

Invocation

Savitri

B H A V A N

Study notes No. 29

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C O N T E N T S

Spiritual and Occult Truths <i>as revealed by the Mother to Huta (3)</i>	4
What <i>Savitri</i> means to me <i>Talk by Ameeta Mehra at Savitri Bhavan on 24.07.08</i>	27
Soul-encounters in <i>Savitri</i> : the Three Mothers <i>Dr. Prema Nandakumar</i>	39
On Translating <i>Savitri</i> <i>From a letter of Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna)</i>	48
Dawn <i>Poem by Amal Kiran</i>	50
<i>Vedic imagery in Savitri (Part 3)</i> The Symbol of Dawn <i>Vladimir Iatsenko</i>	51
New Developments at Savitri Bhavan	70



From a drawing by Shakti

Your Face

*Out of your face there look at me
Two fathomless inexpressible eyes,
And from the heaven of their gaze
Outpours a wine of gold sun-rise*

*I lose myself in its nectar-flood,
A star burning in caves of night.
Remembrances of happy thoughts
Come winging from a sleepless height.*

*An ocean-like immensity
Invades my narrow earthly stream
With an ineffable calm and peace,
Its waves are crested with a gleam*

*Of beauty, child of thy delight :
The heart of dimness glows within,
As the veil slowly fades away
And new paths open to unseen*

*Vistas where mortal vision pales.
An infinite silence born of Thee
Awakes and an immortal rhythm
Of measureless felicity!*

*NIRODBARAN
17.11.1903 – 17.07.2006
(From Sun-Blossoms 1947)*

Spiritual and Occult Truths

as revealed by the Mother to Huta

(continued from issue no. 28)

Now it became a habit for me to go out of my body. I could not possibly help it. The Mother wrote to me:

*Wherever you go in sleep, subconscious or vital, you are protected.
With all my love.*

Ah! I was relieved. I took more and more interest in occultism, because it was something new revealed to me. It was fascinating and fantastic. It was not in the least that I wished to get some power so that I might use it on people. No. I only wanted to explore the marvels of the other worlds and get out for a while from the suffocation of the earthly atmosphere. I truly like to step into other worlds, to flee the struggle and misery of the physical world. Actually, I often found I could bring back from such a journey the courage to face my problems. But still according to human nature I harboured a subtle fear lest I should fail to reach my goal – the Divine.

On 18th July 1967 the Mother wrote in answer to my letter to her:

*My very dear little child Huta,
Chase from your mind this fear that you won't reach your
goal. Did I not tell you that you will?*

*In the night, during sleep, it is with the subconscious
that you get in touch and you get upset by all the fears
accumulated there. This has to be cleared off before you
can safely do any occultism. So the first thing to achieve is
to overcome the fears. Am I not there to help you?*

With all my love.

The Mother has written in *Questions and Answers* 1956, p.191:

Well, the occult world is not one single region where everything is mixed up, which becomes occult simply because we can't see it. The occult world is a gradation of regions, one could perhaps say, of more and more ethereal or subtle regions; in any case, of regions further and further off in their nature from the physical materiality we ordinarily see. And each of these domains is a world in itself, having its forms and inhabited by beings with a density, one could say analogous to that of the domains wherein they live. Just as we in the physical world are of the same materiality as the physical world, so in the vital world, in the mental world, in the overmind world and in the supramental world – and in many others, infinite others – there are beings which have a form of a substance similar to that of that world. That means that if you are able to enter consciously into that world with the part of your being corresponding to that domain, you can move there quite objectively, as in the material world.

I happened to send a book on occultism to the Mother on 25th July 1967. She wrote on an elaborate card depicting red roses:

*My very dear little child Huta,
I looked at the book. Yes, it is occultism. But each teacher of occultism has his own theory and declares that it is the most ancient teaching and tradition.*

In each teaching there is something true based on personal experience and also something very relative which is the product of the mental theories and additions.

So all these books can be read with interest, but not taken as a gospel of Truth.

When you are ready for occultism you will know it yourself and your experiences will take a special significance and a special value.

With all my love.

The Mother has also disclosed her view in *Questions and Answers* 1957-1958, p.161:

Occultism is a special use of the consciousness, that is all. That is, at the moment, as it is practiced among human beings, it is a direct and conscious perception of the forces behind appearances and the play of these forces, and as one has the direct perception of these, one has the power to act upon them, and one makes a more or less higher will intervene in the play of these forces in order to obtain a required result.

On 28th July 1967, after the work on *Savitri*, once again I told the Mother about my having frightful dreams. She meditated for a few seconds and then said gravely:

Dreams come just to indicate your defects which are in the subconscious, and from these dreams you must know and see clearly what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected.

I advise you never to go out of your body by your own will. It is not safe.

I felt from her expression that she was only testing me, otherwise why should she write letters regarding the subject and talk to me about it? I smiled and said: "Mother, before I go to sleep, I concentrate on your photograph, I pray and slip the special blessing packets you have given me under my pillow."

She was pleased, gave a broad smile and said:

Oh good, then you will come to me in your sleep. You see, I am available at night at 10, 12 and 2 o'clock.

Before going to sleep just call me: "Mother, I am coming to you – be with me. I am going out of my body – be with me." And I shall be with you.

Then I saw a glint of amusement in her eyes. She asked me with a humourous smile:

By the way, child, are you alone in your room?

I widened my eyes and answered: "Why? But of course, Mother. Don't you know?" She laughed. It was a lovely sound – clear and sweet like the chiming of little silver bells. She really never lost a chance to tease me whenever the opportunity arose. She caressed my cheeks and said:

I know. But the reason why I asked you is that if anybody touches your body, then everything will go away – all that you had seen and felt in the other worlds. It should not happen. You must lock your door.

A smile hovered on my lips when I replied: "Mother, I am all alone in my room. In fact, I feel terribly uncomfortable and uneasy if anybody sleeps in my apartment. For I like to be free and alone. So the question doesn't arise. Does it?"

Her gay laughter filled the room. She held my hands and said:

Then it is all right. Also, my child, you must remember that you should never get up suddenly from your sleep in the morning. Nor must you use any artificial means like an alarm-clock.

Another thing, you must never go out of your body from the navel but from the heart. (The Mother did not mean the physical heart but the subtle heart which is felt in the middle of the chest). Keep your body straight. Relax – lie on your back with your hands by your side and palms facing upwards.

Then after a pause she added:

The fellow who wrote that book you sent to me the other day is an Englishman and calls himself a "Lama". It is a big blunder.

I said: "Mother, I promise you that I will not adopt what he or anybody in this world writes on occultism. I will always follow the inspiration of my soul under the influence of the Supreme Truth. Moreover, whatever you have willed for my life, let it be so...."

The Mother was very happy. Further, I said with an anguished sigh: "Mother, this world is really painful."

She answered:

Yes, it is.

I said: "That is why I want to go out of my body to the invisible worlds – just for recreation. It is so thrilling and sensational to fly into a vast space. I feel so light in the subtle body that I do not like at all to return to my physical body."

The Mother listened to me attentively and then said suddenly:

No, my child, do not try to go out of your body by your own will. It will come automatically to you when the time comes.

I asked: "When, Mother?"

She withdrew into a trance for a moment or two. Then she held my face between her hands and looked fully into my eyes and said reassuringly:

You will see....

That very night I attempted to do exactly as the Mother had asked me. But it was very difficult to lie for long on my back. It started aching. I got tired and told myself, "What type of occultism is this?" Despite all the discomfort and confusion, that night I felt nice and refreshed. I awoke at 3.45 a.m. During my sleep I had seen huge mountains and deep valleys where some people were fighting peacefully without making any clamour and I was watching them peacefully also. What a peculiar sight!

The next morning the Mother wrote:

Things are going on all right. The night was good. Persevere and you are sure to succeed.

Noted for tonight.

With all my love.

Once again I thought that if I had to lie on my back then I would rather drop the idea of this occultism. The position required was surely not comfortable.

The night of 29th July 1967 was disturbed. I could not come to any conclusion or know what was happening. I got up at 4.30 a.m. I wrote a letter to the Mother and put some questions to her about spiritual and occult truths. She wrote back:

Your letter of yesterday and all its questions have been answered already, fully and completely, all explanations given, and all concerning Yoga. But these answers and explanations have been sent in silence, not written, just because they are concerning Yoga, and you must receive them by the inner reception. Otherwise their effect is incomplete and may even be falsified by the misunderstanding of the mind.

So do not try to grasp with your mind, let them do their work inwardly, which they are doing, even if you do not know it.

I can add that the needed effect is being achieved and that you are advancing towards your goal in a steady way, even more rapidly than expected.

So all is well and do not worry. Trust the Divine Wisdom which arranges things for the best and answers all the aspirations even if they are not formulated.

Be confident, my dear child, all is well.

With all my love and blessings.

On 7th August 1967 I went to the Music Room where the Mother used to play the organ. She had given me a cupboard in that room in which I kept all the required things for our work. So I arranged everything – the recorder, the microphone, the script, and so on.

The Mother entered the room gracefully with a huge white water-lily in her hand, which she gave to me with a radiant smile. She has called the flower: “Wealth. True wealth is that which one offers to the Divine.”

After the work, I showed her the thick note-book in which I had put down all that she had said and written regarding occultism. I said

with a sigh: “O Mother, look, I have stopped writing after certain pages.....”

She pressed my hands with a smile and said:

This note-book will be filled.

Instantly I understood within my heart what was demanded from me. Ever since, I have left each and everything to the Divine Mother to do the best, for she knows the best. Truly speaking, I never practiced occultism systematically, never did any effort. I just let myself go.

The Mother knew that I did not wish to be bound by anybody or anything – she knew all too well that it was enough for me to be bound by the Supreme Lord....

For a couple of years she gave me the flowers Pancratium Littoralis. She has given the meaning: “Occultism. Does not truly blossom except when it is surrendered to the Divine.”

I did not know the meaning of this particular flower. I wondered why the Mother gave me this flower very often. One day I could not resist asking her its significance. First she looked at me with her shining eyes and then said in French: “Occultisme”, and went towards her high-backed chair and sat down elegantly. When I looked at her I saw a glimmer of laughter in her eyes. I raised my eyebrows and kept silent.

My memory flows back to the year 1962. It was 23rd February when I saw the Mother in the Meditation Hall upstairs. We worked there on *Savitri*. During that period we had almost finished Canto Three of Book One. She said specifically that Canto Three was full of occult visions. The Mother closed her eyes for a few seconds and then told me with a gentle smile:

In 1904 I realized or rather reached the highest spiritual and occult worlds. You see, I learnt occultism within a few weeks' time....

Once again she closed her eyes as if she recalled all the invisible worlds.

I said with distress: “Alas! Mother, I know nothing, have realized nothing, achieved nothing. I am a real duffer. And on top of everything I am getting old...”

She laughed sweetly, patted my hands and said:

Oh, one day you will realise. You see, there are two ways. The occult knowledge is rather easier than the spiritual knowledge. I learnt true spiritual things when I came here. No doubt, everything was within myself, though not outwardly.

The Yoga of Transformation is very difficult – it takes years and years.

To learn occultism one needs a Guru or a Guide, while the spiritual life can be transferred like this (the Mother pointed to her heart with the index finger of her right hand and then moved the finger in an upward curve towards my heart).

Step by step, and with great patience the Mother revealed to me spiritual and occult truths as we advanced in our work on *Savitri*.

The Mahabharata says correctly: “He who has heard with devotion the glorious story of Savitri, that man is fortunate, his affairs shall prosper, and never shall sorrow visit him.”

The Mother wrote on the top of a diary containing quotations from *Savitri*:

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

I was still puzzled and brooding over the words the Mother had spoke about having learnt true spiritual things after she came here.

Recently I came across her explanation in Volume 10, *On Thoughts and Aphorisms*, pp.333-334:

Until the age of about twenty-five, all I knew was the God of religions, God as men have created him, and I did not want

him at any price. I denied his existence but with the certitude that if such a God did exist, I detested him.

When I was about twenty-five I discovered the inner God and at the same time I learned that the God described by most Western religions is none other than the Great Adversary.

When I came to India, in 1914, and became acquainted with Sri Aurobindo's teaching, everything became very clear.

Sri Aurobindo has written in Volume 19, *The Life Divine*, p.877:

Occult science is, essentially, the science of the subliminal, the subliminal in ourselves and the subliminal in world-nature, and of all that is in connection with the subliminal, including the subconscious and the superconscious, and the use of it as part of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and for the right dynamisation of that knowledge.

The Mother's comment on this occult science is in *Questions and Answers* 1957-58, pp. 340-341:

In true occultism one must have the quality, the ability, the inner gift for using it, and that is the safeguard. True occultism cannot be handled by the first idiot who comes along. And this is not magic either – neither white magic nor black nor golden – it is not magic at all, it is a spiritual power which must be acquired through a long discipline; and finally, it is given to you only by a divine grace.

This means that as soon as one draws near the Truth, one is sheltered from all charlatanism, all pretensions and all falsehood. Of that I have had numerous and extremely conclusive proofs. And so one who has the true occult power possesses at the same time, through the strength of this inner truth, the power to undo all magics, white or black or of whatever colour they may be, simply by applying a drop of that truth, to put it thus. There is nothing that can resist that power. And this is very well known to those who practise magic, for they always take very great care, in all

countries but especially in India, never to try out any of their formulas against yogis and saints, because they know that these formulas which they send out with their little mechanical, very superficial power, will go and strike, as a ball does a wall, the true power that's protecting one who leads a spiritual life, and quite naturally their formula will rebound and fall back upon them.

The Yogi or saint doesn't need to do anything, he doesn't even have to want to protect himself: it is something automatic. He is in a state of consciousness and inner power which protects him automatically from everything that is inferior. Naturally, he may use his power voluntarily also to protect others. This rebounding of the bad formation from his atmosphere protects him automatically, but if this bad formation is made against someone he is protecting or simply one who asks his help, then he can, by a movement of his own atmosphere, his own aura, surround the person who is exposed to the magical evil spells, and the process of rebounding acts in the same way and works so that the bad formation falls back quite naturally upon the one who made it. But in this case the conscious will of the yogi or saint or sage is needed. He has to be informed about what has happened and must decide to intervene.

That is the difference between true knowledge and magic.

When the Mother and I were doing the painting of *Savitri* Book Nine – The Book of Eternal Night, I used to see Death near my bed practically every night. I informed the Mother. And Death stopped appearing.

When I went to her, she inquired:

Child, I hope now Death is not bothering you.

I replied: "No, Mother, not lately."

After a few days once again Death was walking to and fro near my bed. He showed himself like a dark huge shadow. I felt he had come to take me.

The Mother wrote to me in answer to my letter:

Do not be afraid. The Lord is more powerful than Death and the Lord is with you.

LOVE

In the course of doing with the Mother the paintings of the same *Book Nine*, I did according to her instruction the picture of Savitri's descent into the domain of an endless Night. Mostly I used to paint late at night when everything was hushed.

After finishing this painting, I went to sleep. I was perfectly all right.

But suddenly I observed that I was submerging deeper and deeper into a bottomless pit of limitless darkness. My throat choked, strangled by the dire and shuddering gloom. My breathing almost stopped and I actually experienced that I was no more alive. Then I did not know what happened.

Afterwards, I gradually came to and found myself in painful tears. From this experience I knew how one feels when Death draws nearer and nearer.....

The Mother gave me unnumbered experiences so that I could accomplish the work on *Savitri* under her direct guidance. Otherwise it was impossible to bring out the realities and the right vibrations.

Later the Mother saw certain paintings I had done of Death and his domain and remarked:

This is the real reality in this domain. What is there is just expressed in the paintings – the figures, darkness, fire, etc., etc.

It is very strange that after the Mother had left her body, her Force intensified a hundredfold. I am sure many must have felt it who are in constant contact with her. From my own experience I can say that at times I am simply driven by her Force to do certain things – I feel strong vibrations in my heart or sometimes in my whole being. At first I thought that it was my imagination and did not pay any attention to what her Force directed. Then I realized that it was not so, because at such a moment whatever I do according to the inner guidance falls always rightly.

Now my dreams are tranquil; they carry a sense as of waves that sink to rest and make a smooth immobile sea. There are no distinct formations. But when something is going to happen, and it has some meaning and importance, I get solid indications beforehand from the Mother and I have observed that events confirm their pointers of truth.

The happiest thing of all is that I feel during my sleep the Mother's living Presence. The warmth of her loving embrace, her vibrations comforting and caressing, her exquisite perfume – all these prove to me that she comes to me almost every night in different forms but producing the same tangible effect.

In one of my letters to the Mother I asked: "How am I to know that I have overcome the activities of the Subconscious in my sleep?"

She replied:

When your nights will become quiet and peaceful.

I can also feel the vibrations of people whom I know and the people who are strangers to me. There are various kinds of vibrations – good and bad – soothing and harsh. So I try to be always alert to avoid certain vibrations.

It is truly difficult to make people understand how I really feel.

Indeed, in spite of all these experiences, I know very well that I have a long way to go in order to reach my supreme goal.

On the morning of Tuesday the 11th May 1968, I went to the Mother for our new work of *About Savitri*, after finishing the paintings of *Meditations on Savitri*. She recited the passage, which I had written out from the epic on a big sheet in bold letters.

After that she plunged into profound meditation for quite a long time. I wondered. I had nothing to do except to watch her and be ready to switch on the recorder when she spoke. Then she opened her dreamy eyes slowly and gave the striking explanation. Afterwards she heard back her voice which I had recorded, including her recitation.

She said with an exclamation:

Child, I see many things when I go into a trance but it is difficult to grasp everything seen. So I cannot convey to you all of them.

I said instinctively: "Mother, never mind. I shall try to paint according to your inspiration."

Suddenly she leaned forward and, taking my hands into hers, said:

My child, do you see all these things?

Her voice was silky soft, but her blue-grey eyes probed my whole being.

I answered: "No, Mother, I do not see things but I feel them. I love to be near you. I like the atmosphere."

The Mother said with a charming smile:

You see, I started seeing things clearly and precisely when I was 81 years of age.

I laughed and said: "Mother, I do not really believe you. And if it is so, then in that case I shall be able to behold the wondrous things in my next birth or God alone knows when or perhaps never."

She laughed and said:

Ah! you too will see...

I marvelled at her supreme humility. As a matter of fact, I knew that the Mother did not forget what she had told me in 1961, before we had started the work on *Savitri*, how she had achieved in her tender age the highest occult truths, how she had realised and seen all the visions set forth in *Savitri*. Actually, she had experienced the poem's fundamental revelations before she arrived at Pondicherry and before Sri Aurobindo read out *Savitri* to her early in the morning day after day at a certain period of the Ashram. She also said to me that she had never told Sri Aurobindo all that she had seen beforehand. A great number of things the Mother has unveiled during my work with her. Unhappily, it is impossible for me to put all in this article.

The Mother brought me back from the glorious reveries of the past. I looked at her. Her glowing eyes held a withdrawn expression. When she talked to me, I felt that she was not living in the same world as ours.

She said with a sweet smile:

Child, I can go anywhere while in this body. You have already seen for yourself how I go out of my body. I can go to the highest and deepest – elsewhere too – (gesture pointing with her index finger first up and then down)

In this body you can also go anywhere you like.

She made me face something so incredible that my mind at that moment felt incapable of understanding it. In truth I was appalled.

In 1962 the Mother arranged my reading of *Savitri* with Amal Kiran (K.D.Sethna), to whom Sri Aurobindo had first introduced *Savitri* in private drafts and written all the letters that are now published along with the Epic.

He made me understand *Savitri* intellectually and aesthetically, because it was essential for me. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the poem with him – a work carried out in harmonious collaboration and with wonderful discussions.

Then I read *Savitri* several times by myself. Lastly, the Mother made me understand it inwardly in its true and perfect sense.

Once she told me:

*My child, *Savitri* is your life-long work.*

I have to admit this.

To state the truth, it was the Mother who took my consciousness to the other spheres and let me regard many things in detail. She also made me feel their vibrations and meet innumerable beings of different types. Without her direct instructions, guidance and constant help nothing would have been achieved. For, when I came to stay in the Ashram on 10th February 1955, I did not know how to draw a straight line. Also, I did not know about the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I am definitely of the view that nothing is impossible for the Divine's Grace. What *Savitri* says is true:

All can be done if the God-touch is there.

Repeatedly the Mother expressed the wish that the whole of *Savitri* should be painted according to the visions which she had seen in France and in Algeria where she had learnt the highest occultism. She also said that before I was born she had tried here – in the Ashram – to get them depicted through certain people but without success.

I was extremely happy and grateful that she had chosen me as an instrument.

Some people think that the paintings of *Savitri* are mere pictures – some even mocked and criticized. Some passed random and gauche remarks out of sheer jealousy, and they believe the paintings to be my personal possessions and affairs because I have done them and because the Mother graciously granted me special copyrights.

But, really speaking, the paintings of the whole of *Savitri* are substantially the Mother's own creation based on her series of visions – in fact, her own Yoga. She told me, before we launched into the ocean of *Savitri*, that physically she had no time at all to express these beautiful visions, so she would use only my hands while the rest would be done by her Force, Light and Consciousness. I have not forgotten how many times she concentrated on my hands to execute the big work.

The Mother said that there would be a link between her Consciousness and mine which would be like a channel. She also told me numberless things from the occult point of view which are not easy to explain through words.

I worked with the Mother for years all alone. So there is no witness except the Supreme and my soul.

My memory rolls back to the year 1967. I saw the Mother one afternoon to tell her that I had finished the paintings of Sri Aurobindo's mystical poems other than *Savitri*. She was glad and said with a contented smile:

A card came to me the other day from somebody for my blessings, along with a lot of praise for it. It was the card which you had done for the New Year – “Bliss”. You see, I like it very much when people appreciate your paintings.

In everything there is the Divine but some people find the paintings bad.

And she put her hand on her forehead. I said: “But, Mother, it is their way of seeing, feeling and appreciating things. What can we do? Let me tell you a joke.” I recounted the following story:

An artist painting in the country had a farmer spectator. “Ah!” said the artist, “Perhaps you too are a lover of the beauties of Nature. Have you seen the golden finger of dawn spreading across the eastern sky, the red-stained sulphurous islets floating in the lake of fire in the West, the ragged clouds at midnight blotting out the shuddering moon?” “No,” said the farmer, “not lately. I have not taken hard drink for a year.”

The Mother’s laughter tinkled merrily. She leaned forward and kissed my cheek lovingly.

While we were doing *Book Ten – The Book of the Double Twilight*, I asked her: “Mother, Savitri followed Death. Now in the Epilogue, *Book Twelve – The Return to Earth* – I read that Savitri was lying near Satyavan’s dead body. How is it possible for her to pursue Death in her physical body, which seems to be the case since she is described as passing through woods and other places?”

The Mother leaned a little forward from her high-backed chair and exclaimed:

Oh no, it is her Spirit which followed Death. She shed the physical sheath. She also left her senses, faculties, one by one before her Spirit flew to Satyavan who was now in a subtle luminous body.....

This reminded me of the twelve bodies which according to the Mother human beings have.

While at the same *Book Ten*, the Mother, knowing that I was confused, threw some light on the verses which described the transformation of Savitri when she confronted Death.

My child, here it is not the physical transformation of Savitri, but the spiritual transformation.....

Sri Aurobindo has explained in Volume 19, *The Life Divine*, p.910:

A highest spiritual transformation must intervene on the psychic or psycho-spiritual change; the psychic movement inward to the inner being, the Self or Divinity within us, must be completed by an opening upward to a supreme spiritual status or a higher existence. This can be done by our opening into what is above us, by an ascent of consciousness into the ranges of overmind and supramental nature in which the sense of Self and Spirit is ever unveiled and permanent and in which the self-luminous instrumentation of the Self and Spirit is not restricted or divided as in our mind-nature, life-nature, body-nature. This also the psychic change makes possible; for as it opens us to the cosmic consciousness now hidden from us by many walls of limiting individuality, so also it opens us to what is now superconscious to our normality because it is hidden from us by the strong, hard and bright lid of mind, – mind constricting, dividing and separative. The lid thins, is slit, breaks asunder or opens and disappears under the pressure of the psycho-spiritual change and the natural urge of the new spiritualised consciousness towards that of which it is an expression here.....

I have read in *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, p.20:

If the transformation is complete, that means no subjection to death; it does not mean that one will be bound to keep the same body for all time. One creates a new body for oneself when one wants to change, but how it will be done cannot be said now. The present method is by physical birth – some occultists suppose that a time will come when that will not be necessary – but the question must be left for the Supramental evolution to decide.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will never give up the tremendous task of transformation to prove to humanity that death can be conquered. Once the Mother told me:

Child, we remain in eternity – time does not exist for us.

So we must leave everything to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and not behave as if failing to realise what Harry Emerson Fosdick has expressed: “God is not a cosmic bell-boy for whom we can press a button to get things.”

On 16th November 1974 I saw the Mother in a dream-vision between 2 and 3.30 a.m. She spoke many things about the body’s transformation. I could not possibly grasp all of them. but she definitely said to me:

The transformation of the body is not an impossibility, and it has to be done. I am working for it in order to make it a reality upon earth.

Sri Aurobindo has written in Volume 16, *The Supramental Manifestation*, p.5:

The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use.

The Mother wrote to me:

The transformation of the whole being is not only a possibility, it is a certitude. But it takes time and patience, endurance and confidence in spite of all difficulties, setbacks and delays.

My Force and courage are always with you to face everything.

A similar conception the Mother has expressed in the *Bulletin*, November 1957:

When the physical substance will be supramentalised, to be born on earth in a body will not be a cause of inferiority; rather the contrary, there will be gained a plenitude which could not be obtained otherwise.....

I invite you to the great adventure, and in this adventure you are not to repeat spiritually what others have done before us, because our adventure begins from beyond that stage. We are for a new creation, entirely new, carrying in it all the unforeseen, all risks, all hazards, – a true adventure of which the goal is sure victory, but of which the way is unknown and has to be traced out step by step in the unexplored.

I have already written an article about the Mother's position towards the body's transformation in answer to certain opinions held by some people. My article has appeared in *Mother India*, February 21, 1974: pp. 86-92.

Sri Aurobindo has given a just appraisal of modern Science in Volume 16, *The Supramental Manifestation*, p.96:

Science is in her own way a great seer and magician; she has both the microscopic and macroscopic, the closely gazing and the telescopic view, a dissolving power of searching analytic resolution, a creative power of revealing synthetic effectuation. She has hunted to their lair many of the intermediate secret processes of the great creatrix, and even she has been able, by the inventive faculty given to us, to go and do one better. Man, this midget in infinity, locomotive yet nailed to the contiguity of a petty crust of soil by the force of gravitation, has certainly scored by her a goodly number of points against the mother of the universe. But all this has been done in some perfection only in the limits of her lowest obtrusive physical field.

Face to face with psychic and spiritual secracies, as in the open elementary world even of mind, Science has still the uninformed gaze and groping hands of the infant.

Sri Aurobindo has also written in Volume 17, *The Hour of God*, p.127:

God within is infinite and self-fulfilling Will. Unaffected by the fear of death canst thou leave to Him, not as an experiment, but with a calm and entire faith thy ailments? Thou shalt find that in the end He exceeds the skill of a million doctors.

The Mother explained in Volume 10, *On Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p.208:

Ultimately, what is most accessible to materialistic thought, to scientific thought, is the fact that they cannot foresee. They can foresee many things, but the unfolding of terrestrial events is beyond their prevision. I think that this is the only thing they can admit – there is a problematical element, a field of unpredictability which eludes all their calculations.

I have never talked with a typical scientist who had the most up-to-date knowledge, so I am not quite sure, I do not know how far they admit the unpredictable or the incalculable.

What Sri Aurobindo means, I think, is that when one is in communion with the soul and has the knowledge of the soul, that knowledge is so much more wonderful than material knowledge that there is almost a smile of disdain. I do not think he means that the knowledge of the soul teaches you things about material life that one cannot learn through science.

The only point – I do not know whether science has reached it – is the unpredictability of the future.

If the Mother had been in her body, I would have certainly told her a fine joke – how the men of science depend on machines to the point of absurdity:

A bachelor asked a computer to find him the perfect partner: “I want a companion who is small and attractive, loves water sports, and enjoys group activities.”

Answered the computer: “Marry a penguin.”

Dr. Raymond Moody has mentioned another experience of Light, which is indeed very touching.

The divine Light has many aspects, colours and gradations. Also each represents its own power, function and significance.

Here in the version of *Life after Life* this Light can be what Sri Aurobindo has delineated in Volume 24, *Letters on Yoga*, pp. 1205-1206:

There are special forces of the Light and there is a play of them according to needs but the Light in itself can be lived in as much as one can live in Peace or Ananda.

As Peace and Ananda can pour through the whole system and finally stabilize themselves so that they are in the body, and the body and the whole being are in them – one might almost say, are that, are the Peace and Ananda – so it can be with Light. It can pour into the body, make every cell luminous, fix itself and surround on all sides in one luminous mass of Light.

It (Light) is the power that enlightens whatever it falls upon – the result may be vision, memory, knowledge, right will, right impulse etc.

In 1969 I saw the Mother one Thursday in the afternoon to offer her the sandalwood lotion which I had been preparing for her for a few years.

I showed her a new painting of *About Savitri: The Divine Mother is coming down upon earth*.

The Mother said:

This is all right. But you must paint the Earth as receiving the Divine Light because now the Earth is conscious of the New Light.

You must paint here the silver drops to show that the Earth is receiving the Light.

I held the picture in my hand and thought of the alteration. Then I looked at her, and saw that enchanting smile still lingered round the

corners of her mouth. She was very sure of what she had said about the Earth.

Remembering that smile, I should like to close this article on the marvellous note which rings in a lovely talk of the Mother to me on 22nd December 1960:

Child, you must be obstinate, you see; the Supreme Lord Himself is very obstinate. He persists in His aim of taking away all obscurity, inertia and unhappiness from human beings and making them perfect. This process goes on in an endless cycle. He does not change human beings suddenly. Everything has its own time.

Failure always comes in human life but even he who fails can go one step forward to his goal. Not a single person can escape from miseries, difficulties and failures.

A few people seem highly educated and intellectual, they are praised by many for their remarkable work and success, but after all, these 'wise' people are full of ignorance, and in the end they fail to achieve their goal.

A person gets married, has children and all the rest, yet he is not happy at all. At the end he falls into the chasm of death and again he comes into this world. This goes on, and on, and on... until he finds the Truth.

This world is the only place where man can progress and lessen the burden of his past life and present life and get ready for the next more fortunate birth to find something higher and more beautiful. It is only here in this world that you are given the opportunity to progress towards the Eternal.

I have seen many other worlds, which are dull, grey and full of darkness, where people are bored and are groping to find happiness.

I know the beginning of the world and its end up to Eternity. Your failure is that of your past birth and not of your present birth. Failure is nothing but a step forward to your success. You will have to dig in each step carefully, and set your feet firmly and proceed in future to the Truth. But you must be obstinate.

The Highest cannot be realised until one becomes perfect. It takes years after years, century after century. However, you must be obstinate like the Supreme Lord. Be more and more obstinate in front of your own defects.

Life is not so simple and straight. It is like the waves of an ocean.

Do not care about what people say; they are ignorant, their judgement leads you nowhere.

Remain in the Vastness of the Supreme Love, Truth, Light and Peace....

This is the Law of the Supreme.

What Savitri means to me

*Talk by Ameeta Mehra at
Savitri Bhavan on 24.07.08*

Ameeta Mehra is the founder and leader of The Gnostic Centre in Delhi, which we feel to be a kind of sister-centre to Savitri Bhavan, especially because both have been close to the heart of our dear elder brother Nirodbaran so that we are linked in our love and reverence for him. Ameeta has kindly agreed to join the Advisory Group of wise friends who are helping to guide the development of Savitri Bhavan, and is also a member of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation. When she was in Auroville in July to take part in a Governing Board meeting, we requested her to speak to us on Savitri. One of the reasons why we so much like to invite members of our Aurobindonian family to come share their insights is because Savitri is truly an Ocean of Gems, and every diver who explores this Ocean is constantly finding new things and it is really very nice when someone brings something up from the depths and says, ‘Look, this is what I found’. In this way we are all enriched. Ameeta shared some inspiring jewels with us – a garland of precious insights garnered from her own personal experience and relation to the poem.

I must first begin by saying that when Shraddhavan asked me to speak on *Savitri* I was nonplussed. I felt ‘This is not my cup of tea’ and the first reaction was to immediately refuse. But a little later I remembered Nirod-da’s words to me: he said “Savitri Bhavan is a very important work of Sri Aurobindo. You must be connected, and you must go there.” He used to tell me this when I was quite young and I used to stay in Pondicherry for fairly long periods of time. At the slightest invitation or idea he would say, ‘Let’s go’ and we would get up in the evening, get into the car and go for a drive to Auroville – and then he would always come to Savitri Bhavan, take a walk around before we went back. Most of these buildings had not come up at that time. So that is really what brings me here today.

Having said that, I thought I would first say a few words about how I was introduced to *Savitri*. And again, it happened with Nirodha, in 1988 – which I realise at this moment is exactly 20 years ago. I was just out of college and very young and enthusiastic. The first thing he told me was, “Do you want to learn poetry?” I said “Yes, I would certainly like to learn poetry”. He said, “Well, let us begin with *Savitri*. And you must first learn how to scan.” He explained to me about iambic pentameter, and gave me some pages and showed me how the stressed and unstressed syllables can be marked. He said, “You go and you mark these and bring them back to me”. I still have that copy of *Savitri*, where I was marking; then he would correct it and explain. This went on for about a month, when I didn’t understand a word in *Savitri*: all I was doing was just marking the scanning and trying to understand the rhythm of the poem. That was my first introduction to *Savitri*.

Since then there have been other people who have introduced me to *Savitri* but I think the one I would like to mention is Sri Aurobindo himself. One of the first experiences I had of him was when I had this deep inner aspiration to hear him read *Savitri*. I asked everybody in the Ashram whether anybody had a recording of Sri Aurobindo reading *Savitri*. They all said no. Then I had an experience when I was in Delhi, a kind of vision or dream, I don’t know what you want to call it, of Sri Aurobindo. We were sitting at a table and he asked me “So, what would you like me to read: *Essays* or *Savitri*?” I said “*Savitri*”. I still remember that canto he started reading in *Savitri*. It was unnamed, it was a strange canto – I tried to look for it later on, but not knowing *Savitri* at all in those days, I was really not able to catch which canto it was. But I heard him read *Savitri* for a very long time. So that remains with me: at least I can say that I have heard Sri Aurobindo reading *Savitri*.

After that introduction, I shall begin to share with you something of what *Savitri* means to me. I don’t want to give any expositions on *Savitri*, because I don’t think there can be one. This poem is so vast and so deep that whatever one knows today is not sufficient and is very meagre. So what I will share with you is a little bit about what *Savitri* means to me, and some of the things that have been very meaningful to me in my own journey with *Savitri*.

1

The first thing about *Savitri* that really caught my consciousness, was that it is an invocation of the human soul to the Supreme, an awakening of the human aspiration for the divine consciousness. This was one thing that ignited my own aspiration, and that is why I often go back to *Savitri* for a deepening of my own consciousness. I would like to begin by reading a small passage where this invocation of the human soul comes forth. I always feel that no talk about *Savitri* can be complete without reading from the poem. I have chosen this particular one because I feel that all of us – at least those who are in the Ashram or in Auroville – have reached this point at some stage in our own journey. It is the point of change :

*That hour had fallen now on Savitri.
A point she had reached where life must be in vain
Or, in her unborn element awake,
Her will must cancel her body's destiny.
For only the unborn spirit's timeless power
Can lift the yoke imposed by birth in Time.
Only the Self that builds this figure of self
Can rase the fixed interminable line
That joins these changing names, these numberless lives,
These new oblivious personalities
And keeps still lurking in our conscious acts
The trail of old forgotten thoughts and deeds,
Disown the legacy of our buried selves,
The burdensome heirship to our vanished forms
Accepted blindly by the body and soul.*

p 12

This particular sentence: *A point she had reached where life must be in vain...*, I think that those who have come to *Savitri*, have all reached that point when one feels that life itself is in vain as it is, unless there is something greater. That same point strikes me throughout *Savitri*, in various parts, where each time there comes the sense that there has to be something more than this terrestrial existence, there has to be something greater than this human ego, this human existence as we see it today.

2

A second aspect of *Savitri* that is important to me is that *Savitri* is a mantra of love, transforming love. I shall say something more about that later. To me, it is also a mantra of healing. I have had many experiences of this – from very physical things like a slipped disc to more psychological things. When there has been either physical disability or mental disturbance, just listening to *Savitri*, just hearing the words of *Savitri*, I have found that there is a mantric power in *Savitri* to heal and to invoke energies that are far beyond our normal reach.

Once I was having a very terrible pain in my back. I was feeling, “This is the end of it, I won’t be able to get up. Who is going to look after the horses and who will do the work tomorrow morning?” So I thought ‘Now that I am in this terrible state, I may as well do something useful with my time.’ I had Nirod-da’s CDs of *Savitri* with me. I spent I think 8 hours, the whole day, in bed and I had the CDs going on. I must have gone into a very deep slumber when suddenly I felt there was a golden light on my back and I do not know what it did, I can only tell you that when I got up from my bed I was perfectly well. I was so well that when I went back to my doctor she said “I think you should get another scan because you seem much better” – with no painkillers, nothing. This is again the power of *Savitri*, the invocation of *Savitri*.

But I do believe that when one listens to *Savitri* or when one reads *Savitri*, the key thing is aspiration. If there is an aspiration to understand, to go deeper, to call the divine, to call the Supreme, to ask Her help to transform our lives, to ask Her help to transform our nature, to ask Her help to rid oneself of oneself so to speak, then there is the help, there is something that comes in. It is not anything mundane. Like all mantra, it has to be invoked, the power of the mantra has to be invoked.

3

A third aspect of *Savitri* is that it is an aid in the development and growth of consciousness. It creates the conditions for spiritual capacities and experiences. You must have felt it yourselves: – if one has read and one has invoked, after a few hours, perhaps even at night, or when one is quiet, the

power of that invocation creates a vibration in the body, creates a vibration in the mind, creates a vibration in the consciousness, that brings something forward. It could be new capacities: for example maybe in poetry or in writing. It could be new experiences. Again that is a very great gift of *Savitri*. I feel that we go to *Savitri* because it keeps the consciousness at its highest point. Whenever one feels that one has come down once again to the mundane ordinary level, one word of *Savitri* or one passage of *Savitri* – and there we are: we are uplifted. I think that is because of one reason. I believe it is because *Savitri* is an epic poem written from the overmental consciousness, with touches of the Supermind. There is nothing of the mental in it, except for the mind structuring, ordering, recording and transmitting as Sri Aurobindo did. He was listening and recording. His mind had reached that level, his mind had become a recording instrument of *Savitri*. I believe that *Savitri* must be one of the first works written with that highest overmentalised consciousness. If that is the inspiration from where it comes, one can just imagine the impact it has on the human consciousness and its own transformation.

What is interesting is that this makes it very difficult to explain *Savitri*. If someone asks me to explain *Savitri* I feel very bad. Even though we have *Savitri* sessions at the Gnostic Centre, I can tell you that all we do is read *Savitri*, because I always find the intrusion of the human consciousness – in explanation especially – always brings in a lowering of the vibration ... except for the ordering, structuring, organising: this is the story, we are here, this is the canto, the general gist of it, etc. Anything else of *Savitri*, until one has reached that level of consciousness, in itself is inadequate. Because the mind cannot know, the mind cannot explain what has come from a much higher instrumentation. So to understand *Savitri* mentally, as many great scholars we know of, who have been given a copy of *Savitri* have tried: they open it, they try reading it and they simply say, “What is this? Is this poetry? I don’t understand it.” They have very critical remarks to make, because unless one’s soul is opened to receive, and the understanding comes through the soul, not from the mind, one finds that even the greatest mind cannot understand *Savitri*. This is again a very interesting aspect of *Savitri*.

4

I discovered something else in *Savitri*, I wonder whether any of you will agree with it. *Savitri* for me creates a kind of new prototype. It is very interesting: it is breaking the mould of the past. *Savitri* creates a new prototype of the Woman. This is very important. So far all our greatest epics have had male protagonists: Sri Rama in Ramayana embodies the concept of morality, Sri Krishna in Mahabaratha, the concept of Dharma, Christ in the Bible – compassion and service, Mohammed and the Quoran ... And then we have the epic written by Sri Aurobindo called *Savitri*, and this epic has as the main protagonist a woman. Why is that so? Why such a great departure from the past? I think it has something to do with the fact that *Savitri* is the first epic poem written for the new species. As the Mother has hinted and as Sri Aurobindo said to the Mother, “You must stay on to continue this work, your body is required”. The hints are there in their lives, and there is something deeper here that I think has to be caught, that has to be discovered still.

5

In *Savitri* we can find some of the greatest descriptions of human psychology, describing the human condition. I have not read a better exposition of the nature of the human being and the conditions of our mortal birth, and more importantly, the way to grow out of them: not only the problem but the solution. I would like to read one wonderful passage I have selected on the nature of the human being. It comes in Book Three, Canto 4:

*His day is a moment in perpetual Time;
He is the prey of the minutes and the hours.
Assailed on earth and unassured of heaven,
Descended here unhappy and sublime,
A link between the demigod and the beast,
He knows not his own greatness nor his aim;
He has forgotten why he has come and whence.
His spirit and his members are at war;
His heights break off too low to reach the skies,
His mass is buried in the animal mire.
A strange antinomy is his nature's rule.*

*A riddle of opposites is made his field:
Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds,
He has need of darkness to perceive some light
And need of grief to feel a little bliss;
He has need of death to find a greater life.
All sides he sees and turns to every call;
He has no certain light by which to walk;
His life is a blind-man's-buff, a hide-and-seek;
He seeks himself and from himself he runs;
Meeting himself, he thinks it other than he.
Always he builds, but finds no constant ground,
Always he journeys, but nowhere arrives;
He would guide the world, himself he cannot guide;
He would save his soul, his life he cannot save.
The light his soul had brought his mind has lost;
All he has learned is soon again in doubt;
A sun to him seems the shadow of his thoughts,
Then all is shadow again and nothing true:*

p. 336-37

So this exploration into man's consciousness, into the nature of man, is something unparalleled so far.

6

There is a favourite passage of mine, one of the few which I have learnt by heart, which again reveals another aspect of *Savitri*. This is the aspect of *Savitri* revealing the vision of a supramental world that is born. Now in *Savitri* there is a vision given to us where Sri Aurobindo is almost saying '*I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers ...*' and there it is not something that is in the past or future tense but the present tense that he is using. This aspect of *Savitri*, where *Savitri* is revealing a new world, the birth of a new species, a new consciousness that is taking birth in human form, that is descending the stairs of birth – that is another aspect of *Savitri* that is worth pondering over. Let me read these lines to you, they are so powerful:

*I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life*

*Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude,
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.
I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.
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. 343-44

Here Sri Aurobindo says, ‘*I saw the sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn, ... I saw them cross the twilight of an age...*’ Nothing can give a more supreme confidence or a greater brighter sense of the future than reading these lines. When you hear Sri Aurobindo say this, it is almost as though he is saying “Tathasthu – that has been done” – and we have only to wait for the new world that is already present to fully manifest. This great hope is present in *Savitri* in many many places, but this is one of the ones that has struck me.

7

The Mother has said that *Savitri* contains everything. When she was asked, she said to Mona Sarkar, ‘Everything is in *Savitri*, every answer is in *Savitri*, every problem is in *Savitri*, all of human existence is in *Savitri*, all of Divine Existence is in *Savitri*, the future is in *Savitri*. Concentrate for a moment, and if you do it in sincerity and if you have a real problem, if there is a real question, open *Savitri*: you will come straight to the page that gives you the answer’. This is the power of *Savitri*. Every page, every word, has in it the new consciousness and it evokes that in us.

8

Another aspect of *Savitri* that is very striking, is that *Savitri* is an exploration, experience and new understanding of human love, transforming to Divine Love through Yoga. And you see the description of Savitri’s Yoga, you see the description of Aswapathi’s Yoga and it concretises into the earth atmosphere the possibility of physical immortality. This is what Sri Aurobindo has done through *Savitri* and this concretisation of the possibility of physical immortality is not in a hereafter but here on earth. That is the supreme revelation and experience that *Savitri* can transmit and does transmit to those who seek her.

In this epic there is something unfathomable. It is very new, very creative, one could never imagine that love has so much power, that it can change the world, that it can conquer death.

This power of love I experienced personally in some way. The fact that somebody dies, the fact that Satyavan died, physically, and Savitri was able to follow him into the realms of Death and be with him and bring him back – it means something: it means that Death has nothing to do with love and that love survives death. You would have had this experience with loved ones too: that your love never dies, it grows and grows and grows, you begin to understand that person, that being, better than you ever had in life, you begin to commune, to have the experience of an unbelievable protection. Even so with the Mother: some of you have had the rare privilege of being with her when she was in her body, and then to find that her physical body has gone. But what is this love that binds you to her, that brings you each time in front of her and she in front of you? This is the power

of love that is invoked in *Savitri*, and that she speaks of when she says ‘All I have is love’.

9

Finally, and this is a debt I owe to Richard Hartz, because he opened to us at the Gnostic Centre a new exploration of *Savitri* – that is the connection between *Savitri* and Sri Aurobindo’s *Record of Yoga*. *Savitri* is an autobiographical epic of the combined yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. We have of course read of many instances when Sri Aurobindo used to read the passages of *Savitri* he had written at night to the Mother the next morning, and she would say “Ah, voila! This is what I went through last night. How did you know?” Sri Aurobindo was writing and the Mother was experiencing almost at the same time. It was an unbelievable journey that took place and the Mother has commented many many times about that experience that she had, which Sri Aurobindo recorded. Similarly what we did not know until the Archives brought out *The Record of Yoga*, was Sri Aurobindo’s experience, which is specifically very detailed in the *Yoga of Aswapati*, ‘The Yoga of the King’. Sri Aurobindo has almost, you can say, written into those pages his entire Yoga up to the point that he wrote *Savitri*.

One of the things that struck me when I started studying these things was the “Sapta Chatushtaya” – which is what *The Record of Yoga* is based on – and how that relates with passages of Aswapati’s Yoga in ‘The Yoga of the King’. The Sapta Chatushtaya has within it seven groups of four. Sapta means seven and Chatushtaya means groups of four: The first group is Shanti, the second is Shakti, the third Vijnana, the fourth Sharira, the fifth is Karma, the sixth Brahma, and the seventh is Siddhi.

Of the seven, Shanti, Shakti, Vijnana and Sharira, these four are really the four stages simultaneously and sequentially of the perfection of the instrument; while the fifth, sixth and seventh stages Karma, Brahma and Siddhi are more general states of consciousness. I would like to bring in, just for a brief while, how these seven Chatushtayas are found in *Savitri*, as a hint. I was actually amazed until I began to see it and read about it, after reading *The Record*. Let us have a look at a passage from Book One, Canto 3 : ‘The Yoga of the Soul’s Release’, where Sri Aurobindo is describing Aswapati’s Yoga :

*As so he grew into his larger self,
Humanity framed his movements less and less;
A greater being saw a greater world.
A fearless will for knowledge dared to erase
The lines of safety Reason draws that bar
Mind's soar, soul's dive into the Infinite.
Even his first steps broke our small earth-bounds
And loitered in a vaster freer air.
A fearless will for knowledge dared to erase
The lines of safety Reason draws that bar
Mind's soar, soul's dive into the Infinite.*

p.26

If you look at these words, ‘*As so he grew into his larger self*’ it seems as if something of the *Shakti Chatushtaya* comes in here, what Sri Aurobindo describes in *The Record of Yoga*. It is a description of the four stages in the perfection of *Shakti*. The four stages of *Shakti Chathushthaya* are Veerya, Shakti, Daivyasprakasha and Shraddha. These are the four stages of *Shakti*. Interestingly Sri Aurobindo puts Shraddha as the final consummation. We would not imagine Shraddha to be in *Shakti* but there it is. If we look back at the passage in *Savitri*, it is a beautiful explanation of this:

*As so he grew into his larger self,
Humanity framed his movements less and less;
A greater being saw a greater world.*

‘*a greater world*’ : the *Brahma Chatushtaya*.

*A fearless will for knowledge dared to erase
The lines of safety Reason draws that bar
Mind's soar, soul's dive into the Infinite.*

‘*A fearless will*’ corresponds to the *veerya* aspect

*Even his first steps broke our small earth-bounds
And loitered in a vaster freer air.
In hands sustained by a transfiguring Might*

'In hands sustained': the *dasya* aspect, the surrender aspect – it is not his own *veerya*, but a higher Shakti

*He caught up lightly like a giant's bow
Left slumbering in a sealed and secret cave
The powers that sleep unused in man within.*

Here comes in the Vijnana aspect: *The powers that sleep unused in man within.*

So if you go back to *The Record of Yoga*, and then if you go to *Savitri*, you can find hints of each of these Chatushtayas in *Savitri*, specifically in the passages dealing with Aswapati's Yoga. You will find that all Sri Aurobindo's experiments of levitation, *laghuta*, the different experiments that he made and noted in *The Record*, they will be reflected in the most poetic language, far, far transcendent beyond that, in *Savitri*. So there is a correlation, and one begins to appreciate and understand the amount of yogic tapasya and research done by Sri Aurobindo that backgrounds *Savitri*, the yoga that he himself went through before he could write *Savitri*. In a first reading one does not notice this. Only if one begins to go deeper and deeper we can find layers and layers of experience, each word is a whole universe of experience that he had, these are not just wonderfully poetic lines.

*He made of miracle a normal act
And turned to a common part of divine works,*

So here comes in the Karma Chatushthaya.

*Magnificently natural at this height,
Efforts that would shatter the strength of mortal hearts,
Pursued in a royalty of mighty ease
Aims too sublime for Nature's daily will:
The gifts of the spirit crowding came to him;
They were his life's pattern and his privilege.*

That is all I have to share with you this evening.

Soul-encounters in Savitri: the Three Mothers

Dr. Prema Nandakumar

On August 20th 2008 Dr. Prema Nandakumar gave a talk on this topic at Savitri Bhavan in Tamil. At our request she has provided an English version of it for us to share with the readers of Invocation.

One could almost say that the whole of Indian spirituality is a Devi Suktham. It is one long adoration of the Divine Mother from the very beginning. The Vedas present us prayerful poems on goddesses such as Lakshmi, Bhudevi, Neela, Medha, Sraddha, Aditi and Vak. Each Suktha has its own divine personification of the varied aspects of creation. With some insight, one could even say it is because of Devi that the Supreme is recognized as divine, as suggested in an ancient saying: *Sraddhaya Devo devatvamasnute*, Through the Devi Sraddha, the Supreme receives his divinity.

From childhood, Indians do gain a general idea about the workings of these various devis thanks to a living tradition. Thus Lakshmi (Sri) is seen as the Mother of Prosperity. The Sri Suktha of the Vedas opens magnificently:

*O Jatavedas (Creator of the Vedas)!
Do manifest in me Lakshmi, golden-hued,
Doe-like, ornamented with gold and silver;
Moon-like, an icon of gold.*

The Bhu Suktha exalts the Earth-Goddess. She is the patient, compassionate Mother whose form is this earth. Her patience and kindness are shoreless. We dig her, torture her, pour dirt on her, poison her very being. Yet she forgives us and feeds us all the time. She is garmented by the ocean (*samudravatee*), has the Sun as her forehead (*Savitree*), holds up all lives (*dharanee*) and is saluted by the gods (*surasaree*).

So many images of the Supreme Mother. For each portion of our lives, there is always a guardian goddess coming to our aid and helping us to go beyond that aspect towards a total vision of the Divine Mother. The ancient sages had studied the psychology of man which finds it very difficult to realize the Transcendent Being. The Transcendent's power of consciousness as well as action were made recognizable to us by the rishis who posited the Purusha-Prakriti idea. Is there any aspect of life where the Supreme's power of action is not recognized? We are acquainted with this Shakti all the time: in the green glow of grass on the earth, in the twinkling stars above, the movement of the plumed serpent dancing or in the leap of the monkey from branch to branch.

For several centuries this power has been recorded in scriptures like the *Devi Mahatmyam*, *Saundarya Lahari*, *Lakshmi Sahasram* and *Syamala Dandakam*. The twentieth century gave us new Devi scriptures from Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni like *Renuka Geetam* and *Uma Sahasram*. Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* belongs to this *parampara*. Born as the gift of Goddess Savitri, Princess Savitri of the Madra country chooses Satyavan as her life's companion and marries him in spite of Rishi Narad's warning that he had only one year to live.

*I am stronger than death and greater than my fate;
My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me
Helpless against my immortality.
Fate's law may change, but not my spirit's will.*

p. 432

Savitri is married and spends a happy year with Satyavan in their forest hermitage. But she is also aware of Rishi Narad's words and proceeds to prepare herself through a meditative Tri-ratra Vrata (sacred observance of three nights), says Vyasa in the original legend that is one of the branch-tales of the *Mahabharata*. The sacred observance by Savitri is referred to briefly:

The virtuous and noble lady, now much worried, when she saw that only four days were left, undertook the three-night vow of standing night and day at one single place.¹

¹ Translations from Vyasa are by R.Y. Deshpande

She stood erect like a block of wood (kaashtabhuteva), and when the three nights were over she performed the morning rituals and made sacrificial offerings. She received the blessings of her parents-in-law and other sages in the forest. When they wished her an auspicious life without widowhood (avaidhavyaasishasthe), it was a good omen: Entering into the Yoga of Meditation and saying to herself, ‘Be it just so!’, she in her heart of hearts repeated their words of benediction.

Vyasa speaks of her at this stage as “*dhyana yoga parayana*”. Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri follows dhyana yoga and gains powerful experiences which we find in the Book of Yoga. One of the major experiences when Savitri moves in the inner countries of the mind in meditation is her encounter with the three soul-forces which are iconised as three Mothers. The number three seems to have a mystic significance in Indian spirituality. Vishnu measured the universe with three steps; the three major Shaktis are Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati; and Savitri’s *vrata* was for three nights. The Devi Mahatmya also speaks of three major Goddesses: Mahalakshmi, Mahakali and Mahasaraswati. Sri Aurobindo may have had this mystic number in mind when he was engaged in setting down Savitri’s experiences in meditation.

Savitri’s first encounter is with the Mother of Sorrows:

*A moon-bright face in a sombre cloud of hair,
A Woman sat in a pale lustrous robe.
A rugged and ragged soil was her bare seat,
Beneath her feet a sharp and wounding stone.
A divine pity on the peaks of the world,
A spirit touched by the grief of all that lives,
She looked out far and saw from inner mind
This questionable world of outward things,
Of false appearances and plausible shapes,
This dubious cosmos stretched in the ignorant Void,
The pangs of earth, the toil and speed of the stars
And the difficult birth and dolorous end of life.*

*Accepting the universe as her body of woe,
The Mother of the seven sorrows bore
The seven stabs that pierced her bleeding heart:
The beauty of sadness lingered on her face,
Her eyes were dim with the ancient stain of tears.*

p. 503

Why a Mother of Sorrows? Again, why should we begin with sorrows? But then ‘sorrow’ is the beginning of experiential wisdom. It may be remembered here that the Gita opens with the sorrow of Arjuna. Nay more: the canto is called ‘The Yoga of Arjuna’s Sorrow’ (Arjuna Vishada Yoga)! Can sorrow be a yoga? Obviously nothing is outside the realm of yoga and sorrow and pity are divine emotions. According to Shakespeare, they are angelic emotions.

*And pity, like a naked newborn babe
Striding the blast, or heaven’s cherubin horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye.²*

Macbeth has murdered Duncan, and murder will out at some time or other. Shakespeare says that the angels who pity the sorrow visited upon mortals will publicise it in some way or other. Here ‘pity’ is referred to as a babe, for these angels which are referred to as cherubim are always portrayed as lovely little babies with wings, always in flight. In the same way, the sorrows of mankind and the Supreme Mother’s pity for mankind’s suffering is personified as a Mother, the Mother of Sorrows. Reading the description one is necessarily reminded of Mother Sarada Devi. The portraits of Sarada Devi show her round, kindly face surrounded by her tresses and we see her always dressed in white. Her life-story reveals how she was indeed an image of ‘*karuna*’ and never ceased to pray for suffering humanity.

Was then Sarada Devi’s striving in vain? Not so. She was able to give comfort to those who came to her and this too is a power. Helping people to bear with suffering and instilling in them hope are wonderful qualities. Sri Aurobindo knew this and had high reverence for

² *Macbeth*, Act 1, Sc. vii

Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi. When he had been cast in the Alipore Jail and his young wife Mrinalini felt helpless and inconsolable, her friend Sudhira took her to Sarada Devi to be comforted. Sarada Devi told Mrinalini:

My daughter, don't be disturbed. Your husband is under the full protection of God. With Thakur Ramakrishna's blessings he will soon be proved innocent. But he will not lead a worldly life.³

Later on, when Mrinalini passed away at the young age of thirty-two, it was Sarada Devi who consoled Mrinalini's mother with gentle words:

She was a goddess born as your daughter in consequence of a curse. Now that her karma is exhausted, her soul has departed.⁴

The right words for the situation from a maternal heart full of love for suffering humanity. Of all the qualities, kindness – *karuna* takes precedence. As Sita Devi says in the *Ramayana*, “*kaaryam karunamaaryena*”; for the noble ones, *karuna* is the prime quality. In the same way patience is also a power. We are patient because we have hope. “Wait and Hope” are the last words of the classic, *The Count of Monte Cristo!*

But pity is not enough, of course. The crucified body has to be replaced by the glorified body! Savitri underlines the importance of the Mother of Sorrows and how she will soon gain an accession of power that could not only pity but also annul the sorrows of mankind:

*Because thou art, men yield not to their doom,
But ask for happiness and strive with fate;
Because thou art, the wretched still can hope.
But thine is the power to solace, not to save.*

³ Mother Sarada Devi's words, as quoted in Nirodbaran's 'Mrinalini' (All India Magazine, April-May 2001), p 40

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

*One day I will return, a bringer of strength,
And make thee drink from the Eternal's cup;
His streams of force shall triumph in thy limbs
And Wisdom's calm control thy passionate heart.
Thy love shall be the bond of humankind,
Compassion the bright key of Nature's acts.*

p. 507

Savitri moves further on in search of her soul. Presently the glorious form of the Mother of Might rises before us. It is a familiar figure for us, because of the attendant lion:

*A Woman sat in gold and purple sheen,
Armed with the trident and the thunderbolt,
Her feet upon a couchant lion's back.
A formidable smile curved round her lips,
Heaven-fire laughed in the corners of her eyes;
Her body a mass of courage and heavenly strength,
August on her seat in the inner world of Mind,
The Mother of Might looked down on passing things ...* p. 509

If the Mother of Sorrows is powerless to take decisive action, the Mother of Might is all action. She is the image of heroism and power. No place here for the weakling and the fear-ridden! *Naaham atma balahinena labyah!* What we find in *Savitri* as striking blank verse, is brought to us as compelling rhythmic prose in Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*:

There is in her an overwhelming intensity, a mighty passion of force to achieve, a divine violence rushing to shatter every limit and obstacle. All her divinity leaps out in a splendour of tempestuous action; she is there for swiftness, for the immediately effective process, the rapid and direct stroke, the frontal assault that carries everything before it.

If there are times which call for patience, there are also times when one has to get up and announce: "Thus far, but no further!" The *Mahabharata* is a good example. Before the Kurukshetra war broke out, there were innumerable attempts to achieve peace. The patience

of Yudhistira was phenomenal and caused deep pain and anger in others like Bhima. Right before the start of hostilities, Arjuna also gave vent to his sorrow that in this war he would have to kill his relations, teachers and friends. “The Gandiva is slithering away from my hands” he tells Krishna. But once the war began, Mahakali took over. Arjuna moved around like the fire of dissolution, cutting down the Kaurava hordes.

Did Sri Aurobindo have anyone in mind when he described the Mother of Might? One could, perhaps, hazard a guess. He must have seen the Mahakali aspect in full force in Sister Nivedita. He had known her quite well and admired her. Indeed the admiration was mutual, as she found in him a likeness to Swami Vivekananda. They met for the first time in Baroda in 1902. When he came to Calcutta, she helped him in his secret work and was made a member of the revolutionary committee of five. It was she who warned Sri Aurobindo about the possibility of his being deported even after his release from the Alipore Bomb Case, and took over the editorship of *Karmayogin* when he went to Chandernagore. Lizelle Raymond’s biography of Sister Nivedita, *The Dedicated* (1953) amply demonstrates the heroine who was not afraid of the battlefield. The importance of this Mahakali aspect is pointed out by Savitri as she tells the Mother:

*Madonna of might, Mother of works and force,
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
To help mankind and help the travail of Time.
Because thou art in him, man hopes and dares;
Because thou art, men’s souls can climb the heavens
And walk like gods in the presence of the Supreme.*

p. 513-14

But power is not all. We need wisdom too! Otherwise like the country that acquired the power of the atom bomb, sheer power would but lead to a global crematorium. One needs pity and patience, strength and boldness, but there are other powers too that one must make part of one’s personality. Savitri moves forward and comes upon the last of the three, the Mother of Light:

*A Woman sat in clear and crystal light:
Heaven had unveiled its lustre in her eyes,
Her feet were moonbeams, her face was a bright sun,
Her smile could persuade a dead lacerated heart
To live again and feel the hands of calm.
A low music heard became her floating voice.*

p. 514

Sheer beauty and goodness and a dreamy music are seen in this Mother of Light. Light has many colours: knowledge, compassion, ability to create beautiful things, the joy of music ... oh so many! Can any of these things be brushed aside as worthless by man? They are all needed by him, as he moves forward in this adventure of consciousness, says Savitri, and the qualities personified by the Mother of Light are among the most important for man's advance:

*Madonna of light, Mother of joy and peace,
Thou art a portion of my self put forth
To raise the spirit to its forgotten heights
And wake the soul by touches of the heavens.
Because thou art, the soul draws near to God;
Because thou art, love grows in spite of hate
And knowledge walks unslain in the pit of Night.*

p. 520

The Mother of Light is in action when a man chisels a tiny sculpture self-lost in his creative mood, when a child smiles at a rose which has unfurled its petals, when we look up to the inspirations of great thinkers and spiritual luminaries to give a meaning to our existence. Thus do we feel closer and closer to the divine.

*The world is charged with the grandeur of god
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed.⁵*

But that is not all. One must not remain satisfied with the golden glow of life at present but act decisively to bring down the divine's transformative power so that life on earth could become a life divine. Savitri assures the Mother of Light:

⁵ Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'God's Grandeur'

*One day I will return, His hand in mine,
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,
Then shall the divine family be born.
There shall be light and peace in all the worlds.*

p. 521

It is a nectarean promise after a nectarean vision that does remind one of gentle Mrinalini. Nirodbaran's biographical talk about her makes it abundantly clear that she was indeed an angelic person. As Nirodbaran says, Sri Aurobindo chose her as his wife and, "while in the case of Savitri love met her in the wilderness, in the case of Sri Aurobindo love met him in the heart of a town from a simple girl ..."

The Mother of Light is the all-auspicious Maheshwari vision, according to Nolini Kanta Gupta:

*Vast and serene as the infinite spaces,
Far away from our little earthly world,
And yet overarching and leaning down in a protective gesture –
The mother of Light, the Mother of all-comprehending wisdom,
Throned on the highest heights,
Sheds, equal and unruffled, her benign compassion on obscure mortals,
Draws them infallibly ever nearer to her through the rolling ages –
Her very presence is the power that decrees, the grace that redeems.*

"*The power that decrees, the grace that redeems.*" How true! Mother of Sorrows, Mother of Might, Mother of Light: Mother Sarada Devi, Sister Nivedita, Mrinalini. These are great thoughts and images which have helped us in infinite ways. Of course, playing the Sherlock Holmes with inspired, spiritual poetry is not criticism. It is just a help to understand better the contours of thought behind an epic structure like *Savitri*. And we do need such help, as children need the guiding hand of a mother, not to feel lost in the undulating expanse of this *Devi Kavyam* of our times – not for understanding it at the mental level, but for drawing closer to *Savitri* by holding on to the known so that the unknown draws us towards it – like Beatrice helping Dante Alighieri in the *Divine Comedy*.

On Translating Savitri

From a letter of Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna)

November 25th 2008 marks the 104th birthday of our elder brother Amal Kiran – one who has had a uniquely close relationship with Savitri. And yet this great authority on Sri Aurobindo’s poem, though a prolific author, has never devoted a book entirely to it.

At Savitri Bhavan we have been working for several years on compiling a comprehensive collection of all the published writings of Amal Kiran on Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri. This work is now nearing completion, and runs to over 600 pages. A first volume, comprising full essays and articles, is planned to be published shortly, to be followed by a second volume devoted to extracts from letters and other sources. As a small foretaste, we share this letter on a topic which is of special interest and relevance for many of our readers.

Savitri, the great epic by Sri Aurobindo, is an unparalleled storehouse of spiritual wisdom that comes in the form of what the ancients called Mantra. Mantra is borne to us in sound-waves; not simply the luminous sense, but also the harmonious verbal embodiment of it is important. The poetry that is *Savitri* is inseparable from the spirituality of this master-work of Sri Aurobindo and the latter cannot be appreciated and assimilated in a living manner unless we are responsive to the mode of vision, the cast of word, the mould of rhythm – the Spirit’s varied poetic Avatar. The heart of *Savitri* – the mystery from which the poem has sprung – yields its pulsations most intimately when we approach it with sensitiveness to the art of *Savitri*. There is an intellectual element too in this poem, that is why Sri Aurobindo says that in its final form it is “a sort of poetic philosophy of the Spirit and of Life”.

All this makes translation of *Savitri* a great challenge, for not only is the meaning to be conveyed, the idioms and metaphors adequately depicted in the cultural context of the particular language, but a rhythm has also to be created. The purpose of a translation is not only to introduce *Savitri* to a reader in his own mother-tongue but a kind of

Sadhana, a spiritual effort and not only a literary one for the translator. It is only when one enjoys by the ear and understands by the mind and heart the Mantric rhythm and the spiritual adventure of *Savitri* in the original and has also a mastery over the language, its rhythm and nuances and culture, in which one is translating, that a translation is likely to be fairly successful. That there is a need is clear from the translations already available in various languages, Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Marathi and other Indian languages and French, German and Italian amongst the European ones.

Savitri's most creative function is to kindle in us a flame burning at all times so that we may build up in ourselves the living presence of that Master-Yogi and through the illumining art of this Epic of the Spirit quicken at each moment with the invocation:

*O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride...*

p. 345

If any translation can achieve a little of this, it is very much worth its weight in gold.

Dawn

How earth-strange on the ethereal way
Travels the first wing-carillon
A-tremble with the silver dawn
Ere rush of golden day!

Across slow-widening brightness, still
A dim-disclosed secrecy,
Quivers the foliage-tracery
Apart, inscrutable.

As though their breath was made divine
By dew of contemplative hours,
There hangs an aura round the flowers
A nameless shadow-shine.

The heart, a hovering consciousness,
Thrills on some paradisal verge
As if awakening to merge
With beauty sorrowless.

Familiar hues are yet unborn,
A veil half-hiding them lays bare,
Shimmering through the mystic air,
An alchemy of morn,

Wherein the sense of earthly eyes
If soul could only learn to steep,
Out of the human dross of sleep
A golden god would rise!

AMAL KIRAN
(born 25.11.1904)

Dawn in the Veda is the goddess symbolic of new openings of divine illumination on man's physical consciousness. She alternates with her sister Night; but that darkness itself is a mother of light and always Dawn comes to reveal what the black-browed Mother has prepared.

SRI AUROBINDO

The Secret of the Veda, p. 273

Vedic imagery in Savitri (Part 3)

The Symbol of Dawn

by Vladimir Iatsenko

It is interesting to note the distinction between the Dawn and the Dawns.

Sometimes the plural is used to indicate the same phenomenon of spiritual illumination, but in cases where the many Dawns are the hues of the one Dawn, as in *Savitri: Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues....*¹

But sometimes the plural is used when the aspect of Time and its succession is important. Vamadeva, for instance, dedicates nearly an entire hymn to this question: which Dawn is ancient and which is new. It is important for him, he says, to know whether the path of these Dawns is leading him to the same goal as his Ancestors or whether it is a new path, which he may not want to choose – the path of “misleading dawns”², so to say. Sri Aurobindo has also used it in this way in *Savitri*. Vamadeva says:

kuvit sa devīḥ sanayo navo vā
yāmo babhūyād uṣaso vo adya
yenā navagve aṅgire daśagve saptāsyे revatī revad ūṣa

*O goddesses, is it your ancient or new path today? By which, o rich ones, you revealed the riches to Angiras, Navagvas, Dashagvas and Saptasya?*³

And he answers himself:

kva svid āsām̄ katamā purāṇī
yayā vidhānā vidadhur ṛbhāṇām̄
śubhram̄ yacchubhrā uṣasaś caranti
na vi jñāyante sadṛśīr ajuryāḥ

1 *Savitri* p.4

2 *Ibid.* p. 55:

A Consciousness that knows not its own truth,
A vagrant hunter of **misleading dawns**,
Between the being's dark and luminous ends
Moves here in a half-light that seems the whole:...

3 RV 4.51.4

Where, indeed, among these? Who is ancient, with whose help they established the establishments of Ribhus⁴?

The Bright Dawns come having the brightness (of the ancient ones within), they cannot be distinguished, for being ageless they look similar.⁵

īyusṭīṇām upamā ūaśvatīnām
vibhātīnām prathamoṣā vyaśvait

The Dawn broke forth, the closest to those eternal ones which are already gone, and the first of those which are to come.⁶

Sri Aurobindo explains the symbol of many Dawns in *The Secret of the Veda*:

Thus the Dawns come with a constant alternation, thrice ten—the mystic number of our mentality—making the month, till some day there shall break out upon us the wondrous experience of our forefathers in a long bygone age of humanity when the dawns succeeded each other without the intervention of any night, when they came to the Sun as to a lover and circled round him, not returning again and again in his front as a precursor of his periodical visitations. That shall be when the supramental consciousness shines out fulfilled in the mentality and we shall possess the year-long day enjoyed by the gods on the summit of the eternal mountain. Then shall be the dawning of the “best” or highest, most glorious Dawn, when “driving away the Enemy, guardian of the Truth, born in the Truth, full of the bliss, uttering the highest truths, fulfilled in all boons she brings the birth and manifestation of the godheads.” Meanwhile each dawn comes as the first of a long succession that shall follow and pursues the path and goal of those that have already gone forward; each in her coming impels the life upwards and awakens in us someone who was dead.⁷

⁴ The Ribhus are the skilful divine artisans who fashion our physical, vital and mental bodies.

⁵ RV 4.51.6

⁶ RV 1.113.15

⁷ *The Secret of the Veda* p. 482

*It wrote the lines of a significant myth
Telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns,
A brilliant code penned with the sky for page.⁸*

This great evolution is effected in Time gradually, in the mornings of the human spirit, by the unbroken succession of the Dawns. For Dawn in the Veda is the goddess symbolic of new openings of divine illumination on man's physical consciousness. She alternates with her sister Night; but that darkness itself is a mother of light and always Dawn comes to reveal what the black-browed Mother has prepared. Here, however, the seer seems to speak of continuous dawns, not broken by these intervals of apparent rest and obscurity. By the brilliant force of that continuity of successive illuminations the mentality of man ascends swiftly into fullest light.⁹

We read in *Savitri*:

*Some great thing has been done, some light, some power
Delivered from the huge Inconscient's grasp:
It has emerged from night; it sees its dawns
Circling for ever though no dawn can stay.¹⁰*

The Path of Knowledge: the conception of evolution and the Dawn.

The Dawn creates the Path for men to follow; she brings her fresh light of the Divine Vision from the Sun for man to see and know the Path.

udapaptann aruṇā bhānavo vṛ̥thā
svāyujo aruṣīr gā ayukṣata
akrann uṣāso vayunāni pūrvathā
ruṣantam bhānum aruṣīr aśiśrayuh / 1.92.2

Suddenly the red lights (beams) flew up! They yoked the red cows (the rays of Knowledge), easy to yoke!

⁸ *Savitri* p.4

⁹ *The Secret of the Veda* p. 273

¹⁰ *Savitri* p.650

***The Dawns created the paths as before, red-hued they become
of bright light!***

gātum kṛṇavann uṣaso janāya (4.51.1)

asthur u citrā uṣasah purastān mitā iva svaravo 'dhvareṣu (4.51.2)

The Dawns are making a Path for men to walk...

*The bright Dawns stood up from the East, as if measuring the Paths
by the sacrificial posts.*

The Dawns are showing what is to be done, the stages on the path of development which have to be passed, completed. When they come, one can clearly see what is to be done now and then. One can see the path, as if measured by sacrificial posts. The path is itself a Sacrifice, *yajñam adhvaram*, (RV1.1.3), *mitā iva svaravo 'dhvareṣu*; “as if measured by the Sacrificial events” of greater consecration and more complete surrender to the Divine of all that is here in the lower hemisphere, which as such creates the movement towards Light. This experience-knowledge naturally leads us to the conception of the evolution of consciousness.

The full light of the Dawn cannot be immediately assimilated by the darkened consciousness, so the Darkness has to feed on it, as it were, slowly bit by bit, building up the possibilities of a new perception for a greater light to come. So day by day the Dawn comes and brings something of a new light, but she cannot stay long. In fact, she never stays. Her light is always fresh and new and ancient at the same time. But our mortality cannot bear her ever-new light; therefore she must withdraw and come again.

*Then the divine afflatus, spent, withdrew,
Unwanted, fading from the mortal's range....*

*Too perfect to be held by death-bound hearts,
The prescience of a marvellous birth to come.*

*Only a little the god-light can stay:
Spiritual beauty illumining human sight
Lines with its passion and mystery Matter's mask
And squanders eternity on a beat of Time.”¹¹*

11 Savitri p.5

Thus being born again and again, *punah punar jāyamānā*,¹² the Dawn diminishes, wears out the life-force in Man, making him age, *martasya devī jarayanty āyuh, praminatī manusyā yugāni*.¹³ For according to the Veda the body of mortal man has only a temporary value and should not stay long in its imperfect and transitional form; it has some higher purpose and evolutionary destination: Immortality. Therefore when Dawn comes with the Immortal Light of the Sun symbolizing the Supramental Consciousness, *suryasya ceti raśmibhir*,¹⁴ she forces the life of mortal beings to age and thus to change. This function of Usha to bring the influence of the higher world into the lower and to ensure the growth of the lower forms of consciousness into the higher is the very concept of evolution in the Veda. She is an intermediary between the Supreme and His Creation. She is the symbol of the Divine Mother.

She does not diminish, however, Man's sacred commitments which are of a divine character or dedicated to the divine, *aminatī daivyāni vratāni*,¹⁵ for these are the agents of his future life, which cause the divine force to enter into him and make him grow. The opposition of the two statements is quite obvious: *praminatī manusyā yugāni* and *aminatī daivyāni vratāni*, which clearly shows that the Dawn is supporting all the actions of man dedicated to the higher life and neglecting or even diminishing the establishments of mortal life, which have no future. She is therefore transgressing the law of human life, neglecting or even destroying the state of mortal consciousness in its progressive movement towards Immortality. Let us read the whole passage now:

punah punar jāyamānā purāṇī
samānam varṇam abhi śubhamānā
śvaghnīva kṛthnur viajā āminānā
martasya devī jarayanty āyuh / 10

Again and again She is being born, the Ancient One, shining with the same colour all around.

As if a hunter, measuring the flight of birds with the hunting dogs to cut them down, the Goddess wears out the life-force of the mortal.

12 RV.1.92.10

13 RV.1.92.10-11

14 RV.1.92.12

15 RV.1.92.12

vyūrṇvatī divo antāṁ abodhy apa svasāram sanutar yuyoti
praminaṭī manuṣyā yugāni yoṣā jārasya cakṣasā vi bhāti / 11

Disclosing the borders of Heaven She awakened, leading away Her sister (Night).

Decreasing the age of Men, the Lady shines wide with the Eye of the Beloved (Sun).

paśūnna citrā subhagā prathānā
sindhur na kṣoda urviyā vyāšvait
aminaṭī daivyāni vratāni
suryasya ceti raśmibhir dr̄śānā / 12

*Spreading like cattle, bright and blissful, shining wide like the ocean,
Never diminishing the divine laws, She is seen as the Sun, visible
in its rays.*

And then, in order to establish the continuation of life – symbolized in the Rig Veda by progeny (*tokam ca tanayam ca dhāmahe*,¹⁶ which is nothing but delight) – in this world of death, Usha is asked to bring into this lower hemisphere of darkness and death three great achievements:

- a) the Supreme Consciousness-Knowledge, *tac citram*, by which Men can be supported in their growth and evolution here.¹⁷ Progeny is a symbol of the continuation of the Supreme's existence in the world of non-existence, where He, the Supreme, doesn't know that He is the Supreme. The combination of these two states of consciousness of the Supreme: awareness and unawareness, creates time, space and causality. It is as if being is stretched over into non-being; there is a gap between being: the gradation from more conscious part into less conscious, which makes all the play in this creation of multitude. To continue the play between the two and thus to introduce more conscious beings into this play, can be seen as the spiritual symbol of getting progeny.
- b) Then She is asked to reveal the luminous wealth within Man, the divinity in him, his very soul, the spark of the Divine, the immortal among mortals. It can be revealed only with the help of the Supreme Consciousness from above, which Usha brings with Herself, *tac citram*,

16 RV.1.92.13

17 Cf. Aswapati, the Lord of Power, doing tapasya to Savitri, the Goddess of the Divine Truth, for getting progeny.

- c) and then to yoke the horse-powers to her luminous Knowledge, *aśvān adyāruṇān*,¹⁸ introducing her Consciousness into matter! And thus, by these three actions, She brings delight to Men. It is important to note here that delight is the offspring of Knowledge and Power (Cit-Tapas) and so requires both for its realisation. Thus we can say that delight of this kind is nothing but Conscious Existence. Neither existence which is imperfectly conscious, nor consciousness which is imperfectly existent are sufficient for the manifestation of that Delight.¹⁹

uṣas tac citram ā bharāsmabhyam vājinīvati
yena tokam ca tanayam ca dhāmahe

O Dawn, Powerful Mistress, bring to us that luminous perception by which we may establish our offspring here.

uṣo adyeha gomaty aśvavati vibhāvari
revad asme vyucchā sūnr̥tāvati

*O Dawn, here today, the radiant one, the mistress of knowledge and power,
Illumine within us the shining wealth, O mistress of the happy truths!*

yukṣvā hi vājinīvaty aśvān adyāruṇān uṣah
athā no viśvā saubhagāny ā vaha

Today, O Dawn, yoke, O powerful maiden, the red horses (powers) together, and then bring to us all the enjoyments.²⁰

The Dawn as the power of Aditi and the Adityas

The Dawn brings the light from the Transcendent into the lower hemisphere of mind, life and body. She is the first to introduce light into the Darkness, after which the Creator, the God Savitar comes and Surya is finally able to reveal in this manifestation his luminous body of light.²¹

18 RV.1.92.15

19 Cf. with the symbol of Aswapati in the story of Savitri.

20 RV.1.92.12-15

21 The time of Savitar in the morning worship precedes the time of Surya; it falls between the time of the Dawn and the time when the actual disk of the Sun is visible, which is the time of Surya.

Sri Aurobindo explains the relations between these principles in the *Secret of the Veda*:

[Surya] is the light of the Truth rising on the human consciousness in the wake of the divine Dawn whom he pursues as a lover follows after his beloved and he treads the paths she has traced for him. For Dawn the daughter of Heaven, the face or power of Aditi, is the constant opening out of the divine light upon the human being; she is the coming of the spiritual riches, a light, a power, a new birth, the pouring out of the golden treasure of heaven into his earthly existence.

So Dawn is the power of Aditi, and her powers are the solar deities, known as the Adityas in the Veda. They are Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Daksha, Ansha and Surya or Savitar. These seven children of Aditi are the guardians of that supreme Light. It is with the help of these godheads and their action that the Divine Mother manifests the Supreme in Time and Space. However there was also the eighth son, known as Vivasvat or Martānda, who descended into the mortal regions of Darkness. Sri Aurobindo speaks about this myth in the chapter "The Guardians of Light":

We are told that there are eight sons of the cosmic Aditi who are born from her body; by seven she moves to the gods, but the eighth son is Martanda, of the mortal creation, whom she casts away from her; with the seven she moves to the supreme life, the original age of the gods, but Martanda is brought back out of the Inconscient into which he had been cast to preside over mortal birth and death. This Martanda or eighth Surya is the black or dark, the lost, the hidden sun. The Titans have taken and concealed him in their cavern of darkness and thence he must be released into splendour and freedom by the gods and seers through the power of the sacrifice.

The Four Kings

Aditi is the infinite Light of which the divine world is a formation and the gods, children of the infinite Light, born of her in the Ritam, manifested in that active truth of her movement **guard it against Chaos and Ignorance.**²²

22 *The Secret of the Veda* p.475

These are the Guardians of Light, the godheads who bring the higher light and infuse it into the darkness of the lower creation. “It is they who maintain the invincible workings of the Truth in the universe, they who build its worlds into an image of the Truth. They, bounteous givers, loose out upon man its floods variously imaged by the mystic poets as the sevenfold solar waters, the rain of heaven, the streams of the Truth, the seven mighty Ones of heaven, the waters that have knowledge, the floods that breaking through the control of Vritra the Coverer ascend and overflow the mind. They, seers and revealers, make the light of the Truth to arise on the darkened sky of his mentality, fill with its luminous and honey-sweet satisfactions the atmosphere of his vital existence, transform into its vastness and plenitude by the power of the Sun the earth of his physical being, create everywhere the divine Dawn.²³

“This creation of the divine Creator goddess Aditi speaketh forth to us, this the all-kings Varuna and Mitra and Aryaman with one mind and heart.” The four Kings find themselves fulfilled with their infinite Mother by the delightful perfection in man of Bhaga the Enjoyer, the youngest and greatest of them all. Thus is the divine creation of the fourfold Savitri founded on Varuna, combined and guided by Mitra, achieved by Aryaman, enjoyed in Bhaga: Aditi the infinite Mother realises herself in the human being by the birth and works of her glorious children.²⁴

There is a significant passage in the *Secret of the Veda* where Sri Aurobindo explains these four godheads in terms of the later concept of Sat Chit Ananda.

Still the union comes about by a combination of their powers and therefore each has in it his own proper nature and function. That of the Four is to build up the whole divine state into its perfection by the natural interaction of its four essential elements.

- 1) The Divine is existence all-embracing, infinite and pure; Varuna brings to us the infinite oceanic space of the divine soul and its ethereal, elemental purity.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.* p.516

- 2) The Divine is boundless consciousness, perfect in knowledge, pure and therefore luminously right in its discernment of things, perfectly harmonious and happy in its concordance of their law and nature; Mitra brings us this light and harmony, this right distinction and relation and friendly concord, the happy laws of the liberated soul concordant with itself and the Truth in all its rich thought, shining actions and thousandfold enjoyment.
- 3) The Divine is in its own being pure and perfect power and in us the eternal upward tendency in things to their source and truth; Aryaman brings to us this mighty strength and perfectly-guided happy inner upsurging.
- 4) The Divine is the pure, the faultless, the all-embracing, the untroubled ecstasy that enjoys its own infinite being and enjoys equally all that it creates within itself; Bhaga gives us sovereignly that ecstasy of the liberated soul, its free and unfallen possession of itself and the world.

This quaternary is practically the later essential trinity of Sachchidananda, — Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, with self-awareness and self-force, Chit and Tapas, for double terms of Consciousness; but it is here translated into its cosmic terms and equivalents.

- 1) Varuna the King has his foundation in the all-pervading purity of Sat;
- 2) Mitra the Happy and the Mighty, most beloved of the Gods, in the all-uniting light of Chit;
- 3) many-charioted Aryaman in the movement and all-discerning force of Tapas;
- 4) Bhaga in the all-embracing joy of Ananda.

Yet as all these things form one in the realised godhead, as each element of the trinity contains the others in itself and none of them can exist separately from the rest, therefore each of the Four also possesses by force of his own essential quality every general attribute of his brothers. For this reason if we do not read the Veda as carefully as it was written, we shall miss its distinctions and see only the indistinguishable common functions of these luminous Kings, —as indeed throughout the hymns the unity in difference of all the gods makes it difficult for the mind not accustomed to the subtleties of psychological truth to find in the Vedic divinities anything but a confused mass of

common or interchangeable attributes. But the distinctions are there and have as great a force and importance as in the Greek and Egyptian symbolism. Each god contains in himself all the others, but remains still himself in his peculiar function.²⁵

Dawn and the manifestation of the Sun

Kutsa Angirasa in the hymn to Surya RV 1.115.1-2 invokes the Sun with as follows:

citrám devánām úd agād ánīkam cáksur mitrásya várūnasya agnéh
áprā dyávāpr̥thiví antárikṣam súrya ātmá jágatas tasthúṣaś ca.

The conscious power, citram anīkam, of all the Gods has risen! The Eye of Consciousness Supreme, of Being and of Will (of Mitra, Varuna and Agni), filling the Earth and Heaven and the Air, the Sun, the Self of all that moves and moves not.²⁶

Surya is the Self of all that moves and moves not, *ātmā jagatas tasthuṣaś ca*, which is a direct and ultimate definition of the Supramental Manifestation.

On the other hand the God Savitar is called the lord, *vašī*, of all that moves and moves not, but not the self, *jágataḥ sthātúr ubháyasya yó vaśī* (RV 4.53.6). This defines the difference between Surya and Savitar. Surya is the Self and Savitar is the Lord of all that moves and moves not.

Then the verse runs as follows:

súryo devím usásam rócamānām máryo ná yósām abhí eti paścāt
yátrā náro devayánto yugáni vitanvaté práti bhadráya bhadrám.

The Sun follows the Dawn, resplendent Goddess, as a young man follows a lady, there, where the heroic souls [of men struggling], seeking the divine manifestation, spread out the Blissful for the Blissful!²⁷

25 *The Secret of the Veda* p.497

26 Griffith's translation: "The brilliant presence of the Gods hath risen, the eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni. The soul of all that moveth not or moveth, the Sun hath filled the air and earth and heaven."

27 Griffith's translation: "Like as a young man followeth a maiden, so doth the Sun the Dawn, resplendent Goddess: Where pious men extend their generations, before the Auspicious One for happy fortune."

So the Sun is following the Dawn there where the divine souls of heroic men are sacrificing (spreading or manifesting) the Blissful in time and space for the sake of the Blissful. It is the Dawn who brings Him there, she is *rocamānā*, shining with his supramental light of the three luminous realms *rocanā*, and he follows her, like a young man goes after a young woman to realize all his wishes and desires in manifestation. It is the Dawn, the Divine Mother, who brings Him into manifestation.

There is another very significant passage in the Rig Veda, which is striking in its imagery:

"Do not delay your sacrificial work", *mā ciram tanuthā apah* – says the Rishi to the Dawn, – "do not let the Sun burn you with his flame as if you are a thief and an enemy!" *net tvā stenam yathā ripum tapāti sūro arcīṣā*.²⁸

The Sun is a symbol of the Supramental manifestation. If it comes before the Dawn has finished her evolutionary preparatory work of bringing down the light of the Sun and establishing it in the darkness, gradually transforming it into the substance of light, then the Supramental Light, symbolized by the Sun, would simply burn it down, destroying this creation, which is unprepared to receive the full force of that light. It is interesting to note that the word thief, *stena*, is used in this context. *Stena* is one who lives for himself: having come into this creation to do the sacrificial work – that is, for the Divine growth in the Manifestation – he changed and started to live for himself alone and his own enjoyment, his own knowledge, and his own power.²⁹

Stena,³⁰ according to Vedic psychology, is the one who does not sacrifice, who takes the Divine light and support for granted, with no gratitude and no giving back. The Panis, the traffickers and traders,

28 RV 5.79.9. Sri Aurobindo translates this passage differently but implying the same meaning: "Break forth into light, O daughter of heaven! And spin not out too long the work. For thee thy sun afflicts not with his burning ray as he afflicts the foe and the thief." In the footnote Sri Aurobindo says: "The labour towards the being of the Truth is long and tedious, because the powers of darkness and division, the lower powers of our being, seize on and appropriate, keep idle or misuse the gains of the knowledge. They are not bearers of the sacrifice, but its spoilers; they are hurt by the full ray of the sun. But this Dawn of knowledge can bear the full illumination and bring to a rapid conclusion the great work."

29 "There is no greater sin than selfishness", says Sri Aurobindo in his *Aphorisms*.

30 BhG 4 : "The one who cooks for himself alone is a thief", says the Gita, meaning that the heavenly Soma, coming down here from heaven, is not shared with the whole, though it was given for the whole of creation.

are also called thieves and robbers. They steal the Divine light and treasures, store them in the cave of the Subconscious, but do not use them for the Divine purpose, which is the welfare of all. So when the time of the Sun, the supramental manifestation, comes and the Sun, the Divine Eye, sees that the bearers of light are not ready to receive and use the Immortal Power, it will treat them as thieves and robbers.

vyuccha duhitar divo mā ciram tanuthā apah
net tvā stenam yathā ripum tapāti sūro arcisā
sujāte aśvasūnṛte

*Shine wide, O Daughter of Heaven, **do not delay your work**. Let not Sun with his flame burn you down, as if it was a thief, or enemy. O maiden of a perfect Birth, O Mistress of Power of happy Truth!*

etāvad ved uṣas tvam bhūyo vā dātum arhasi
yā stotrbhyo vibhāvary ucchantī na pramīyase
sujāte aśvasūnṛte

This much and more you should give, O Dawn,to those who affirm you in their prayers, you, O Luminous Lady, who shines but are not diminished, O maiden of the perfect Birth, O Mistress of Power of happy Truth!³¹

Similarly to this passage, in *Savitri* the Voice of the Supreme warns Aswapati not to invoke the immeasurable descent of the Supreme into the earthly frame of man, who is too weak to receive it. Therefore he has to be patient, and entrust all work to the Divine Mother, for she is the all-seeing Power and knows how to slowly hew her way through this resistance.

I am the Mystery beyond reach of mind,
I am the goal of the travail of the suns;
My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.
But too immense my danger and my joy.
Awake not the immeasurable descent,
Speak not my secret name to hostile Time;

³¹ RV 5.79.8-10. It is another interesting thought of the evolutionary function of the Dawn. Unlike the Sun, the Dawn shines and gradually transforms the Darkness, but unlike the Sun, her light does not destroy.

**Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight.
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.
Leave the all-seeing Power to hew its way:**

In thy single vast achievement reign apart
Helping the world with thy great lonely days.³²

In *The Essays on the Gita* Sri Aurobindo explains the psychological concept of the thief in the Vedic perspective of the Sacrifice:

But the individual being begins with ignorance and persists long in ignorance. Acutely conscious of himself he sees the ego as the cause and whole meaning of life and not the Divine. He sees himself as the doer of works and does not see that all the workings of existence including his own internal and external activities are the workings of one universal Nature and nothing else. He sees himself as the enjoyer of works and imagines that for him all exists and him Nature ought to satisfy and obey his personal will; he does not see that she is not at all concerned with satisfying him or at all careful of his will, but obeys a higher universal will and seeks to satisfy a Godhead who transcends her and her works and creations; his finite being, his will and his satisfactions are hers and not his, and she offers them at every moment as a sacrifice to the Divine of whose purpose in her she makes all this the covert instrumentation. Because of this ignorance whose seal is egoism, the creature ignores the law of sacrifice and seeks to take all he can for himself and gives only what Nature by her internal and external compulsion forces him to give. He can really take nothing except what she allows him to receive as his portion, what the divine Powers within her yield to his desire. The egoistic soul in a world of sacrifice is as if a thief or robber who takes what these Powers bring to him and has no mind to give in return. He misses the true meaning of life and, since he does not use life and works for the enlargement and elevation of his being through sacrifice, he lives in vain.³³

32 *Savitri* p.335

33 *Essays on the Gita* p.126

A Conclusion

The Myth of the Dawn and the forgotten Path

The Path of the Vedic Dawn was understood as symbolic of the union of the human and the divine mind. The Dawn comes from beyond, from the regions of the Sun, impelled by the God Savitar. The Dawn comes down creating the world of Svar on her way, filling it with the Rays of the Sun. It is the world between the Supramental and our ordinary human intelligence, says Sri Aurobindo. This world of the Rays of the Sun is depicted as three luminous realms of the God Savitar. In Sri Aurobindo's terminology these regions are called the Intuitive Mind, the Overmind and the Overmental Gnosis, the first outflow of the Supermind. Sri Aurobindo himself thought for quite some time that the planes of the Overmind were those of the Supramental Consciousness, until he realised, after descending into the abysses of the Inconscient, that there was another realm behind it, which was a true Supermind, for it had the power to change the Inconscient. The Overmental consciousness is thus the closest to the Supramental, diffusing its light into the lower creation. It is the realm of the Dynamic Truth being assimilated in the lower nature, called in the Veda Ritam, (*truth covered by the truth*)³⁴, which alone has access to and therefore can transform our lower dynamic nature into its Divine prototype, for it is indeed a dynamic projection of the Supermind into the lower hemisphere.

All these realms of the Mind are therefore closely associated with the human mind, in fact they are an extension of it into the higher realms of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo confirms this when he says that we cannot really know our mind and how it actually operates until we reach the Supermind. It is in the Supermind, he says, that the secret of our mentality lies, it is there that we will discover it to be a dynamic link to the Beyond. This function of the Mind was well known to the Vedic Rishis. It was always referred to as such and consciously invoked to effect changes to the consciousness in the body.

34 In the hymn to Mitra and Varuna, RV 5.062.01, the Rishi invokes them in this way:

ṛjéna rítám ápihitam dhruvám vām̄ súryasya yátra vimucánti áśván̄
dásá sátaś sahá tashthus tád ékam devánām śrésthām vápusām apaśyam /
By the Truth is veiled that ever-standing Truth of yours where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; there the ten hundreds stand still together; That One, I have beheld the greatest of the embodied gods.

The arrival of the Dawn brings with it the Divine Light from the Beyond into the lower darkened mentality thus effectuating its transformation. Dawn is also depicted in the Veda as a Face of the Divine Mother, Aditi, *aditeranīkam*. All great universal godheads are her sons, called Adityas, the inhabitants of the Overmental realms. It is through them and with their help that She does her Sacrificial work here: pouring her supreme light into us. These godheads are her faculties and powers, her children: Mitra and Varuna, Aryaman, Bhaga, Daksha, Ansha, Surya, Indra, Vishnu, etc. All of them are solar deities, diffusing her light into the lower creation.

Since the ancient Yoga of the Veda did not succeed in transforming our human nature (and the reasons were several)³⁵ the path of transformation was gradually forgotten, and the dynamic link to the Supermind was finally lost. This became the ground for a paradigm shift in the spiritual life of mankind. The focus shifted to the achievement of the Absolute, introducing the concepts of Mukti and Mayavada, in terms of escape from the bodily life. Thus the real meaning of transformation symbolized by the Vedic Sacrifice, which was practiced as a surrender of our human nature to the rays of the Dawn, the dynamic truth of the godheads of Svar, who were leading man beyond his limited mentality to the Supramental consciousness and to the conquest of Immortality, was forgotten and fell into oblivion; it became an ancient Myth of Maya, leaving behind only an extensive system of rituals as the remnants of its glorious past.

No wonder, then, that these great godheads became forgotten, for they were not required any more. Unwanted, they withdrew their influence from the action over our mentality. Another path was established to bypass them that headed straight to the Absolute. The sacrificial ground was still used for rituals, but they were performed in forgetfulness of the promise we made to transform unregenerate Nature. The focus was instead on escaping from the toil and the tardy steps of evolution, destroying all that was done before by the ages of the Sacrifice, in order to become empty, to drop the body with its imperfect life and puppet mind, and return home to the glorious Beginning empty-handed.

35 One of the reasons probably was that the development of the Psychic Being was yet to take place. It was only when it became sufficiently developed that it was possible for the godheads to uplift it to the higher realms of consciousness where they (who are the powers of the soul at the universal level of consciousness) abide.

And we must say that after such a failure there was no other possibility to justify and to keep intact the memory of the Spirit's existence, since the dynamic realms were no more a target and priority; there was no other task, even no question about transformation of life here, for it was already known and considered as an impossible path. The word 'immortality' had lost its significance and its original meaning of transforming life here in the body, and started to mean the state beyond body, life and mind. The only thing which remained for the spiritual seekers was to drop their half conscious nature as soon as possible and to return home where there was no suffering.

It is interesting to note here that Sri Aurobindo, before he translated the Veda, could not find suitable expression in English for his spiritual experiences. Neither the Upanishads nor the Bhagavadgita provided him with suitable descriptions for the states of consciousness he was experiencing, because these later texts do not deal with or describe the Vedic type of experiences. It was only in the Veda that Sri Aurobindo found a confirmation of his spiritual experiences and recognized them as the ancient Path of the Rishis, the Path of the Dynamic Truth, Ritam or, as he called it, the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo was therefore led to believe that the time had come for this path to be taken up by mankind once again. He thus had to reactivate the link between mind and the Supermind over the triple Svar bringing it to the realms of the dynamic Truth, which alone have the power to transform earthly nature.

Announcement

An important new study of *Savitri*

Sri Aurobindo : the Poet of Nature and other writings on Savitri

by Ashok K. Ganguli,
With a Foreword by Dr. Mangesh Nadkarni

Puducherry, SACAR Trust, 2008
407 pages, Rs. 350.-

The four sections of this book deal with Nature poetry, and the concept of Nature in poetry; Imagery and figures of speech; the theme of Death; and lastly the treatment of Science. Each of these topics is first introduced in the context of English poetry in general, before the special characteristics of Sri Aurobindo's treatment of them in *Savitri* are explored. While these essays are scrupulously referenced for the use of the serious student, at the same time the book is presented in a way that is accessible and interesting for the general reader. In each section, Professor Ganguli introduces his readers to an important aspect of Sri Aurobindo's vision by a combination of lucid explanation and illuminating quotations from the poem.

New Developments at Savitri Bhavan

April to October 2008

The last seven months have been a time of exciting new developments at Savitri Bhavan. Friends who visited us as recently as February 2008 are amazed at the great changes they see in our facilities and our activities when they come again now.

Moving into the new premises

As was reported in *Invocation* 28, on March 30th 2008 Dr. Karan Singh performed the official inauguration of the newly completed Core Building of our Complex, and we were able to start moving into the new premises in April 2008.

The Core Building provides classrooms and research facilities, service and administration areas, an outdoor stage, the Picture Gallery for exhibiting the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings entrusted to us by Huta, as well as curatorial and storage space for the rest of the extensive collection of materials connected with them – almost all of the facilities envisaged in our original master plan, prepared in 1995-96. (Only one element is still required to make it fully complete: the Sangam Hall with accompanying audio-visual studio.) Moreover this building is inspiringly beautiful – beyond anything we could have imagined.

We are deeply grateful to our architect Helmut, to contractor Vijay and his team, and to all who have helped to create this offering to Savitri. Our thanks go to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for the great Blessings that have made this manifestation possible, and to all the well-wishers whose prayers and support have been with this process over the years.

A brief chronological outline of the growth of Savitri Bhavan since its inception gives a striking impression of this miraculous blossoming.

Chronology

- 1994 November 24** Initiation of the Auroville Savitri Study Circle at the instigation of Shri Suresh Dey, Secretary of the Auroville Foundation
- 1995 November 24** Foundation stone for the Savitri Bhavan complex laid by Nirodbaran, Sri Aurobindo's scribe for Savitri
- 1996 November 24** Presentation of Master Plan and Model for the Savitri Bhavan complex by architect Helmut
- 1998 May** Fundraising effort in Gujarat for Phase 1 building, organised by Dr. Beena Naik and family of Navsari.
- 1998 August 9** Inauguration of temporary keet shelter by Nirodbaran and Prof. Arindam Basu.
- 1998 December 13** First brick ceremony for Phase 1 building
- 1998 November 24** Appearance of 1st issue of Invocation.
- 1999 August 8** Inauguration of Savitri Bhavan first permanent building (Phase 1) by Nirodbaran
- 2003 November 24** First brick ceremony for Phase 2 Hall
- 2004 November 21** Opening of Phase 2 Hall. Nirodbaran's last visit to Savitri Bhavan
- 2006 September 29** Official opening of 1st module of the Main Building by Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation
- 2008 February 21** Installation of Sri Aurobindo statue, gifted to Auroville by the Auroville Foundation
- 2008 March 30** Dedication of Sri Aurobindo statue and official opening of 2nd module of the Main Building by Dr. Karan Singh
- 2008 August 8** Opening of Picture Gallery dedicated to *Meditations on Savitri* – 472 paintings created by The Mother with Huta 1961-66 – with a first exhibition of 87 paintings covering Book One, Cantos 1 & 2 and Books Eleven and Twelve of Sri Aurobindo's poem.

New Study Aids

The following works have been added to the *Savitri* Reference Collection kept in our Reading Room :

A) Published Books

Editions

Selections from Sri Aurobindo's Savitri, compiled by Mary Aldridge, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1975

Studies

Ganguli, Ashok K., *Sri Aurobindo the Poet of Nature and other writings on Savitri*, Puducherry, SACAR Trust 2008

Gupta, Dr. G.P., *The Soul-Marks of Integral Yoga : with annotations from Savitri*, Puducherry, Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Science, 2004, 2007

Iorco, Tommaso, *Savitri : l'epopea della vittoria sulla morte*, Modena [Italy]. Tapas Edizione Tapas, 1994

Nadkarni, Mangesh V. *Vvedeniye v 'Savitri'*, [Russian Translation by Riju of *Savitri : a brief Introduction*], St. Petersburg, 2007

Pandit, Madhav P., *Savitri Mahakavya Saram* [Tamil translation of *A Summary of Savitri*], Pondicherry, Dipti Publications, 2000

Pandit, Madhav P., *Savitri Arimuga Aayuraigal* [Tamil translation of *Introducing Savitri*], Pondicherry, Dipti Publications, 2000

Pandit, Madhav P., *Yoga in Savitri*, 2nd edition, Puducherry, Dipti Publications, 2007

Translations

Gujarati : *Savitri Manthan*, Booklets 1 – 7, by Jitendra Acharya, Himatnagar, [The Author, n.d.]

Spanish : *Savitri, una legenda i un symbol*, 1 1-5, by Kaque, Barcelona, Fundacio Centre Sri Aurobindo, 2002

B) Unpublished Materials (in typescript form)

Aurelio (comp.), *On Music in Savitri*

Patel, Dilip, *Study Notes* [In Gujarati on *Savitri* Book One, parts of Cantos Three and Four; Book Six, Cantos One and Two.]

Sobieroj, Martin (comp.), *Immortality in Savitri*

New facilities

Over the months of May, June and July 2008, all the working sections which had been crammed into our First Phase – the multipurpose building which has been the hub around which Savitri Bhavan has grown since August 1999 – were gradually transferred into the Core Building. The Audio-visual Section is now housed in a spacious room on the ground floor there. In a neighbouring room, three of our researchers are based. The House of Mother’s Agenda has its own room on the First Floor. And all of Huta’s materials have been moved to their permanent home on the ground floor.

The Reading Room collection was also moved temporarily, to allow a complete renovation and redecoration of the First Phase, which has hosted so many different activities over the last nine years. But now it has been returned there, and finds a new spaciousness and quiet. The opening hours have been extended, so that the collection of book and non-book materials can be accessed by individual readers from 9 in the morning to 7 in the evening. Moreover the facilities for reading are being complemented by facilities for individual use of our extensive collection of *Savitri*-related audio and video recordings, which will soon be available in a newly prepared ‘Listening Space’.

Picture Gallery

On August 8 – the 9th anniversary of the inauguration of our first permanent building by dear Nirod-da in 1999 – the new Picture Gallery was opened, with an inaugural exhibition of 87 of the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings created by the Mother through Huta in the 1960s. These 87 paintings illustrate the first two cantos of the poem – Cantos One and Two of Book One, the Book of Beginnings – as well as Book Eleven, ‘The Soul’s Choice and the Supreme Consummation’, the climax of the epic, and Book Twelve – the Epilogue, “The Return to Earth.”

The exhibition was kept open daily including Sundays from 2 – 6 pm, through August, September and October, but has been temporarily removed during the monsoon season, to allow some adjustments and improvements to be made to the Gallery. The intention is to go on adding more paintings until the entire series is on permanent display, according to the Mother’s wish. But for this, many additional display panels have to be provided, which will be



Photos by: John Mandeen

done as sufficient resources become available. An estimated Rs. 5 lakh will be required to make them all.

Activities

Over the period April – October 2008, our regular activities have continued, and have been supplemented by some additional courses and special events. We remind all our readers that they are most welcome to join any of our activities whenever they happen to be in the area.



Ameeta Mehra speaking at Savitri Bhavan on July 24, 2008

Calendar of Special Events, April to October 2008

- 21.04.08 Film prepared by Manohar: *Meditations on Savitri* – Book Two, Cantos 5 & 6
- 24.04.08 Film prepared by Manohar: *Meditations on Savitri* – Book Two, Cantos 7 - 15
- 14.06.08 2 films : *Auroville and the Ideal of Human Unity* prepared by the Gnostic Centre, New Delhi; *The Mother : Glimpses of Her Life* from the Ashram Trust
- 21.06.08 *Sharing the Dream* – an opportunity for newer arrivals in Auroville to meet pioneers from the early days for a sharing
- 17.07.08 *Nirodbaran and Auroville* – a sharing on the second anniversary of his passing.
- 24.07.08 *What Savitri means to me* – talk by Ms. Ameeta Mehra of the Gnostic Centre, New Delhi
- 08.08.08 Opening of the new Picture Gallery dedicated to Huta's *Meditations on Savitri* paintings, with an inaugural exhibition of 87 pictures covering the beginning and the end of Sri Aurobindo's poem
- 20.08.08 *Savitri Kaavyathil Moonru Devikal* – talk in Tamil by Dr. Prema Nandakumar
- 23.08.08 *A Bouquet of Songs* – musical offering by Amrita Banerjee and ensemble, in the new amphitheatre
- 30 .08.08 *Who is Sri Aurobindo?* – orientation programme for local student volunteers
- 06.09.08 *Savitri and Savitri Bhavan* – orientation programme for Mirra Women's Group
- 07.10.08 Durga Puja : The Mother's Chair was in the upstairs hall for silent concentration from 10am to 6pm.
- 12.10.08 *How to see Indian Art* – powerpoint presentation by Kirti Chandak (as part of Professor Kittu Reddy's course on *The Foundations of Indian Culture*)
- 18.10.08 *Sharing the Dream* – another opportunity for newcomers to meet Auroville pioneers, focusing on 1964-74
- 25.10.08 *Beyond Religion* – orientation session for visiting students from the USA and Germany, led by Dr. Ananda Reddy
- 25.10.08 *Savitri's Message to Us* – talk by Dr. Alok Pandey



*Dr. Alok Pandey arriving at Savitri Bhavan to give a talk on
October 25, 2008*



Concentration around the Mother's Chair on October 7 – Durga Puja

Changing needs and future perspectives

The early stages of construction at Savitri Bhavan, comprising the keet shelter and then the Phase 1 and Phase 2 buildings, were funded entirely by private donations from well-wishers, as have been the largest part of our activities.

Support from the Human Resources Development Ministry of the Government of India under the SAIIER Development Scheme was first given in the form of a grant of Rs. 1 lakh for activities in the year 1999-2000. A similar grant for activities related to Research, Outreach and the creation and collection of Learning Materials including Publications has been received each year since then, totalling Rs. 2.5 lakh in 2007-08. Moreover construction of the Core Building of the complex has been made possible by Government Grants under the SAIIER Development Scheme over the period 2006-08. But now it has been made clear to us that while a Government grant of Rs. 90,000.- for activities has been provided in 2008-09, no further grant for construction is to be expected within the next Five-year Plan.

So for the upkeep of the complex, the development of its activities, and for the realisation of the remaining elements required to complete the Savitri Bhavan Complex we are relying entirely on the Mother's Grace expressed through the goodwill of donors and well-wishers, whose generous support to the Mother's work at Savitri Bhavan has been the mainstay of the project throughout the years.

1: Regular Budget

First and foremost comes the need to maintain the existing buildings, staff and activities in a worthy manner.

The regular expenses involved in running the Bhavan and its activities, including all research projects, outreach activities, collection and creation of learning aids, and publications, as well as equipment purchases, averaged Rs. 1.10 lakh per month in 2007-08. This expenditure was matched by income from donations and grants over the year.

With the move into the new premises in April 2008 the expenditures increased considerably, due to the need for additional equipment and staff, as well as the expenses of an expanding programme of activities. We are therefore aiming to double the average monthly income, by

appealing to well-wishers in India and around the world to commit to support the work of the Bhavan by regular monthly contributions according to their means. Our target is Rs. 2 lakh per month, which can be realised if 1000 donors can contribute Rs. 200 per month. We are hopeful that with support from friends in India and around the world this target can soon be reached.

Next Projects

The next development priority for us are two projects relating to the unique *Savitri*-related materials in our care:

- Temperature and humidity control for storage and laboratory for Huta Collection

A core resource of the Bhavan is the priceless collection of “*Meditations on Savitri*” paintings created by the Mother with Huta during the 1960s. The 472 original paintings of the series, along with a large body of related materials – original sketches, letters and notes from the Mother; other paintings by Huta; her research work, recordings, photographic negatives, slides and prints, etc. – have all been entrusted to the care of the Bhavan by Huta. It is an urgent need to create ideal conservation conditions for these materials, as prescribed by professional consultants. A plan has been prepared and is ready for implementation as soon as sufficient funds become available. The provision of these conditions would also allow valuable new activities – for example, access to unique research materials for serious researchers; and perhaps even more importantly the possibility of setting up a training programme for conservators, researchers and archivists. Dr. Laura Tacelli, Senior Conservator of Paintings at the Regional Conservation Laboratory of Liguria, Italy, has become involved in our work. She has examined Huta’s paintings, and given her professional recommendations about their preservation. If we can provide the necessary laboratory conditions, she is willing to come to Auroville for up to 3 months to conduct an initial training programme in conservation and restoration for a few local young people ... who could later eventually train others. This could be a programme with a much wider impact than just this particular collection. The need for properly qualified art conservators in India is immense. The initial target for establishing the basic humidity and temperature conditions required is Rs. 8 lakh.

- Display panels for the Picture Gallery

The new Gallery has been open since August 8 2008, with an initial display of 87 paintings covering the beginning and the end of the series. The ultimate aim is to have all 472 paintings of the series on permanent display. To make that safely possible, a large number of additional display panels have to be made, according to the design prepared by our architect. We intend to add paintings to those on display as the panels can be provided, until the entire series is on permanent display according to the Mother's wish. The target for this project is Rs. 5 lakh.

Proposals for both these projects are being prepared for presentation to suitable funding agencies, in collaboration with the Auroville Project Coordination Group.

Completing the Complex

Two elements remain to be built to complete the Savitri Bhavan Complex :

- Sangam Hall, for gatherings of up to 300 people, with multi-media facilities – current estimated cost Rs. 52 lakh.
- Savitri Hostel, to provide simple boarding and lodging for visiting researchers, students, teachers and volunteers – current estimated cost Rs. 56 lakh.

We are also looking for funding to enable us to start the Landscaping of the Savitri Park which is intended to surround the whole complex and enhance its beautiful atmosphere.

We invite all our readers to consider how they could contribute to full realisation of the Dream of Savitri Bhavan by December 2012. Every offering, however modest, will be appreciated as a precious support.

The Dream of Savitri Bhavan

We dream of an environment in Auroville

that will breathe the atmosphere of Savitri

that will welcome Savitri lovers from every corner
of the world

that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

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

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

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

HOW TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF SAVITRI BHAVAN

Savitri Bhavan is entirely dependent on donations and financial help from all well-wishers is most welcome. Please consider in what way you can help the Dream of Savitri Bhavan to become a reality

Please note that all cheques or drafts should be made payable to

Auroville Unity Fund (SAIIER)

They may be sent to Savitri Bhavan at the address below.

If you live abroad and would like to send your offering by SWIFT Transfer, please note the following new code :

SWIFT Code : SBININBB474

State Bank of India, Branch Code 03160

Auroville International Township Branch

Kuilapalayam, Auroville - 605101 INDIA

Auroville Unity Fund Foreign Account No. 10237876508

Purpose “SAVITRI BHAVAN”

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www.auroville.org/education/edu_centres/savitribhavan_main.htm

*Savitri
is a Mantra
for the transformation
of the world*

The Mother