But how will you get it? You simply link your vital being to the kundalini force which belongs to the supramental and which works through the seven chakras. They are sleeping now; actuate them, wake them up and see what happens! And Sri Aurobindo gives a graphic description in this very canto, how the serpent rises up hissing from centre to centre, activating each centre. Then see what miracles follow. And see also the kind of concentration you will have in life, and the amount of energy you will demand and command in life.

Savitri moves on :

*Through room and room, through door and rock-hewn door,
She felt herself made one with all she saw.
A sealed identity within her woke;
She knew herself the Beloved of the Supreme:
These Gods and Goddesses were he and she:* *p. 525*

I am reminded of that beautiful poem written by Sri Aurobindo :

*Because Thou art All-beauty and All-bliss,
My soul blind and enamoured yearns for Thee;
It bears Thy mystic touch in all that is
And thrills with the burden of that ecstasy.*

*Behind all eyes I meet Thy secret gaze
And in each voice I hear Thy magic tune:
Thy sweetness haunts my heart through Nature's ways;
Nowhere it beats now from Thy snare immune.*

It loves Thy body in all living things;

*Thy joy is there in every leaf and stone:
The moments bring Thee on their fiery wings;
Sight's endless artistry is Thou alone.*

*Time voyages with Thee upon its prow –
And all the future's passionate hope is Thou.* SABCL 5:154

One of the most beautiful poems of Sri Aurobindo. For those who want to adore the Mother, go on reading it and see what happens in your life !

Now, Savitri the individual embodiment of the Divine Mother meets her secret soul in her own home, the home of Adishakti, the Chit-Shakti, the Transcendent Mother of All in the upper and lower hemisphere, *paratha* and *aparatha*.

Sri Krishna in the Gita talks about *janma karma ca divyam*. Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri*, echoing these words, refers to the divine incarnation in her birth and work.

(When you read *Savitri* there are so many echoes : of the Upanishads, the Gita, Dante, Goethe, Tiruvalluvar, and many more. Some fifty days ago a student of mine presented a paper in Chennai, Madras University. The subject was 'Sri Aurobindo as a translator of the Thirukkural'. He has done only 10 verses but they are superb, wonderfully done, nobody can beat him. These are all things which deserve our attention.)

Savitri's mission as the *purna avatar* was an inner process of uniting the upper and the lower hemispheres in the ladder of existence, so that the hitherto unmanifest spiritual powers pour into the triple world of Matter, Life and Mind and bring about an enrichment of earthly life. The question 'What is the true identity of Savitri?' is posed by Sri Aurobindo in this canto. We gather from this canto that the inmost secret soul of Savitri is the Para-Prakriti of the upper hemisphere, of the world of chit and ananda, an immortal being of bliss and peace who can taste the rasa of the essential ananda manifesting itself in the divine lila – very important – in Time, Space and Circumstance. I just refer you to another poem by Sri Aurobindo called 'Lila' –

what a poem! And what a commentary by Professor Seetaraman!

In this canto Sri Aurobindo looks upon life in this world as a play, a divine comedy, a ball, a masquerade and a game. He says that God is *An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden.*¹

Sage Narada avers, in *The Book of Fate*:

*The eternal poet, universal Mind,
Has paged each line of his imperial act;
Invisible the giant actors tread
And man lives like some secret player's mask.
He knows not even what his lips shall speak.
For a mysterious Power compels his steps
And life is stronger than his trembling soul.*

p. 427

Our life is a drama, and the script for this drama has been composed by the divine artist. The various characters in this drama represent the Divine in various disguises and all of us here are the Divine who has come in various costumes. That is a simple explanation of this line. A drama is going on and it is very significant, very important, to follow each and every movement there, and the sequence and the consequence of events have to be followed. The whole game is enormously interesting.

So the entire play is directed by the Divine. The most wonderful thing is that the divine dramatist is in no special hurry to speed up the events of the drama. Time and the hours move so silently that their passage is not felt by the spectators with the shock of violence. Each human actor is subject to the mutations of Time and the dualities of pain and pleasure. However, behind the dualities of Nature, Prakriti, there lies first the presence of the subliminal being and then the Psychic Being, which is a replica of the *jivatman* in the transcendental world. As I told you, the original is there, only the duplicate has come here. This has to go and merge with that – then only life begins. This is the divinity that sits in each man, ‘*The power unnamable*’, as one of the characters puts it in Sri Aurobindo’s tragedy *Rodogune*. The *jivatman* above in the upper hemisphere is secretly supporting

¹ *Thoughts and Glimpses* CWSA 13 : 202

the human actor, all of us; and slowly infusing more and more spiritual qualities into the Psychic and through this into the other members, like the mind, the life-force, and the body.

*Yet is the unwounded and immortal self
Supporting the actor in the human scene.
Through this she sends us her glory and her powers,
Pushes to wisdom's heights, through misery's gulfs;
She gives us strength to do our daily task
And sympathy that partakes of others' grief* p. 527

The psychic being is a speciality of the earth, something very special, and it should be realised at any cost at the earliest – because then only life begins. Till then we are all only dead fellows. The psychic being is a tiny being, ‘A being no bigger than the thumb of man’ – *ankustamatra purusha*, as the Upanishad puts it, deep-seated in the cavernous depths of man’s being. This is what Sri Aurobindo says:

*As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,
She puts forth a small portion of herself,
A being no bigger than the thumb of man
Into a hidden region of the heart
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds
And labour mid the labour of the stars.
This in us laughs and weeps, suffers the stroke,
Exults in victory, struggles for the crown;
Identified with the mind and body and life,*

(The triple world of Matter.)

*It takes on itself their anguish and defeat,
Bleeds with Fate's whips and hangs upon the cross,*

The psychic being in an individual is a tiny flame. It grows into Fire and then bursts into a huge conflagration. It grows in stature – to quote Professor Seetaraman – progressively, with every ascent towards and descent from the higher consciousness, till at last that tiny creature becomes a majestic King.

*In this human portion of divinity
She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time
To uplift from light to light, from power to power,
Till on a heavenly peak it stands, a king.* p. 527

Sri Aurobindo graphically describes how ‘*in a chamber of Flame and Light*’ Savitri’s psychic being contacts her transcendent spiritual part.

*Then with a magic transformation’s speed
They rushed into each other and grew one.*

By this finding of her soul, Savitri unites the Supreme Mother of the world of chit-tapas with the triple world of mind, life-force and matter. Savitri has become a gnostic being by cultivating the gnostic purusha, which would now be reflected in the gnostic prakriti gradually. And when the gnostic prakriti is perfected, then there shall be no more Death in the world, because each individual will become an *alaya*, a shrine. The Upanishad says *deho devalaya protahar*. This is how Plato, centuries ago, described the human body : as a shrine, as a temple. So each human being, each man here, is a god in the making. But are we aware of it? What are we doing to wake up the god within us? And each woman here is a goddess in the making. That is the Aurobindonian message; and that is the message given by Book Seven, Canto Five of *Savitri*. This is how Savitri initiates a new movement towards the creation of a perfect *alaya*. When there are some human beings who have discovered their gnostic being and tried to reflect it in the outermost faculties then what Sri Aurobindo calls the Gnostic Community will get established.

Before closing, I would like to read out a passage from *Savitri* that is not to be found in Book Seven Canto Five, but in Book Two, Canto Five, on page 169. There Sri Aurobindo has given the mantra for discovering the psychic being. Giving a lecture on the Finding of the Soul, if I don’t quote this passage my talk would be incomplete.

*A mighty Supernature waits on Time.
The world is other than we now think and see,*

*Our lives a deeper mystery than we have dreamed;
Our minds are starters in the race to God,
Our souls deputed selves of the Supreme.
Across the cosmic field through narrow lanes
Asking a scanty dole from Fortune's hands
And garbed in beggar's robes there walks the One.
Even in the theatre of these small lives
Behind the act a secret sweetness breathes,
An urge of miniature divinity.
A mystic passion from the wells of God
Flows through the guarded spaces of the soul;
A force that helps supports the suffering earth,
An unseen nearness and a hidden joy.
There are muffled throbs of laughter's undertones,
The murmur of an occult happiness,
An exultation in the depths of sleep,
A heart of bliss within a world of pain.*

Now follows the mantra:

*An Infant nursed on Nature's covert breast,
An Infant playing in the magic woods,
Fluting to rapture by the spirit's streams,
Awaits the hour when we shall turn to his call.*

These four lines are a mantra. Go on repeating them and one fine morning you will wake and find that your psychic being has been realised.

*In this investiture of fleshly life
A soul that is a spark of God survives
And sometimes it breaks through the sordid screen
And kindles a fire that makes us half-divine. p. 169*

Thank you.

The Mighty Mother

*Some words of Sri Aurobindo,
A Selection of Passages from the Mother's Agenda,
and some lines from Savitri*

Sri Aurobindo

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

In a letter of 1936

SABCL 29 : 729

From Mother's Agenda¹:

January 22, 1961

Savitri is really a condensation, a concentration of the universal Mother – the eternal universal Mother, Mother of all universes from all eternity – in an earthly personality for the Earth's salvation. And Satyavan is the soul of the Earth, the Earth's *jiva*. So when the Lord says, ‘he whom you love and whom you have chosen,’ it means the earth.

July 28, 1961

The earth is a representative and symbolic world, a kind of crystallization and concentration of the evolutionary labour, giving it a more concrete reality. It has to be taken like this: the history of the earth is a symbolic history. And it is on earth that this Descent takes place (it's not the history of the universal but of the terrestrial creation); the Descent occurs in the individual TERRESTRIAL being, in the individual terrestrial atmosphere.

Let's take *Savitri*, which is very explicit on this: the universal Mother is universally present and at work in the universe, but the earth is

¹ Passages quoted with acknowledgements to Institut de Recherches Evolutives, Paris, and Mira Aditi Centre, Mysore.

where concrete form is given to all the work to be done to bring evolution to its perfection, its goal. Well, at first there's a sort of emanation representative of the universal Mother, which is always on earth to help it prepare itself; then, when the preparation is complete, the universal Mother herself will descend upon earth to finish her work. And this She does with Satyavan – Satyavan is the soul of the earth. She lives in close union with the soul of the earth and together they do the work; She has chosen the soul of the earth for her work, saying, 'HERE is where I will do my work.' Elsewhere (*Mother indicates regions of higher Consciousness*), it's enough just to BE and things simply ARE. Here on earth you have to work.

There are clearly universal repercussions and effects, of course, but the thing is WORKED OUT here, the place of work is HERE. So instead of living beatifically in Her universal state and beyond, in the extra-universal eternity outside of time, She says, 'No, I am going to do my work HERE, I choose to work HERE.' The Supreme then tells her, 'What you have expressed is My Will.' 'I want to work HERE, and when all is ready, when the earth is ready, when humanity is ready (even if no one is aware of it), when the Great Moment comes, well ... I will descend to finish my work.' That's the story.

June 27, 1962

*(Mother speaks of her vision of a tall white
being armed with a kind of halberd.)*

What was standing there was a manifestation of one of my states of being, a part of my vital being, or rather one of my innumerable vital beings – because I have quite a few! And this one is particularly interested in things on earth.

A projection of yours – an emanation?

I said one day that in the history of earth, wherever there was a possibility for the Consciousness to manifest, I was there¹; this is a fact. It's like the story of *Savitri*: always there, always there, always

¹ "Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of the Consciousness, I was there." March 14, 1952.

there, in this one, that one - at certain times there were four emanations simultaneously! ...

Afterwards I told Sri Aurobindo about it, and he explained to me that it was quite natural. And indeed, it is quite natural: with the present incarnation of the Mahashakti (as he described it in *Savitri*), whatever is more or less bound up with Her wants to take part, that's quite natural. And it's particularly true for the vital: there has always been a preoccupation with organizing, centralizing, developing and unifying the vital forces, and controlling them. So there's a considerable number of vital beings, each with its own particular ability, who have played their role in history and now return.

But this one [*the tall white Being*] is not of human origin; it was not formed in a human life: it is a being that had already incarnated, and is one of those who presided over the formation of this present being [*Mother*]. But, as I said, I saw it: it was sexless, neither male nor female, and as intrepid as the vital can be, with a calm but absolute power... Ah, I found a very good description of it in one of Sri Aurobindo's plays, when he speaks of the goddess Athena (I think it's in *Perseus*, but I am not sure); she has that kind of ... it's an almighty calm, and with such authority! Yes, it's in *Perseus* – when she appears to the Sea-God and forces him to retreat to his own domain. There's a description there that fits this Being quite well.¹

Besides, all the Greek gods are various aspects of a single thing: you see it this way, that way, that way, this way (*turning her hand, Mother seems to show several facets of a single prism*)... But it's simply one and the same thing. They are different aspects of one self-existent thing. These beings have merely taken on different aspects depending on the country or the culture.

Sri Aurobindo's description fits this Being exactly. And a few days ago, this same Being came, without my calling it or thinking about it

¹ *A whiteness and a strength is in the skies...
Virgin formidable In beauty, disturber of the ancient world! ...
How art thou white and beautiful and calm,
Yet clothed in tumult! Heaven above thee shakes
Wounded with lightnings, goddess, and the sea
Flees from thy dreadful tranquil feet.* (Perseus the Deliverer, SABCL 6:6)

or wishing it to come. And it seemed to be saying it was time for it to intervene. So I let it!

During the whole time Sri Aurobindo was here, the four entities he speaks of, the four Aspects of the Mother¹, were always present. And I was constantly obliged to tell one or the other of them, “Now keep calm, now, now, calm down” – they were always inclined to intervene! Did I ever tell you? Last time I went down for the pujas (was it last year or the year before? I remember nothing any more, you know: it all gets swept away, brrt!).... Yes, it was the year before last, in '60, after that anniversary². Durga used to come every year, two or three days before the Durga puja. I was walking as usual and she came; that was when she made her surrender to the Supreme.... Those divinities don't have the sense of surrender. Divinities such as Durga and the Greek gods (although the Greek gods are a bit dated now; but the gods of India are still very much alive!). Well, they are embodiments – what you might almost call localizations – of something eternal, but they lack the sense of surrender to the Supreme. And while I was walking, Durga was there – really, it was beautiful! Durga, with that awesome power of hers, forever bringing the adverse forces to heel – and she surrendered to the Supreme, to the point of no longer even recognizing the adverse forces: ALL is the Supreme. It was like a widening of her consciousness.

Some interesting things have been happening in that world [*since the supramental descent - Satprem*].... How can I explain? Those beings have an independence, an absolute freedom of movement (although at the same time, they are all a single Being), but they had the true sense of perfect Unity only with the supreme Consciousness. And now with this present intervention [*Mother's*], with this incarnation and the establishment of the Consciousness here, like this (*Mother makes a fist in a gesture of immutable solidity*), in such an absolute way (I mean there are no fluctuations) ... HERE, on earth, in the terrestrial atmosphere, this incarnation has a radiating action throughout all those worlds, all those universes, all those Entities.

¹ In *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

² First anniversary of the supramental descent: February 29, 1960.

And it results in small events,¹ incidents scaled to the size of the earth – which in themselves are quite interesting.

June 30, 1962

(Mother refers to a passage from the conversation of June 27 in which she said that her present incarnation on earth didn't have a merely terrestrial effect but an effect on all the other worlds as well - and particularly on the gods.)

None of those beings, those gods and deities of various pantheons, have the same rapport with the Supreme that man has; for man has a psychic being, in other words, the Supreme's presence within him. These gods are emanations – independent emanations – created for a special purpose and a particular action which they fulfill SPONTANEOUSLY; they do it not with a sense of constant surrender to the Divine but simply because that's what they are, and why they are, and all they know is what they are. They don't have the conscious link with the Supreme that man has – man carries the Supreme within himself. That makes a considerable difference.

But with this present incarnation of the Mahashakti.... She is the Supreme's first manifestation, creation's first stride, and it was She who first gave form to all those beings. Now, since her incarnation in the physical world, and through the position She has taken here in relation to the Supreme by incarnating in a human body, all the other worlds have been influenced, and influenced in an extremely interesting way.²

¹ Like the one Mother just mentioned: Durga's surrender. – Satprem.

² Some days later, Satprem again brought up the above passage, asking whether the Mother hadn't been active on earth since the beginning of time and not merely "with this present incarnation of the Mahashakti." She replied : "It was always through EMANATIONS, while now it's as Sri Aurobindo writes in *Savitri* – the Supreme tells Savitri that a day will come when the earth is ready and "The Mighty Mother shall take birth . . ." [*Savitri* Book Eleven, line 1216, p.705] But Savitri was already on earth – she was an emanation."

So they were all emanations?

They were all emanations, right from the beginning. So we have to say: 'With the PRESENT incarnation.'

May 11, 1963

Mahalakshmi is the Divine Mother's aspect of love, the perfection of manifested love, which must come before this supreme Love (which is beyond the Manifestation and the Nonmanifestation) can be expressed – the supreme Love referred to in *Savitri* when the Supreme sends Savitri to the earth:

For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!

Book Eleven, line 1114, p.702

It's to prepare the earth to receive the Supreme's manifestation, the manifestation of His Victory.

January 12, 1961

I am going downstairs on the 21st, for Saraswati Puja.¹ They have prepared a folder with a long quotation from *Savitri* and five photos of my face taken from five different angles.

The title of the folder is the line from *Savitri* that gave me the most overpowering experience of the entire book (because, as I told you, as I read, I would LIVE the experiences – reading brought, instantly, a living experience). And when I came to this particular line .. I was as if suddenly swept up and engulfed in ... ('the' is wrong, 'an' is wrong – it's neither one nor the other, it's something else) ... eternal Truth. Everything was abolished except this:

*For ever love, O beautiful slave of God*²

That alone existed.

March 26, 1966

I have tried many things, a great many, I have looked a great deal, and I see only one that's absolute – only one that's absolute and can bring the absolute result, it's this (*gesture turned Upward*): the

¹ Saraswati represents the universal Mother's aspect of Knowledge and artistic creativity. On this occasion, Mother would go down to the Meditation Hall and the disciples would silently pass in front of her to receive a message. This year they would receive a folder containing five photographs of Mother.

² *Savitri*, Book XI, line 1114, p. 702

complete annulment of all that, leaving it all, “To You, Lord – You, You, to You.” And it isn’t a being with a form, that’s not it; it isn’t a formless force, it’s ... It has nothing to do with thought, only with this: the contact. And the contact, an unmistakable contact, which nothing can imitate – nothing, nothing at all has the power to imitate it. And for every difficulty, every time, whatever it is, simply this: “Everything to You, Lord. Everything for You, to You. You alone can do it, You, You alone, You alone. You alone are the Truth; You alone are the Power.” And those words are nothing, they are only the very clumsy expression of something ... a stupendous Power.

It’s only the incapacity, the clumsiness, the lack of faith we mix into it that takes away His power. The minute we are truly pure, that is, under His influence alone, there are no limits, no limits – nothing, nothing, there is nothing, no law of Nature that can resist, nothing, nothing.

Only, the whole thing is that the time must have come, there must be only That left – all the rest spoils, whatever it is, even the highest, purest, noblest, most beautiful and marvellous things: all that spoils. Only That.

(*Mother opens “Savitri”:*)

There! Don’t you think it’s marvellous!

But when the hour of the Divine draws near ... ¹

(*Mother repeats :*)

But when the hour of the Divine draws near ...

Lines from Savitri

The context of these marvellous lines can be seen in the following selection from Book Eleven of *Savitri* : the passages in **bold** have been translated by the Mother into French.

¹ *But when the hour of the Divine draws near,
The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time
And God be born into the human clay ...*

(Book Eleven, lines 1215-17, p.705)

*“Descend to life with him thy heart desires.
O Satyavan, O luminous Savitri,
I sent you forth of old beneath the stars,
A dual power of God in an ignorant world,
In a hedged creation shut from limitless self,
Bringing down God to the insentient globe,
Lifting earth-beings to immortality. . . .*

*He is my soul that climbs from nescient Night
Through life and mind and supernature’s Vast
To the supernal light of Timelessness
And my eternity hid in moving Time
And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space. . . .*

*He is my soul that gropes out of the beast
To reach humanity’s heights of lucent thought
And the vicinity of Truth’s sublime.
He is the godhead growing in human lives
And in the body of earth-being’s forms:
He is the soul of man climbing to God
In Nature’s surge out of earth’s ignorance.
**O Savitri, thou art my spirit’s Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word,
The face of Truth upon the roads of Time
Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God.***

*While the dim light from the veiled Spirit’s peak
Falls upon Matter’s stark unconscious sleep
As if a pale moonbeam on a dense glade,
And Mind in a half-light moves amid half-truths
And the human heart knows only human love
And life is a stumbling and imperfect force
And the body counts out its precarious days,
You shall be born into man’s dubious hours
In forms that hide the soul’s divinity
And show through veils of the earth’s doubting air
My glory breaking as through clouds a sun,*

*Or burning like a rare and inward fire,
And with my nameless influence fill men's lives. . . .*

*But more there is concealed in God's Beyond
That shall one day reveal its hidden face. . . .*

Mind is not all his tireless climb can reach, . . .

*Abandoning the dubious middle Way,
A few shall glimpse the miraculous Origin
And some shall feel in you the secret Force
And they shall turn to meet a nameless tread,
Adventurers into a mightier Day.*

*Ascending out of the limiting breadths of mind,
They shall discover the world's huge design
And step into the Truth, the Right, the Vast.*

*You shall reveal to them the hidden eternities,
The breath of infinitudes not yet revealed,
Some rapture of the bliss that made the world,
Some rush of the force of God's omnipotence,
Some beam of the omniscient Mystery.*

*But when the hour of the Divine draws near
The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time
And God be born into the human clay
In forms made ready by your human lives.
Then shall the Truth supreme be given to men: . . .*

*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, . . .*

pp. 702-05

News of Savitri Bhavan

February – November 2005

1 : Regular Activities

We would like to remind our readers that if ever they are in the Pondicherry – Auroville area they are most welcome to join any of the activities on our regular weekly programme. Currently these are as follows :

Sunday – Morning	10.30–12	<i>Savitri Study Circle</i>
Evening	5–6.30	<i>The Ideal of Human Unity,</i> led by Kittu Reddy
Monday and Tuesday	4–5pm	Cultivating Concentration, led by Jai Singh
Tuesday	6.30pm	OM Choir: tuning from within
Wednesday	4–5pm	The Mother’s <i>Notes on the Way</i> (recorded talks)
Thursday	4–5pm	The English of <i>Savitri</i> , led by Shraddhavan
Friday	5–6.30pm	<i>The Synthesis of Yoga</i> , led by Sraddhalu
Every morning	7.30-8.00	Group meditation in the New Hall.

The Hall is open for silent concentration throughout the day (8am – 6pm) The Office and Reading Room are open 9-12 and 2-5 daily except Sundays

The *Savitri Study Circle* on Sunday mornings is the core activity, from which all the others have developed. It continues uninterrupted since it was started on November 24th, 1994. We have not missed a single Sunday morning since then, and are now going through *Savitri* for the fifth time. The article on the Sphinx and related allusions in

this issue is one example of the kind of research that is now coming out of these sessions.

The Wednesday programme of recorded talks of the Mother in French has been continuing for several years. It was started way back in 1998, with the recordings of her comments on twelve of Sri Aurobindo's aphorisms. Then we heard each of her "Playground Talks" to the young people of the Ashram, published in her Collected Works as *Questions and Answers*. After hearing the commentaries on the aphorisms again, we have now started playing recordings of her *Notes on the Way* – extracts from her *Agenda* which she selected to be published in the Ashram's *Bulletin* from 1964 to 1973. Since the talks are in French, we prepare and supply leaflets containing the texts in both French and English.

2 : Calendar of Special Events

February : 11th – 28th "Mother – a Smile" : an exhibition of rare photographs of the Mother, along with some of her personal belongings and and interesting texts, arranged by Loretta. This rich and complex exhibition attracted hundreds of visitors and was much appreciated for its beauty and concentrated atmosphere.

March : 16th Visit of Professor S. Kandaswami and party. The Professor gave a talk entitled "*Savitri* : The Finding of the Soul" - see pages 28 - 38 of this issue.

May : Construction work started on Phase 3 – a first module of the Core Building of the Savitri Bhavan complex.

June and July : Exhibition in the New Hall of reproductions of Huta's "Meditations on Savitri" paintings from Book Two, Cantos One to Five

August : Three special events around Sri Aurobindo's 133rd birthday:

On the 14th in the morning, Jhumur Bhattacharya gave a reading and comments on the first section of Book Seven Canto Five of *Savitri*, "The Finding of the Soul" – see pages 11 - 26 of this issue.

The same day in the evening we were able to give a preview of a new film version of the "Meditations on Savitri" paintings for Book One Canto One. This work is being done at Huta's request by an Italian film-maker who has recently joined Auroville, who has been

given the name of Manohar by Champaklalji's brother Bansidhar shortly before he passed away in October. The film is based on new digital photographs taken this summer by another Italian professional, Giorgio Molinari, who has also joined Auroville recently. In due time the films will be released on DVD by the Havyavahana Trust. Those who saw the first version were deeply moved by the beauty of the paintings and their presentation.

On August 16th our friend Mohan Mistry from the Ashram joined us with his group to present a programme of devotional songs in honour of Sri Aurobindo.



Mohan Mistry and party at Savitri Bhavan on August 14, 2005

On August 21st Huta paid a long-awaited visit with some of her family members. It was the first time she had seen the New Hall. She saw Manohar's film and made some suggestions for improvements, inspected the room where all the materials are kept which she has entrusted to our care, and saw the plans for further construction. She offered to take up retouching and varnishing of the "Meditations on Savitri" paintings, so that they will be in perfect condition before they go on permanent display. We are most grateful to her for taking up this delicate work, despite her health problems. Friends in Holland, with the assistance of Auroville International Netherlands, have supplied the special varnish needed for the work.



Huta at Savitri Bhavan on August 21, 2005

November : This month there are several events :

5th : “Fun and Light” : an offering of North Indian classical music played by Dutch and Indian Aurovilians.

10th : Two videos on the Mother : “Glimpses of Her Life” and “Four Aspects of the Mother”.

16th : “Vedic Symbolism in Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*” a talk by by Dr. R.L. Kashyap, Director of the Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastry Institute of Vedic Culture, Bangalore,

17th : The Mother’s Chair, used by her whenever she visited Huta, will be kept in the Hall, which will be open for concentration from 8am to 6pm. In the course of the day recordings of the Mother’s readings from *Savitri* and *The Mother* will be played, as well as some of her organ music.

19th : “The Problem of Pain” : a talk on Book Six, Canto Two of *Savitri* by Dr. Alok Pandey, professional psychotherapist and noted Aurobindonian speaker.

3 : Research Projects

Two research projects which we have been pursuing over the past couple of years came to a certain stage of fruition over the summer.

***Savitri* Bibliography**

With the help of a young visitor from Gujarat, Vishven Soneji, who took up the role of research assistant, it was possible to bring our bibliographical material on *Savitri* further up to date. In response to the list of translations published in our last issue, we received a letter from Dr. S.C. Tyagi, editor of *Aditi*, an Aurobindonian journal in Hindi. Dr. Tyagi pointed out to us the existence of a third Hindi translation, by Rajpal Karun. So far we have not been able to locate a copy of this work, and are not yet able to give publication details. Dr. Tyagi also kindly sent us two issues of *Aditi* which contain a list, compiled by him, of theses on aspects of Sri Aurobindo's work submitted to Indian universities. This list was extremely helpful to us, and enabled us to add a list of theses and dissertations to the Bibliography. Sri A.V. Saxena also assisted us by supplying a list of *Savitri* studies he had consulted in the library of Sri Aurobindo Nivas in Vadodara. Vishven also did sterling work in tracing articles on *Savitri* in a wide range of journals, complementing the existing list prepared earlier by our staff. So far our bibliography lists only items in English. We hope to be able to make it available on request early in 2006.

***Savitri* references in Mother's Agenda**

This has been another fascinating research project, which has also come to a certain level of completion this summer. It has been possible to prepare several indexes for different purposes : by Agenda volume, by *Savitri* reference, by topic, and a full annotated index of all the references. We have also prepared a complete collation of all the relevant passages, not intended for publication but for reference in our Reading Room. The topic-wise index has enabled us to group together passages on related themes. In earlier issues of *Invocation* we have presented most of the references to the Mother's translation work on *Savitri*. In this issue too we are giving a few extracts from the *Agenda*, around the topic of "The Mighty Mother" in *Savitri*.

4 : New Publications and Study Aids

In August, the fourth issue of our Tamil journal *Prarthana* appeared. This is kindly edited for us by Mrs. Sundaravalli Saimohan of Paramati Velur near Erode. The journal is being highly appreciated by the growing number of *Savitri*-lovers in the State. Apart from individuals, we are happy to be in touch with a number of centres which are taking up regular *Savitri* reading.

Since August too we are able to make available on request the following materials on CD :

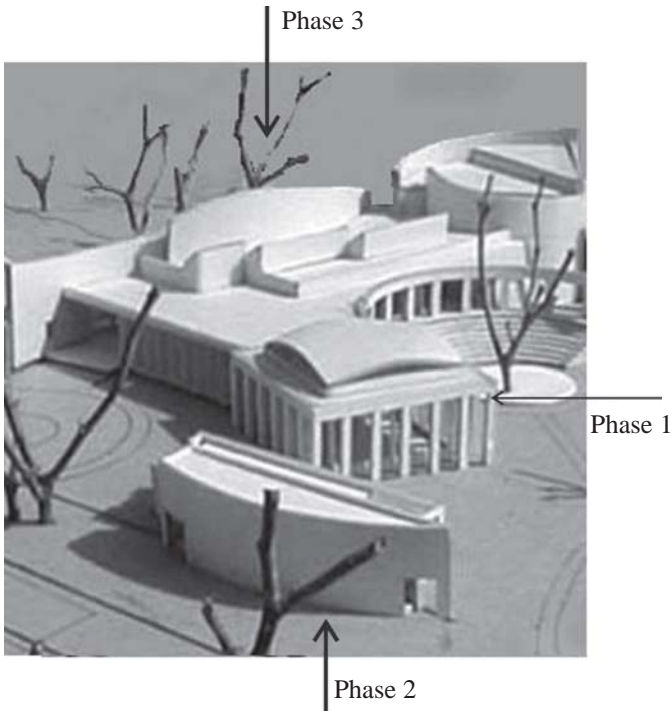
- *Invocation* issues 1 – 23, with an index : pdf files on one CD
- Shradhdhavan's reading of the whole of *Savitri* : MP3 files on 2 CDs.

5 : Construction

In May 2005 we were able to make a start on our Phase 3 construction – a first module of the future Core Building. This is being funded by a grant from the Government of India, HRD Ministry, under the SAIER Development Scheme. It is hoped that this section will be completed in the Spring of 2006.



Phase 3 Construction, August 2005



6 : Equipment

Our architect has been developing a design of display cases for the exhibition of Huta's paintings in the New Hall. In response to the appeal in our last issue, we received very generous support from our well-wishers for this project. There is obviously a great goodwill and wish that the Mother's intentions for the "Meditations on Savitri" paintings should be fulfilled as soon as possible. We have resolved to devote all the time and effort necessary to provide the best possible conditions for these treasures. Considering the difficulties of protecting the precious paintings under tropical conditions, it has been decided to use closed cases with integrated lighting, which will provide security as well as visibility. Our architect Helmut was in Europe during the summer and visited a lot of galleries and museums to gain an idea of what could be suitably adapted for our purpose. Now his team has come up with a design, and a first prototype is in preparation. Meanwhile, as mentioned above, Huta has very kindly offered to retouch and revarnish the paintings, so that they are in perfect condition before they go on display.

Apologies Due

In issue no. 23 (February 2005) we published a list of *Savitri* translations known to us. By an unfortunate editorial oversight, two important items were omitted from the list : the Oriya translation by Benod Bihari Das, and the Hindi translation by Mrs. Sushma Gupta. This is especially regretted since both translators had made a point of donating copies of their works to our collection. Our sincere apologies go to both of them for this lapse. The details of these books are as follows :

Savitri : a legend and a symbol, Oriya translation by Benod Bihari Das, published by Matri Bhavan, Kuttack, 1999

Savitri : pouranika gathaka ka pratika-satya, Hindi translation by Sushma Gupta, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1999

New *Savitri* materials in the Reading Room

Shortly after the appearance of our February issue, we received a visit from our friend Dr. Jagdish Vyas of New Jersey U.S.A. He has kindly gifted us the three volumes of his work in Gujarati, *Savitri : a Study*, handsomely published in Ahmedabad.

When Professor Kandaswami visited us in March he donated several copies of a new Tamil translation of Book Five of *Savitri*, made by one of his students, Mrs. Radha Sundaram. This translation has been highly appreciated by Tamil readers:

We were also made aware that Sri Kapali Sastry had translated part of *Savitri* into Sanskrit. It is included in his collected works published in twelve volumes by Deepti Publications Pondicherry in 1990, and we were able to add a copy of this translation to our collection.

Some allusions to Classical Mythology in Savitri

*Based on research by Dr. Sumeet Kumar,
a regular member of our Study Circle*

Sphinx

At present our *Savitri* Study Circle is reading in Book Two, The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds. A few weeks ago, while going through Canto Six, The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life, we came across this line:

A Sphinx whose eyes look up to a hidden Sun. p.191

For most of us perhaps the most familiar image of the Sphinx is that lion-like figure with a human head in front of the Great Pyramid in Egypt. But the word ‘sphinx’ is a Greek one, and the original sphinx is a figure in classical Greek mythology. The Penguin Dictionary of Classical Mythology tells us that the sphinx is

A monster with the face of a woman, the chest and feet of a lion and wings like a bird of prey. The Sphinx was particularly associated with the myth of Oedipus and the Theban cycle. ... The Sphinx lived in a mountain west of Thebes, where it ravaged the countryside, devouring mortals who passed by. It would ask riddles of passers-by and eat those who could not answer them. ... Oedipus eventually solved the riddles and in despair the monster threw itself from the top of a rock and was killed.¹

How is it that in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo mentions this ‘monster’ no less than four times?

¹ Grimal, *The Penguin Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, London, Penguin, 1991



Oedipus and the Sphinx (from a Greek vase painting)

*Always he met a veiled and seeking Force,
An exiled goddess building mimic heavens,
A Sphinx whose eyes look up to a hidden Sun.* p.191

Book 2, Canto 6 : The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life

*The wings that fold around created Space,
The sun-eyed Guardians and the golden Sphinx
And the tiered planes and the immutable Lords.* p.300

Book 2, Canto 15: The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge

*On his long way through Time and Circumstance
The grey-hued riddling nether shadow-Sphinx,
Her dreadful paws upon the swallowing sands,
Awaits him armed with the soul-slaying word:* p.336

Book 3, Canto 4: The Vision and the Boon

*He too must grapple with the riddling Sphinx
And plunge into her long obscurity.* p.449

Book 6, Canto 2 (the section that begins

“Hard is the world-redeemer’s heavy task...”)

Moreover this mysterious creature comes up numerous times in Sri Aurobindo’s other writings, as well as in those of the Mother. For example, the Mother writes in one of her prayers :

*“O Consciousness, immobile and serene, Thou watchest at
the confines of the world like a sphinx of eternity. And yet*

to some Thou confidest Thy secret. These can become Thy sovereign will which chooses without preference, executes without desire.”

CWM 1:272

(The Mother, Prayers and Meditations, 10 November 1914)

The Mother later commented on this passage :

This immobile Consciousness is the “Mother of Dreams”, the sphinx of eternity who keeps vigil on the confines of the world like an enigma to be solved. This enigma is the problem of our life, the very *raison d’être* of the universe. The problem of our life is to realise the Divine or rather to become once again aware of the Divine who is the Universe, the origin, cause and goal of life.

Those who find the secret of the sphinx of eternity become that active and creative Power.

CWM 4:1

Questions and Answers 21.12.1950

Here the Mother equates the Sphinx with the “Mother of Dreams”. Sri Aurobindo has written a poem with this title. A few days later the The Mother was asked,

“What does “Mother of Dreams” mean ?

When he speaks of the “immobile and serene Consciousness”, Sri Aurobindo often uses poetic terms which are very suggestive. He has used the term “Mother of Dreams” because he has put himself in the place of one who is below, one who sees, perceives something mysterious, altogether wonderful, inaccessible and almost incomprehensible; but if you look from another point of view, you may say that it is the creative Consciousness, the Origin of the universe, the universal Mother, the creative Power, and so on.

CWM 4:10

Questions and Answers 25.12.1950

The four references from *Savitri* clearly show that this mysterious female power takes on different aspects on different levels of consciousness. This is also hinted at by its composite appearance : the lion part connects it with one of the fiercest predators walking

the earth, its wings and claws connect it with the mighty eagle that soars high in the heavens and can look straight at the sun with its powerful eyes, while the human face connects it with our own humanity – which even seems to hold the answer to the riddle of existence which she poses.

Manoj Das had this to say about the story of the Sphinx when he talked to us at Savitri Bhavan in March 2000 about the mythic background of *Savitri* :

Then I am sure you all know the legend of the Sphinx, one of the most significant of Greek myths. You see, many of mankind's early myths and legends are lost to us. Most of the Hebrew ones, apart from those preserved in the Old Testament, are lost. But between these two great treasuries of myths, the Indian and the Greek, we sometimes come across wonderful meeting points. One wonders if some of the followers of the rishis had migrated there. Now the Sphinx episode is such a magnificent myth! Along the lonely road, on the hilltop, lives a strange creature, with a woman's face, the body of a lion, the paws of a dog and a serpent for its tail. And whoever happens to pass by is stopped by this Sphinx and asked a question: "What is the creature who walks in the morning on four legs, as the day grows on two legs and in the evening on three legs?" You must answer it. If you cannot answer it by sundown, you will lose your life. However wise a traveller may be, however he may scratch his head, he will never come across the answer to the question: "What is the creature who walks in the morning on four legs, as the day grows on two legs and in the evening on three legs?" And by sundown, whoever has failed to answer – and everybody failed – the Sphinx pounces on the helpless traveller and tears him asunder. But one day Oedipus happens to be passing by, and when this question is put to him, he instantly replies, "I am the answer." The Sphinx is taken aback. "What do you mean, you are the answer?" "I, Man, is the answer. Man in his infancy crawls on all fours, two hands and two legs, so in the morning he walks on four legs; as the day of his life

grows he walks on two legs as an adult; in the evening of his life he takes recourse to a stick, a third leg; so in the evening he walks on three legs. So I myself am the answer.” The moment he has answered, the Sphinx jumps down to its own death.

This is an expression of the Upanishadic truth, that the day a person knows his true self, death dies for him. Death is an illusion, and as Sri Aurobindo says, “Death is a question Nature puts continually to Life, and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself.” So the day a human being has found him or herself, death dies for him. The illusoriness of death is indicated by the very composition of the Sphinx: it is not a reality, it is a conglomeration of objects that cannot possibly be put together. And just like an illusion death also disappears. That is the essence of the Upanishadic truth embedded in the graeco-roman myth of the Sphinx.

Invocation 8:28-29

The Mother selected a painting ‘Oedipus and the Sphinx’ by Gustave Moreau to be reproduced on the Gymnastics Competition Award Card of the Ashram’s Physical Education Department, and gave this message about it :

The Riddle of the World

If you can solve it, you will be immortal, but if you fail you will perish.

MCW 12:289

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo has explained :

The Sphinx is a symbol of the eternal quest that can only be answered by the secret knowledge.

Letters on Yoga

SABCL 23:19

Gates of horn and ivory

A little further on in the same canto, we came across this passage :

*This greater life wavers twixt earth and sky.
A poignant paradox pursues her dreams:
Her hooded energy moves an ignorant world*

*To look for a joy her own strong clasp puts off:
In her embrace it cannot turn to its source.
Immense her power, endless her act's vast drive,
Astray is its significance and lost.*

...

*For all the depth and beauty of her work
A wisdom lacks that sets the spirit free.
An old and faded charm had now her face
And palled for him her quick and curious lore;
His wide soul asked a deeper joy than hers.
Out of her daedal lines he sought escape;
But neither gate of horn nor ivory
He found nor postern of spiritual sight,
There was no issue from that dreamlike space. p.196*

An internet search revealed that here is a reference to some lines of Virgil, who writes in his *Aeneid* :

*Sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur
Cornea, qua veris facilis datus exitus umbris,
Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,
Sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes.*

Virgil, *Aeneid* 6:893

There are two gates of Sleep, one of which is said to be made of horn, and by it easy egress is given to true shades (dreams); the other is shining, fashioned of gleaming white ivory, but the Manes send deceptive visions that way into the light.

The erudite Elizabethan writer, Sir Thomas Browne, uses the phrase “*dreams through the gate of ivory*” to imply delusions, nonsensical notions. But, just as the classical tale of Oedipus and the Sphinx as usually told does not account for the deep symbolic significance given by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to that enigmatic being, these lines from Virgil do not quite account for Sri Aurobindo’s allusion here. And by the way, when we look at Sri Aurobindo’s poem “The Mother of Dreams”, we find that it opens :

*Goddess Supreme, Mother of Dream, by thy ivory doors when thou standest,
Who are they then that come down unto men in thy visions that troop,
group upon group, down the path of the shadows slanting? ...*

Collected Poems, SABCL 5:67

Daedal

In the mysterious passage about the gates of horn and ivory, we found another allusion to Greek mythology in the word “daedal”. As an adjective, this means “intricate, varied, formed with art, displaying artistic or inventive skill” and is derived from *Daedalus*, the legendary artist and engineer who built the Cretan labyrinth to house the monstrous Minotaur, and later made wings to enable himself and his son Icarus to escape across the sea from Crete. The point about the labyrinth was that once inside, it was impossible to find the way out. So Sri Aurobindo uses the word ‘daedal’ here to underline the impossibility of finding a way out of the wondrous appearances that Life, as the Mother of Dreams, weaves around us. King Aswapati cannot find any way out, not through either of the gates that the ancients said allowed an exit from the world of Sleep (equivalent, we suppose, to the subtle worlds of life), nor even any insignificant postern – a private back door or gate – provided by spiritual sight.

This word ‘daedal’ appears one other time in *Savitri*. While the first occurrence we found relates to the artistry of the Greater Life, the second one refers to that of Reason, which also proves an entrapment it is difficult to escape from :

*On the huge bare walls of human nescience
Written round Nature’s deep dumb hieroglyphs
She pens in clear demotic characters
The vast encyclopaedia of her thoughts;
An algebra of her mathematics’ signs,
Her numbers and unerring formulas
She builds to clinch her summary of things.
On all sides runs as if in a cosmic mosque
Tracing the scriptural verses of her laws
The daedal of her patterned arabesques,
Art of her wisdom, artifice of her lore.
This art, this artifice are her only stock.*

*In her high works of pure intelligence,
In her withdrawal from the senses' trap,
There comes no breaking of the walls of mind,
There leaps no rending flash of absolute power,
There dawns no light of heavenly certitude.
A million faces wears her knowledge here
And every face is turbaned with a doubt.*

p.251

In this case, Sri Aurobindo uses the word, which is normally an adjective, as a noun. In *Savitri* we often find him taking masterly advantage of the freedom which the English language allows the poet, to use any word as any part of speech, regardless of whether it is normally used as a noun, adjective or even conjunction – as in the famous line from Shakespeare's *Richard III* : “*But me no buts, and uncle me no uncles!*” in which we find the humble conjunction ‘but’ ennobled into use both as verb and noun.

There are several other allusions to the tale of Daedalus to be found in *Savitri* – both to the labyrinth, and to the man-made wings which he fashioned from feathers held together with wax, to enable himself and his son Icarus to escape from the island of Crete and the rule of King Minos.

*Earth's human wisdom is no great-browed power,
And love no gleaming angel from the skies;
If they aspire beyond earth's dullard air,
Arriving sunwards with frail waxen wings,
How high could reach that forced unnatural flight?* *p. 619*

The story runs that the father warned his son not to fly too high, for if he flew too near the sun, its heat would melt the wax, and the wings would no longer work. But alas, Icarus was so thrilled and elated to find himself flying that he forgot or disregarded the wise advice. The wax of his wings melted, and the poor boy plummeted to his death in the sea.

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We dream of an environment in Auroville

that will breathe the atmosphere of Savitri

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that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

that will house all kinds of materials and activities
to enrich our understanding and enjoyment of
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