

Invocation

Savitri

B H A V A N

Study notes No. 30

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24 April 1973

(The Mother's last Darshan Message)

Beyond man's consciousness

Beyond speech

O Thou, Supreme Consciousness

Unique Reality

Divine Truth

MCW 15:201



Light on the Mother's Paintings and Drawings

by Huta

When the book *The Mother: Paintings and Drawings* was published in 1992, it was a pleasure for me to go through it.

The Mother showed me almost all of these paintings on September 13 1956 before she started teaching me how to paint. She introduced each of her paintings to me with great enthusiasm. I have given a full account of all this in my *The Story of a Soul*, vol. 2 1956, the first part of which is now in the Press and will be appearing soon.

When *The Story of a Soul* was first appearing in *Mother India* from August 1981 onwards, one of our Ashram artists, Krishnalal, asked from me an offprint of the record I had made of the Mother's sketches. For, he said, he had no such record. Much later, his brother Vasudev asked me for another copy to be given to Jayantilal who was preparing this book of the Mother's paintings and drawings.

In the book, the image of the Buddha appears as Plate 108 on page 132. If I had been consulted I could have informed the compiler about a number of things.

When the Mother was teaching me painting, she used to send articles from her rare collections for me to paint according to her instructions. On April 11 1957 the Mother sent me a statue which was a combination of Buddha and Shiva. She asked me to do a sketch of it. I did so and showed it to her in the evening in her Playground room. She found it inaccurate. She said:

Bring the statue tomorrow evening. I will sketch it in front of you to make you understand how it can be done correctly.

You see, the statue has come from Tibet.

I did so, and in front of me the Mother made her beautiful drawing.



Many years passed. The original sketch, which remains with me, became brown, so I got a photostat copy made of it by the Press.

In 1977 I was requested by Prakash Patel and Basabjit Deshmukh, who were at that time cultivating the garden in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, to give them a copy of the sketch so that they might get a bronze statue made by a sculptor, B. Vithal of Bombay, who had come to Pondicherry for the purpose.

Since the Mother's sketch is only a profile, the sculptor assured me that he would make the full face by copying the other side of the profile. He made several models in clay. We chose what was closest to the original sketch.

Finally the sculptor made a bronze statue of Buddha. He returned the copy of the Mother's sketch to me. Prakash and Basabjit asked me to keep the statue for some time in my meditation room before it was placed in a corner of the School garden. Before they installed it on the occasion of the Mother's Birth Centenary I got photographs taken of the statue.

I was happy to see this concrete representation put in the right place.



*

It was interesting and amusing to find my name in the book, on page 174:

The Mother encouraged Huta to illustrate Sri Aurobindo's epic poem, Savitri, and herself made sketches for the paintings. Her sketches are not reproduced in the present volume, but some paintings based on them and done according to her instructions have been published elsewhere. Naturally the actual execution of the paintings represents Huta's style and ability and cannot be considered identical to what the Mother would have done with her own hand. Yet these 'Meditations on Savitri' give a hint of the kind of mystical imagery and symbolic expression she might have employed if she had taken up painting again in her later years. Their purpose is, in the Mother's own words, to make us 'see some of the realities which are still invisible for the physical eyes.' The work with Huta in the 1960s on the illustration of Savitri was the Mother's last substantial involvement with art.

This account is incomplete and at places incorrect. The book reports:

The Mother encouraged Huta to illustrate Sri Aurobindo's epic poem, Savitri, and herself made sketches for the

paintings. Her sketches are not reproduced in the present volume, ...,

As a matter of fact, the Mother never wanted her sketches for *Savitri* to be published anywhere except where she would want. She had written her comment on each of them as well as her instructions. The Mother told me that when all the books of *Meditations on Savitri* – the name given by her – would be published, her sketches would take the form of a separate book which would correspond to the *Savitri* paintings. Similarly, the rest of the sketches she made to guide me would be published along with my earlier paintings as planned by the Mother.

There are hundreds of these sketches. Some are coloured ones which she had done with crayons. Regarding all of them the Mother said jokingly:

Ah, you see, when good food is served, we must not tell how it was cooked; similarly we must not show my sketches nor my teaching of how the paintings were done. People must know by themselves how everything is done!

*

Further the book narrates:

... but some paintings based on them and done according to her instructions have been published elsewhere.

This refers to the four volumes of *Meditations on Savitri* which the Mother had published from 1962 to 1965. A few of the Mother's sketches appear in these volumes, which cover the first Book of *Savitri*, The Book of Beginnings, Cantos One to Five. We took Cantos Two and Three in one volume.

The Mother told me when I offered the last, fourth, volume on February 18 1965:

Child, the volumes of Meditations on Savitri we have published so far are only experiments. I did not let you

retouch and redo the paintings in the volumes, because I wanted to show to the world how the consciousness is developed.

The Mother and I completed illustrating the whole of *Savitri* – twelve Books – through paintings in 1965. Then in 1966 the Mother asked me to retouch and redo quite a number of paintings before they were exhibited in February 1967. Before they went to the Exhibition Hall she looked at them all, one by one, more than once, in order to fill them with her Force and Consciousness. It is planned to publish reproductions of all the final paintings in a series of volumes of *Meditations on Savitri*. That series will also include two volumes of the Mother's sketches.

Here is the message given by the Mother for the exhibition:

Here is *Savitri*

*The importance of
Savitri is immense
Its subject is universal
Its revelation is prophetic
The time spent in its
atmosphere is not wasted.*

*Take all the time necessary
to see this exhibition. It
will be a happy compensation
for the feverish haste men
put now in all they do.*

10-2-67.

*The importance of Savitri is immense
Its subject is universal
Its revelation is prophetic
The time spent in its atmosphere is not wasted.
Take all the time necessary to see this exhibition.
It will be a happy compensation for the feverish haste
men put now in all they do.*

10.2.67

THE MOTHER

Later in one of the newspapers it was reported:
NEWS IN BRIEF

*PONDICHERRY: Exhibition of Paintings:
An exhibition of paintings illustrating the whole epic of
Sri Aurobindo's Savitri is being held by the Sri Aurobindo
Ashram here, in connection with the celebration of the
birthday of the Mother of the Ashram on February 21.*

The Mother wrote to me on February 13 1967:
My very dear little child Huta

*Yes, everything is going on well with the exhibition. But you
are right, the only thing that truly matters is to realise the
Divine – and that is sure to be.
With all my love.*

After the exhibition was over, some people suggested that the pictures should be exhibited in different countries of the world in a 'one-man show'. When I asked the Mother about this, she told me:

*We prepare the Truth here. If people have a thirst for the
Truth, they must come to us. We must not go to them. We
must not lower our dignity – that is to say, the superiority
of the Truth.*

Earlier I had recorded on the tape-recorder the passages of *Meditations on Savitri* which the Mother recited. For this work the Mother used the 1954 edition of *Savitri*. We gave copies of the recordings to Sunil Bhattacharya to compose the *Savitri* music, which was meant to be played during general meditations in the Playground.

Later, slides of the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings were taken by Narad – Richard Eggenberger of America. I sent all the films to Bombay for developing. The Mother arranged for these slides to be shown in the Ashram theatre in 1972 as part of the celebrations of Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary. To accompany these slide shows, a recording of the Mother's readings accompanied by her own organ music was prepared.

The Mother also expressed her wish to have films made of the *Savitri* paintings. She gave instructions on how she wanted the films to be made: no feature of any kind except the *Savitri* paintings, with her recitations and her own organ music serving as background. Such a series of films is now being prepared by Manohar at Savitri Bhavan in Auroville, using wonderful new photographs of the paintings made by Giorgio Molinari of Italy. These films will be published by me through Havyavahana Trust in the near future.

*

Once again the book *The Mother: Paintings and Drawings* expresses:

Naturally the actual execution of the paintings represents Huta's style and ability and cannot be considered identical to what the Mother would have done with her own hand.

When I came to stay near the Mother on February 10 1955 I did not know how to draw even a straight line, never had any colour-sense – leave aside how to hold brushes! I was quite an 'unshaped consciousness'. The Mother taught me everything, right from the very first principles

In one of her letters she assured me:

Yes, I shall teach you all I know about painting and feel sure that you will learn well.

In another letter she wrote:

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

The Mother sent me a list of the painting materials required. I received them from London through my people's agent.

On December 14 1956 she did in front of me an oil painting of the flower she named 'Divine Grace' – a hibiscus – to show me how the colours should be mixed and used on a canvas board by giving different strokes with different brushes. Later she gave me this very painting.

From 1956 onwards she did numerous sketches of the objects which she sent me from her rare collections. I also received many different flowers. She made me paint all these so that my consciousness, hands and eyes might be trained. This was a grand preparation for me both outwardly and inwardly before the Mother and I launched into the great ocean of *Savitri*.

In August 1957 the Mother got some of these earlier paintings exhibited along with paintings by other artists and students of the Ashram.

She also taught me how to draw with crayons on tinted papers. Mostly I drew her visions, which the Mother related to me. She gave significances to all of these drawings, along with her comments. Here too she made some sketches.

For our work on *Meditations on Savitri* from October 1961 onwards the Mother guided me at every step with sketches and detailed instructions. In one particular painting I could not grasp the colours that she wanted to represent; so on one of her sketches she pinned coloured pieces of nylon in order to make me understand the colour-scheme.

Even if it was 'Huta's style', there was a divine touch in this whole new creation, for the Mother often concentrated on my hands while holding them.

In one of her talks with me, my report of which, as of all her other talks, she has seen, the Mother said:

Here in the Ashram I encouraged several people before you were born, but without avail. Now you will fulfil my wish.

Since physically I have not time, I will use your hands. Substantially, the whole creation will be mine.

*

Once again the book *The Mother: Paintings and Drawings* says:

... these 'Meditations on Savitri' give a hint of the kind of mystical imagery and symbolic expression she might have employed if she had taken up painting again in her later years. Their purpose is, in the Mother's own words, to make us 'see some of the realities which are still invisible for the physical eyes.'

Here are the four messages which the Mother gave for the four volumes of *Meditations on Savitri*

1

Savitri, this prophetic vision of the world's history, including the announcement of the earth's future. — Who can ever dare to put it in pictures? yet, the Mother and Hula have tried it, this way.

We simply meditate together on the lines chosen, and when the image becomes clear, I describe it with the help of a few strokes, then Hula goes to her studio and finishes the painting.

It is in a meditative mood that these 'meditations' must be looked at: to find the feeling they contain behind their appearance.

Savitri, this prophetic vision of the world's history, including the announcement of the earth's future – Who can ever dare to put it in pictures?

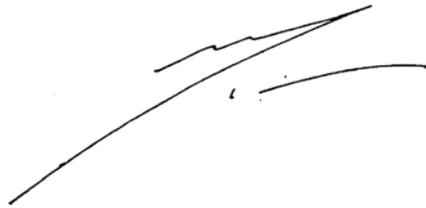
Yet the Mother and Huta have tried it this way.

We simply meditate together on the lines chosen, and when the image becomes clear, I describe it with the help of a few strokes, then Huta goes to her studio and brushes the painting.

It is in a meditative mood that these 'meditations' must be looked at to find the feeling they contain behind their appearance.

2

Here is again a humble attempt to make you see some of the realities which are still invisible for the physical eyes.



Here is again a humble attempt to make you see some of the realities which are still invisible for the physical eyes.

When I offered the second volume to the Mother in August 1963 she said:

Occultists will surely benefit by this book.

If you want to enjoy these "meditations", you must put aside all conventional notions about art and painting

Concentrate silently your vision behind the apparent form of the picture and you will reach the meaning -

Huta is the painter.



If you want to enjoy these 'meditations', you must put aside all conventional notions about art and painting.

Concentrate silently your vision behind the apparent form of the picture and you will reach the meaning.

Huta is the painter.

*Behind the appearances there is
a subtle reality much closer to Truth;
it is that one we are trying to
show you.*



*Behind the appearances there is a subtle reality much closer
to Truth; it is that one we are trying to show you.*

*

It is stated in the book:

*The work with Huta in the 1960s on the illustration
of Savitri was the Mother's last substantial involvement
with art.*

This is not correct. The Mother remained involved with art up to 1972. Here are the outlines:

The Mother and I completed the whole of *Savitri* in paintings in 1965. In 1966 under her direction I retouched and redid many of the *Savitri* paintings.

In 1967 we took up the new work of expressing through paintings some of Sri Aurobindo's poems.

In the course of this work the Mother asked me to paint a vision she had seen many years before. This picture, meant to be a mural, shows the following, as related by the Mother:

*Here the Universal Deity – one of the Mother's aspects –
is sitting on a boulder in the midst of a beautiful scenery,
giving the Spiritual Wealth to people of all Nations.*

The picture was meant to be a vast conception and not restrict itself to a narrow representation.

This aspect also stands for Mother India whom the Mother, looking into the future, calls 'The Guru of the world.'

When the Mother saw my painting she suggested one or two alterations which I have made. On seeing the final picture she expressed her satisfaction and pleasure.

Originally the Mother wished this vision to be painted on the right-side wall at the entrance of Golconde. Her plan was:

Under the brook in the painting a concealed pipe has to be arranged so that water may trickle through the grooves which are in Golconde between the slabs. People will have the illusion that the water is flowing from the brook in the picture. In this water people should wash their feet and, after wiping them on a big mat near the steps, go to their rooms.

This very painting the Mother chose as the illustration for the poem *Bandemataram*.

In January 1968 the Mother started another new work, named by her *About Savitri*.

The first volume of *About Savitri* was printed at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press and released on March 29 1972. The Mother gave this message for the book:

Savitri
The supreme revelation of
Sri Aurobindo's
vision.



Savitri
The supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision

On the first page she inscribed:

About Savitri
with
some paintings

About Savitri
with some paintings

I did the paintings according to the Mother's comments on the *Savitri* passages, which I recorded on a tape-recorder along with her readings. This work continued up to early 1972.

Now all the four volumes of *About Savitri* have been published.

Through her comments on *Savitri* the Mother has disclosed Sri Aurobindo's and her vision of the New World, expressing the Supramental Light, Force and Consciousness accompanied by Delight and their effect on the cells of the body.

For these paintings the Mother chose the size and colour of hand-made paper to be used and asked me to paint with the pigment *gouache*.

When we were working on the first volume of *About Savitri* the Mother related to me two of her visions which she had seen during our work. I recorded her words on the tape-recorder. Then she did the sketches in blue ink to make me understand. I made these paintings, but she told me not to include them in the published volume.

In 1970 the Mother had revealed to me more of her visions by doing sketches and explaining to me their colour schemes. Then in 1972 she instructed me to do her vision of the Physical Mind. Her description of this vision has appeared in the *Bulletin* of August 1972.

*

Whatever I have stated in this article is not even a bird's-eye view or a putting in a nutshell of all that the Mother has given me for the whole of humanity during my work with her for eighteen years.

She disclosed to me the unknown worlds, both higher and nether worlds. She also taught me how to go out of my body to sojourn in the subtle sphere. She explained to me the mystery of the twelve bodies, their colours and the twelve realms of consciousness, the twelve dimensions of being. All this I hope to share with the world through *The Story of a Soul*, the second volume of which is now about to be published, as well as other books such as *My Savitri Work with the Mother* and *The Inner Life*, both now in preparation. There is also a fascinating collection of the Mother's talks to me, for which she gave the title *You said so ...* .

I feel as if my work is never-ending. Once the Mother remarked:

Child, Savitri is your life-long work.

It seems my apartment has become a *Savitri* research centre.

Often the Mother expressed her feeling to me:

We are preparing Truth here. We want young people who are the builders of the New World.

On July 20 1965 she wrote to me:

20-7-65

Yes, my dearest little child
Huta
we are here to bring
upon earth the victory of
Truth and love — and it
will be done —

*Yes, my dearest little child Huta
We are here to bring upon earth the victory of Truth and
Love – and it will be done.
Mother*

I am happy to share all that she has given me, in the Light of Sri Aurobindo, in the Mother's Love.

Savitri's *message to us*

Talk by Dr. Alok Pandey

October 25, 2008

When Shraddhavan gave me this topic, of 'Message of *Savitri*', I was wondering what could one speak of as a message of *Savitri*. I realised that just as there is a problem of poverty, this was a problem of plenty, because there are so many messages of *Savitri*! There are even one-line messages which are so powerful that they could change our life, if we really were to dwell upon any of them. They are like a life-time sadhana; for example, '*All can be done if the God-touch is there*'. I know people who have just picked up one line from *Savitri* that has changed their life. There are so many messages! But what we could do, what I would like to share, is to take up some of the central issues, some broad general messages which are there in *Savitri*, which come as a theme. And then we can have some kind of interaction following the talk.

Earth – a living goddess

The very first thing which comes in *Savitri*, which I think is one of the keys, one of the core issues, is the significance of Earth. The geographical or astronomical way of looking at Earth is that in this universe it is like a little dot, not even a dot. And this little dot seems so inconsequential, so insignificant, and the struggling striving human being upon this Earth even more inconsequential. But when we look at *Savitri*, the first thing we get to know about this Earth is that she is a sleeping goddess. She is truly a mother, and she is sleeping, to be woken up by the touch of the Supreme. These are very powerful lines which come in *Savitri*:

*Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
The forge where the Archmason shapes his works.
Thy servitudes on earth are greater, King,
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.*

p. 686

This is something so striking!

The hope of Light behind darkness

Then, Sri Aurobindo starts *Savitri* as if by paradox. And therefore it becomes contemporary to all of us, for we truly live in paradoxical times. A hundred years ago Sri Aurobindo wrote in one of his letters: 'These are times of universal decomposition.' It is so very true, as much today as when he wrote it. In a way these are times of universal decomposition. Everything is in a ferment. There is a general confusion everywhere. It is like the thick of Night. And *Savitri* starts from that thick of Night. It is very interesting that towards the end of what can be called his physical existence in this life embodiment Sri Aurobindo was so very keen to complete *Savitri*. And within *Savitri* we have two very interesting short passages – one of just four lines, and the other a few lines – which give us the importance and the significance of this poem *Savitri*. First, about its composition: Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Vision and the Boon* – we are all familiar with these lines:

*A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour;
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.*

p. 346

Savitri is that seed, sown in the Earth's atmosphere, in death's tremendous hour. Truly it must have been a tremendous hour, when on the one side the poisonous fumes of the Second World War were still corrupting the Earth-atmosphere, defiling the human mind. Everything was as if in a state of utter depravity; and on the other side, India's partition with such bloodshed. And in that thick of night we have the seed of *Savitri* sown in death's tremendous hour. Very interestingly in *Savitri* itself there is a description of *Savitri* - at least I look at it as a description of *Savitri*. And that comes, very strangely, in Book 2 Canto 8, after Aswapati has gone through the thick of darkness; he has descended into Night, encountered the sons of Darkness, seen through the mask of falsehood, torn through the tablets of ignorance. And when he has gone through all that, at the end there emerges something which, I think, describes *Savitri* very beautifully and very well. We could start by reading those lines, because it strikes as the very core message of *Savitri*: its birth in

the thick of Night – this is the hope that we need to carry in our hearts in times like this, that even in the densest darkness there waits the Dawn.

I think that if we can remember this one thing, that even when everything appears gloomy, everything appears as if we don't know our own self, we don't know what's happening around us, there is *Savitri* to give us hope and light the way. So we have this passage from Book 2 Canto 8 towards the end, when Aswapati has seen through the world of Falsehood entirely, but at the end of it there is something he touches which changes everything.

*Falsehood gave back to Truth her tortured shape.
Annulled were the tables of the law of Pain,
And in their place grew luminous characters.*

Now comes the description which personally I take to be a description of *Savitri*:

*The skilful Penman's unseen finger wrote
His swift intuitive calligraphy;
Earth's forms were made his divine documents,
The wisdom embodied mind could not reveal,
Inconscience chased from the world's voiceless breast;
Transfigured were the fixed schemes of reasoning Thought.
Arousing consciousness in things inert,
He imposed upon dark atom and dumb mass
The diamond script of the Imperishable,
Inscribed on the dim heart of fallen things
A paeon-song of the free Infinite
And the Name, foundation of eternity,
And traced on the awake exultant cells
In the ideographs of the Ineffable
The lyric of the love that waits through Time
And the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss
And the message of the superconscient Fire.*

p. 232

Savitri's message is the message of the superconscient Fire. It is the message of the love that waits through time. It is the story of the

Bliss which is at the root of all creation. Even behind what we see as pain and darkness and the blinding storm there is the light waiting for its hour. It is drawing nearer each moment even through the thick of darkness.

I think that's one of the most powerful things that comes out of *Savitri*, especially in relation to the Earth. Earth itself is a symbol, and we see that every day we have the darkness and we have the light – and light is nearest when the darkness is densest. So this great truth – that there is dawn waiting behind the darkness, and this Earth itself is a field of Divine experiment, that it is a chosen place, not something that is happening by chance, by accident - that gives a meaning and significance to our lives.

The outer mask and the inner human journey

So what is that meaning and significance? I suppose this is the second thing which emerges through the pages of *Savitri* – the meaning of the human journey. What is this human journey? Where do we come from?

If you look at the outer view that is given to us by the so-called sciences as we understand today, we might well conclude that we are born from darkness and go back to darkness. It is a way of looking at things. One can look at every day and say: well, the sun emerges out of darkness and goes back to darkness. But there is another way of looking at things: that the sun never emerges out of darkness and it doesn't go back to darkness – it is we who turn our back to the sun and we who once again turn our face to the sun. So this is the whole human journey: we come from light and we go to light. And this human journey is very beautifully traced out in several passages. All this is there in very many places and I thought we should read from *Savitri* :

A truth occult has made this mighty world

This world is not built by falsehood, it is not an accident – it is neither a chemical accident, nor a spiritual accident. There is a way of looking at this world where it is seen as a chemical accident: gases came, and electrons, and everything has happened by chance. Even spiritually there has been a misconception that somehow it came into being

through a Maya that covered the face of Brahman. Sri Aurobindo would tell us:

*But Maya is a veil of the Absolute;
A Truth occult has made this mighty world:
The Eternal's wisdom and self-knowledge act
In ignorant Mind and in the body's steps.
The Inconscient is the Superconscient's sleep.*

p. 600

We read that '*He made of Earth his divine document.*'

Spiritual thought is crammed in Matter's forms,

Everywhere, when we look around, in trees, in flowers, in animals, in human beings, there is something like a spiritual consciousness which off and on we can have a glimpse of – in the sun, in the river, in mud, in the stars, everywhere If we can learn to read, we can read every day '*the language of the Infinite.*'

*All here is a mystery of contraries:
Darkness a magic of self-hidden Light,*

There is nothing like an original darkness. There is nothing like the colour black. The colour black is simply white turned within itself. Darkness is nothing but light self-absorbed within itself.

*Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life.*

This is the beauty of *Savitri*. It gives us hope where we can see none. Death is nothing but an instrument; it's a passage. Suffering is nothing but a mask that the rapturous secret Beloved has worn so that the bliss we experience can be even more intense, even more powerful, even more wide, even more lasting. That is why we have to go through suffering and pain. Otherwise we would be very satisfied with some small and limited happiness, some small and limited perfection. So every time suffering comes, if we can remember this one thing: that this is a preparation for a greater Ananda to come. Every time we are

confronted with darkness and the dance of death, if we can remember that this death and darkness is only a preparation for a greater dawn. Every time we face the pang of pain, if we can remember that the Divine Artisan is preparing us to bear the strokes of his delight, because his embrace is too intense for this human form to bear. We experience it as pain in our early status of schooling; but as we grow wider, the same embrace is no longer pain, but changes into figures of delight.

*Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life.
Although Death walks beside us on Life's road, ...*

Scientists would tell us that death starts the moment we are born, or even before birth, even when the baby is in the womb, because cells are dying. And they would tell us that at the end of the day death has its way. Ultimately, the body dissolves and goes back to death. But here is another vision of things:

*Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face:*

It conceals a riddle. It is a riddle we are given to solve. All the opposites that we experience in life, which are contrary to our native innate seekings, the opposite of suffering, the opposite of death, all the opposites, are essentially like a riddle. They are like a puzzle we are here to solve. And that makes life really fascinating.

*Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,*

Death is only a passage between birth and birth. We are told that life is an incident between death and death. But here is a view that death is a passage between life and another life.

*A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.
The unconscious world is the spirit's self-made room,
Eternal Night shadow of eternal Day.*

It is an entire reversion of view, a complete reversal of view. Night is a shadow of the day. Evil is a shadow of truth, of light.

*Night is not our beginning nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we have hid*

In the ancient tradition there is a talk of two mothers: the dark mother and the bright mother, the mother of division and the mother of union and light. The dark mother is the first one: she gives birth to children and she has to look after them, and after a time when they have grown under her care, then they must emerge – they are ready for the light. We have in our everyday experience this emergence, when a seed which is preparing itself to blossom into a big tree has to be buried inside the earth and for a long time the seed must pass through the darkness, it must be fed with earth's waste and after a time it is ready, when its crust has become thin and it has released itself, then the inner core is ready to emerge into light. So our journey is also in two phases. The first is the state of darkness and ignorance. And in that stage we have to be fed by all the waste of the world: pain, suffering. But a time comes – even this is a preparatory phase – when we are ready and we emerge and can directly expose ourselves to the light and the sun. For

*Night is not our beginning, nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we have hid
Safe from too swift a waking to world-pain.*

If suddenly we throw the seed into the light of the sun, what happens? We need light for the seed to grow, but if it is thrown directly to the sun, it will just burn up. So for a long time the seed has to be put inside the womb of darkness, where by the heat, by the darkness it melts and is ready for the light. It has got roots and now it will grow upwards.

*We came to her from a supernal Light,
By Light we live and to the Light we go.*

p. 601

So this is the third very beautiful thing: that we come from the light and we go to the light. And this is the human journey.

The cosmic paradox and the goal of creation

Now, this journey is not only the human journey – it is the journey of the whole creation; but in human beings this becomes a very conscious journey. In this journey we are not alone. In this journey there are immense forces and powers, cosmic forces which help and hinder. But the beauty is that though they seem to help and hinder, eventually they all conspire towards a common end. That is the fourth thing we discover in *Savitri* – it is an apparent paradox. There are cosmic powers which in different traditions are called the gods and the titans. They must play their role – the powers of light and the powers of darkness. It is an evolutionary journey, so at each stage there are forces which pull us backward and downward, and forces that pull us towards the light and help us, because it is a whole slow process of march. Therefore this brings in for us humans an element of choice. There is something we can do even while we are in ignorance – we need to choose. At different stages the choice comes to us and at different stages the choice changes. What is valid today becomes invalid tomorrow. And this choice, that we leave behind the darkness and move towards the light, this is the human journey. And there are cosmic powers that assist us. The beauty is that eventually these choices make a difference only in terms of the time and the struggle experienced. They cannot eventually deny, they cannot eventually stifle, they cannot eventually say ‘no’ to the destiny – that is impossible. Through all the things, through the conspiracy, through the working of the titans and the gods, through the conspiracy of fate, through all the cosmic powers which restrain us from too swift an opening to the light, we eventually move towards the intended perfection.

This human journey which moves through this kind of a struggle and battle is again very beautifully described in Canto 2 in several places, but we'll just pick up some of these portions. And then – what is behind them?

We are all living in the dusk of God. On one side we have an animal consciousness behind us which holds us back. On the other side we have the gods inspiring our hearts and our minds, but we don't know which way to go. We feel the call and the urge, but we are still attracted and drawn towards all that we are trying to leave behind. So it is a stage where we are half-way through, and therefore it is a dusk of God. In this dusk, we cannot tell whether it is light or whether it is darkness.

*... This slow and strange uneasy compromise
Of limiting Nature with a limitless Soul, ...*

This is the problem, the real problem of all of us: that we are a limitless soul. That is why within us there is an urge for the infinite. That is why we by instinct seek boundlessness. That is why we are forever discontent with the little, with the small, with the narrow, with the petty. We are seeking for that Infinity. Yet our nature is limited – it cannot grasp the infinite, so it disfigures it and puts its own stamp and terms upon the soul's dreams.

*... Where all must move between an ordered Chance
And an uncaring blind Necessity,
Too high the fire spiritual dare not blaze.*

p. 18

This is the problem – we want all these beautiful things, but we know that if we aspire with too much intensity, our mortal frames are not able to bear it – we break down. In *Savitri* this comes in several places; first when Aswapati asks for the boon for Earth, he is told:

*My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.
But too immense my danger and my joy.*

...

*Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight.
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.*

p. 335

Later on, when Savitri asks for the boon, even after Death has been annihilated, again she hears the same message. She is told:

*How shall earth-nature and man's nature rise
To the celestial levels, yet earth abide?* p.688

...

*O too compassionate and eager Dawn,
Leave to the circling aeons' tardy pace
And to the working of the unconscious Will,
Leave to its imperfect light the earthly race:
All shall be done by the long act of Time.* p. 690

Again towards the end:

Heaven's call is rare, rarer the heart that heeds; p. 689

We are still too much amorous of this darkness, and if Truth descends too soon it just might shatter all the norms, all the limits within which human beings must move. So:

*Too high the fire spiritual dare not blaze.
If once it met the intense original Flame,
An answering touch might shatter all measures made
And earth sink down with the weight of the Infinite.* p.18

That is why we have restraints upon us. On different levels the gods restrain us, the titans restrain us.

A gaol is this immense material world:

We are in a prison, but we don't realise it. To begin with, our journey starts in a jail. The jail is this immense material world. The soul is in prison and it is seeking to escape from all sides, through every door. Through the senses it seeks to escape into some original delight. Through the heart it seeks to find universal Love. Through the mind, parts of the mind, it wants to have a glimpse of infinite Truth. Even through the very pores of our body it wants to have contact with some original Bliss that will deliver it. But:

*A gaol is this immense material world:
Across each road stands armed a stone-eyed Law,
At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.*

We want to go through the mind? We want to seek infinite Truth? The sentinel Doubt will come in. It says, 'Well, do you have the key?' And you get into discussing: 'I want the key, I want to experience infinite Truth.' And it will keep on throwing doubts inside the head. So after a time you feel: 'No, no, it is better that I remain in the safe limits of the mind. This is too dangerous. I must be objective. I must not lose the balance of my rational analytical thinking. It is too dangerous!' So, *the huge dim sentinels pace*. They push us back. This is how this jail is created, the jail of consciousness. You want to expand the heart into the wideness of universality? Again the ego-sense, desires, personal interest..., all these things will come and push us back: 'No, no, no, this is very dangerous, don't try this. Live in the safety of the measures made.'

*At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.
A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgment sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God:*

So what happens when the measures are broken? This is the problem. We may either grow godward in a swift uprising, or suddenly we may open to the immense darkness that was held back in the subconscious chambers. When these measures are broken, then life becomes the arena of a terrible wrestle between the powers of Light and the powers of Darkness.

*Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel's circling immobility.*

If you go this way, you want to seek the Divine – all right: ego is the price. Oh, that's very painful! Desire is the price. My God, no way! Initially it sounds okay, fine. But as the price is extracted, little by

little ... this is not without a price. Sri Aurobindo writes in one of his letters that humanity would want all that the Supramental can bring to it, but it is not willing to pay the price. The price is too heavy. We can pay the price of things which are outside us. Here the price is yourself, so very dear to us. That is why he says, 'Surrender is the way, surrender is the goal.' It is a very difficult price. There is a famous mystic who says: 'What is the price you must pay to sit in the house of Love, the Lord's Love?' If you want to enter there, there is a price, like, you know, we go on the roads, ECR road, and they ask toll-tax, or everywhere you go there is a price. So he says, 'If you want to sit in the chambers of the Lord's Love and be face to face with the divine Beloved and experience his Delight, then the price is that you have to cut off your head and leave it outside.' It is the symbol of the ego and all its pride – cut off your head, leave it outside, and then you are admitted. Otherwise stay outside, keep guessing what is inside the secret chambers.

*Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel's circling immobility.
A bond is put on the high-climbing mind,
A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life.*

p.18

So, this is a slow journey. This is the fourth thing: yes, this human journey is moving towards the light, but please, don't be impatient. Sri Aurobindo has given us a thousand year-program. It is not a program of 10-15 years, it is not a 'yoga-made-easy', it is not a 14-day course in Nirvana, it is not a virtual reality, where we simply enter, pay a little money, go put on some goggles and start experiencing some 'higher mental' world of our own making! Fortunately it is not that. It is literally like... the symbol is, well, the construction of Matrimandir, Savitri Bhavan, Auroville: God's creation. When somebody asked Mother: 'Who is building Auroville? Who is behind Auroville?' – '*The Supreme Lord.*' Now imagine, what a joy! The Supreme Lord! Then everything should be so easy. You get here and everything should just work out, because the Supreme Lord himself is there! If somebody were to build, you know, a place like Savitri Bhavan or maybe even Matrimandir outside, you would expect that

maybe at the most within 10-15 years you would see the whole thing come out, But look at this: 40 years, and still, there are those little bits and parts – because human consciousness has to be ready. It is not just the outer structure – it is the symbol of something inside. The building of Matrimandir should coincide with the building of the inner shrine within us. Then it has a meaning. Otherwise it is just a beautiful building with nothing inside. So it is a long journey. The human consciousness has to be made ready, through pain, through joy, through both these things.

In another passage in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo says:

O mortal who complainst of death and fate, p. 454

You must know this passage. And then he says that

A little bliss is lent thee from above, p. 451

So you move through both these things and you must be ready that only a little bliss is given.

*Make of thy daily way a pilgrimage,
For through small joys and griefs thou mov'st towards God.*

p. 451

So here when we look at it from one side, it looks as if it is restraining us. From the other side we are ready for this much. We experience a little joy, a little pain – we are ready for it. Now when we have gone through it, it is not that pain and joy cease: we experience on one side a greater delight, we experience on the other side a greater pain. And when we become wide and one with the Universe, we have the universal love and delight on the one side, on the other side we experience the entire darkness and shadow of God. That's what we see in Sri Aurobindo's life: on one side experiencing the delight that could save the world, bringing down that supramental truth; on the other side taking into himself the fumes and poisons of the entire darkness that you could ever imagine on Earth and beyond. That is what happens. So slowly through little touches of joy and pain, then a little more.... And who would understand the agony of a god?

We hear in *Savitri* that when Savitri comes on Earth, Sri Aurobindo describes her like this:

In her there was the anguish of the gods

p. 6

So gods are not just very peaceful, peace-loving content creatures. This is our human notion: gods are only peaceful. Yes, they are peaceful. But they can have an anguish – an anguish for perfection, for Light, for Truth, an impatience which they are born with. So this journey is a slow one. It takes the form of several small steps, till we are ready for that full emergence.

The Goal

And what is the goal of the journey? This goal is very beautifully expressed: the goal is to become in terms of matter what we originally are in our essential self. In ‘The Secret Knowledge’ we read about this journey from life to other life:

*He sails through life and death and other life,
He travels on through waking and through sleep.*

p. 72

This journey is going on, because something within us never sleeps. ‘*There is one who is awake within our sleep, immortal in mortals is his name.*’

*A power is on him from her occult force
That ties him to his own creation's fate,
And never can the mighty Traveller rest ...*

If we read this we will feel that rest is a curse and restlessness is a boon – of course, provided that this is a divine discontent and a divine restlessness. But even in the most human restlessness, in the writhing of the worm, there is the emergence, the far off emergence of the butterfly. So that is the beauty, that this restlessness that we experience is given to us as a boon and a curse. If we read some of the legends, it is very interesting that every curse which the rishis gave ... you know, in the mythology you have some of the rishis giving curses and you wonder why is this man suddenly giving a curse – has

he lost his head? But in every curse is a boon concealed. It actually shortens the way. One very interesting story is the story of one of the kings, after Krishna departs and the dark age, the age of Kali has just entered. The grandson of Arjuna – one of the main protagonists of the great war – Parikshit, inherits the kingdom. The age of Kali has come and darkness is everywhere and dharma is fading away ... it stands only on one foot – faith is spent, devotion has gone, man does not think about surrender: Truth is the only foot on which it stands, and even that is being chased away. And this king, who is so righteous, who comes from such a righteous lineage, suddenly in one of his moments he goes to a sage in a forest and he is feeling thirsty, so he asks for water. The sage is lost in his meditation. The king wants water – he gets really very annoyed. He says: ‘What kind of a man are you? You have closed eyes. Who knows what is going on inside your head? You are so insensible!’ He picks up a dead snake and puts it around his neck. And the sage's son – he is also a sage to be – when he sees that, he gives a curse: ‘After seven days you will die of a bite of this same snake.’ Now, the beauty is that this curse turns into a great boon, because this man is confronted with a great existential crisis: ‘I will die within seven days. What should I do? Which doctor should I summon? Which person can treat this snake bite?’ He knows which snake, he knows the date, he knows the moment. After seven days, by this snake, at this moment he would die. What he does he do? He turns this curse into a boon. He says: ‘One day I will have to die. How does it matter whether it is after seven days or seven years, or seventy? Let me find the secret by which I can enjoy immortality despite going through the gates of death.’ So eventually when you look at it, everything turns to good, conspires towards one great end. So this the journey, it goes on ...

*And never can the mystic voyage cease
Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul
And the morns of God have overtaken his night.*

...

*There is a truth to know, a work to do;
Her play is real; a Mystery he fulfils:
There is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim,
A purpose in her vast and random game.*

*This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,
This constant will she covered with her sport,
To evoke a Person in the impersonal Void,
With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of trance,
Wake a dumb self in the unconscious depths
And raise a lost Power from its python sleep
That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.*

So this is the journey, this is the goal of the journey. And towards this goal we move through everything – through the seeming good and the seeming bad. This does not mean that we should not make choices. It does not mean that we should choose the bad instead of the good — man is given that discrimination because it makes the journey shorter. But we must know that whatever the appearances, through these both we are moving towards that which is our goal.

We are not alone

And this is so because we have within this Earth the presence of the One. This is another message which we have from *Savitri*, very beautiful one: Man is not alone in this journey. This is the message. There is a divine intervention. It comes from time to time, from age to age. In special moments of crisis, personal or collective, God is nearest to us. This is another beautiful thing, that whenever in our individual life or collective life we are going through an intense crisis, it means that hidden by the strong blinding storm He is there at the heart of it. and therefore there is hope. Because not only is He hidden in this matter, He intervenes in the ways and paths of this Earth and guides the chariot of life through strange ways, inexplicable ways, and keeps it on the track. However far we may go, however much we may deviate, eventually, He is the divine charioteer and He will set the course right. So we have these beautiful lines:

*Yet a spiritual secret aid is there;
While a tardy Evolution's coils wind on
And Nature hews her way through adamant
A divine intervention thrones above.*

*Alive in a dead rotating universe
We whirl not here upon a casual globe
Abandoned to a task beyond our force; ...*

p.58

Sri Aurobindo has already told us that this is not a casual globe, that there is a purpose, there is a journey. And we are all here for a work. But we are not alone. We are not abandoned children. None of us is alone.

*Even through the tangled anarchy called Fate
And through the bitterness of death and fall
An outstretched Hand is felt upon our lives.*

As we grow, it comes nearer and nearer to us. How beautifully we find in that poem of Sri Aurobindo - 'Krishna'

*Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
Life shudders with a strange felicity;
All Nature is a wide enamoured pause
Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.*

*For this one moment lived the ages past;
The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.* SABCL 5, p. 139

If we can remember just this one thing, that through all this journey, through the thick of it, through the storm, through sin, through sorrow, through tears, through suffering, even when our hands are stained with blood, He is there. That is such a great hope. So here we have these lines:

*It is near us in unnumbered bodies and births;
In its unslackening grasp it keeps for us safe
The one inevitable supreme result
No will can take away and no doom change,
The crown of conscious Immortality,*

p. 59

In that famous story 'Alice in Wonderland' we have people running around and at the end of the race Dodo is asked: 'Who has won? Who

has come first? Who has won the prize?’ So he thinks for a while and then he says, ‘All win the prize and all have come first.’ We are not competing with anybody here. All of us win the prize because that prize is the crown of conscious immortality, and He keeps that safe for us. Whatever be the doom, that is something which nobody can take away.

One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:

p. 59

However anarchic it may appear, he is the Lord. It has come out of him. He is in it, he holds the world within himself, he has become it.

One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:

Our errors are his steps upon the way;

There is a beautiful prayer of the Mother where she says, ‘errors have become stepping stones.’

Our errors are his steps upon the way;

He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,

He works through the hard breath of battle and toil,

He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,

What a wonderful hope this is. It is not only in meditation that we find him, it is not only in our puja room we find him. Even when we are left alone, confronting the darkest shadows within ourselves, He is there. He works through all this. *His knowledge overrules our nescience.* We are ignorant – no problem, He knows it. We do stupid things? No problem. He will turn it with His hands into steps towards wisdom. We are fools? No problem. His divine wisdom, his divine knowledge will turn this falling into the best step we could take to come closer to the Light.

He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,

His knowledge overrules our nescience;

Whatever the appearance we must bear; ...

So what is the command being given to us? The appearance will be dark, sometimes blinding, we must bear it.

*Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
When nothing we can see but drift and bale,
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.*

p. 59

A little leaf caught up in the storm or in the floods knows not where it's being taken. It is being carried somewhere. The guide knows where it is being taken. So there is a guidance in life. In one of Sri Aurobindo's very beautiful letters which of course is now available in the form of a book, '*The Riddle of this World*', one of the fundamental things he says which is so important to remember, is that there is a guidance in life, there is a guidance in this world, there is a wisdom which governs this Universe, however random, however chaotic, however full of chance it may appear; and this wisdom is leading us through all things towards that predestined goal. This is the message. And in the journey the Divine Himself is with us.

The Role of Humanity

So at the end of it we may ask: All this is good – what are we to do in this journey? Is there a role that we have to play? What is it for us? What should we do? So we have this message for Man specifically. All this is the message which tells us the vast plan and the whole journey so that we can have the hope and we know what is to be done and we know the goal and we keep faith. But specifically what can we do to assist this process, how can we help in this evolutionary path? This is the message which I take as the message for us, after which we can stop for the questions. This message is on page 476. Basically, it is part of Savitri's yoga, but as we know Savitri's yoga is the yoga done for men. She is told, '*For men thou seekest, not for thyself alone.*' So what she has done is that she has opened the path for men. The way she has walked, we must walk that way. The Mother has opened the path for human beings to follow. What she has done is what we should do. She has taught us surrender, she has taught us to aspire. She has taught us to have faith, she has taught us how to go within. What Sri Aurobindo has done, only he can do. It is as

simple as that. It is difficult for human beings to even envisage how they can take even a single step of that giant stride. But what Mother has done is the yoga given to men. So in the yoga of Savitri we have the message for men, on how we can best assist this journey. One, of course, he has told us: have faith. Even when you are drifting, there is something which is carrying you – through small joys and griefs you are moving towards God. But now we can directly help in this process. First thing ... It is almost like an eight-step program for all of us, and every year we can say at least one step we will take. The first thing is:

Remember why thou cam'st.

p. 476

So we should never forget why we are here. If we forget that, everything goes berserk. Why are we here? The whole problem of life comes because we keep forgetting why we are here. So, the first step:

Remember why thou cam'st.

Next :

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self, ...

Step two, so simple: *Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self.* We are not what we believe ourselves to be. When we think 'I am', that is not what we are. We are an eternal portion of the Eternal, we are an immortal portion of the Immortal. We are in the deepest sense the Mother's child, this Jivatman, this inner self, which is a projection of Her put forward for the play.

*But since she knows the toil of mind and life
As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,
She puts forth a small portion of herself,
A being no bigger than the thumb of man
Into a hidden region of the heart
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,*

p. 526

How beautiful. This is what we are. So to remember that:

*Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths, ...* p. 476

What is it that He wants me to do? What is His purpose within me?

*Then mortal nature change to the divine.
Open God's door, enter into his trance.*

We have turned our backs to God and that is our problem. We have turned our backs to Light, and therefore we have to do everything by conjecture. Who is behind us? Maybe there is God? Maybe not – we don't know. So ‘*Open God's door*’ through the key of faith, through the master-key of sincerity, through the key of aspiration, through the key of surrender – so many keys She has given us! Any of these keys or all of these we can apply and open his door. And when we open his door we enter into his trance of bliss.

Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:

We cannot know it by any amount of intellectual analysis. We'll move in futile circles. We'll end up at the same point from where we began, because thought is an inferior power. It imitates something or someone of which it is a shadow. It cannot know. If it goes there, it vanishes, like when a shadow enters light – it just vanishes. That is why thought is so scared of entering sometimes, because it would vanish. But in its place something else emerges.

*Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:
In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see.*

This is the knowledge towards which we can climb, which is not an intellectual knowledge, but the knowledge which can inform the intellect, which is not a knowledge that comes through thought, but a knowledge which can illumine our thoughts. That is the difference.

Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight:

So first is thought. As long as we are still relying on intellectual analysis, on the habitual thought to know, we will not know. We have to leave it aside and enter into God's kingdom of knowledge and direct vision. Similarly, what veils from us God, who is everywhere, hid in every form? Sense – this weaves reality. That is a very interesting way of looking at this world. We don't see reality – we see what the senses weave and present to us. And we believe this is reality. So the senses weave reality and we have to penetrate deeper. By the power of aspiration we can go deeper into matter – within us, outside us, around us.

Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight:

That is why it is said that all these sense-objects, if we are really attracted to them and are allured by them, the more we are allured and enmeshed by sense-objects, the more difficult it becomes to experience the spiritual reality. This is the fundamental basis behind it, because sense presents objects for the mind, and the more the mind gets caught up in that, the more the senses dwell upon that, the stronger the chain becomes and the more difficult it is to go deeper and experience the Spirit. So many spiritual practices enjoin detachment and not to be enmeshed by the senses and to go deeper and try to see the deeper reality. Then, when the mind is free from the sense-objects :

*In the enormous emptiness of thy mind
Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,
In the world's contacts meet his single touch;
All things shall fold thee into his embrace.*

So the first program is find your soul. The next is, to universalise it and discover the same self everywhere in its play.

*Remember why thou cam'st:
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,*

*Then mortal nature change to the divine.
Open God's door, enter into his trance.
All things shall fold thee into his embrace.
Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God:*

This is the third thing: the mind, the sense, and the emotional being – the vital-emotional being – conquer it, don't let it beat or dance to the tune of the ego. '*let thy heart beat in God.*' If with each beat we could remember the Divine, how beautiful it would be! '*Let thy heart beat in God.*' I think it would be a cure for any of us. I have a suspicion that it should work. But if you suggest it to the cardiologists, they will send you to the psychiatrists. '*Let thy heart beat in God.*' Actually it is true that the more we dwell upon God, the calmer and quieter everything becomes. And the more we dwell upon the objects of the senses and the desires, the more the heart flutters: hopes, fears, expectations – they really quicken the heart-beat. So it may really be true most physiologically. So it is a very practical advice, a one-line cure for all arhythmias :

Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God.

... so that even if it stops, it stops in Him.

Thy nature shall be the engine of his works,

This is the next program. Our nature is right now the slave of ego and desire. It is a puppet, a swinging puppet, dancing to the hours – it should become an engine for God's work. Man is a dynamo for God's work. '*Nature does most in him, God the high rest. Only his soul's consent is his own*' – this is what Sri Aurobindo writes. We think so much about ourselves. So, if our nature can become an engine for his works ...

Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word:

The creative word, the power of the word which can create, which can send forth vibrations of the higher consciousness through the agency of speech. Right now our speech is not at all used for that. The Word

has a power; it can shatter the subconscious. As they say, the rishis of old broke open the caves by the power of the Word and the darkness which was hidden inside came in the front and was annihilated by the Light. So if a word can carry that power it can break open the defences and bring out the Truth concealed.

*Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word:
Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death.* p. 476

Questions and Answers

If there are any questions, anything you would like to share ...

You mentioned that Sri Aurobindo has given a 1000-year programme. Does that mean that if I live 85 years and I work all my life to be a very spiritual person, it would take me 12 incarnations to understand his message? What does it mean?

Yes, I understand. Let me go step by step. When we say 1000 it is a figurative way of speaking. It is not a prophesy or a prediction. Of course when Mother was asked, she did say ‘Wait for a thousand years.’ In one of her talks she did say that. But she was speaking about the supramentalisation of the body, the supramental body, as I have understood it. But otherwise in another place she mentioned that Sri Aurobindo said it would take about 300 years for the consciousness to change into that consciousness. So what I meant to say by that figurative term 1000 was that we should not be impatient. The point that I was trying to convey is that when we are impatient we are actually delaying the work. It is a long journey. Now this is one part. Second, there are two ways to look at it. One – many of us want to achieve everything in one life. Now, it is okay, it is a good thing to have that aspiration. But when this aspiration is under the stress of the vital nature – because that is what we are accustomed to – then we hope violently and we despair violently. So there are people who enter into something like a Sri Aurobindo movement, or any spiritual path, and they enter with a lot of initial enthusiasm because suddenly the whole thing is open You see, unlike previous ages when the initiate had to be ready, he was tested whether he is ready for walking the special path or not, but now we have

a book – and Mother and Sri Aurobindo have spoken about this – we have a book and we read it. Now we know, ‘Oh, supramentalisation, this is wonderful!’ And a lot of us may enter it finding something very marvellous. Yes, it is marvellous, but there is a long journey before we are ready. Now the whole purpose of mentioning this 1000 years is that we should not lose heart. Instead we should be prepared and armed with all that is necessary for a long journey. It is to inculcate those attitudes. It is like if I have to climb Mount Everest. Somebody comes back from there and says ‘Look at the photo.’ ‘Oh, wow! How beautiful, breath-taking summits, it is wonderful, lovely!’ You know the journey is very good. And then the person says ‘Just carry some camping stuff and ...’ and he starts the movement. Now we are very happy till we reach some of those little slopes of the Himalayas, we say ‘Really it was wonderful!’ But the moment we start going beyond it, the moment we have the blinding storms and precipices and all those kinds of things, life and death situations ... that is the point when we turn back. So the idea here is that you must be ready to move slowly, steadily, surely, with the right attitude, the right approach. Whether it will take ten incarnations or three, individually how much time – that really is not what is meant here. What is meant in terms of the time frame of the human consciousness ... maybe the time frame of the gods it would take the twinkling of an eye or less than that, but for the human consciousness to arrive at that point globally, collectively it would be about a thousand years. It may be. I mean, let's hope that it is less, much less. We can probably hasten the process if we follow the program. But we should not be impatient, that's what is meant. And we don't know how many incarnations. Today we live for 85 years – I'm taking that question very literally – we don't know, maybe after two hundred years the human life-span may suddenly increase by two or three hundred years. Once I asked a child in Pondicherry when he was five, ‘What do you want?’ He said something very strange – a five year old child: ‘I want to live for seven hundred thirty ...’ and he gave some figure – 732 or 735 years. It is strange, you know, I mean suddenly it struck me as something very unusual – why is he suddenly speaking of that? We don't know: it may be just three incarnations – may be. Maybe when we come next time humanity may have advanced further and the life-span may have increased by means which are inner as well as outer. We may even find ways and means of increasing life-span by inner means. So let's hope. It may be a little boring, but nevertheless

It won't be boring if we are following the path.

Yes, absolutely. It won't be boring at all if you are following the path and progressing. Then in fact it becomes as Sri Aurobindo says in one of the lines in *Savitri* : *Each day was a spiritual romance.* (p. 30) So wonderful. But that's the beginning. So if we have another question?

In an earlier part of Savitri it is mentioned that :

A prayer, a master act, a king idea

Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.

Then miracle is made the common rule,

p. 20

Does this apply only to Savitri, or is it applicable to us too?

These lines come in Canto 2, where Savitri is confronted with this impossible possibility of confronting Death and changing Fate. So, how can she do it? There Sri Aurobindo says that it is by emergence within our own soul, if we touch that magic key. So it is only after that, that then suddenly the magic leverage is caught. Now once we catch this magic leverage – the magic leverage of the psychic being, then the next line follows:

A prayer, a master act, a king idea

Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.

So it is in terms of that, because otherwise of course we all pray every day and it is not ... one wishes it is as simple as that, but without this magic leverage These are very beautiful lines: we can just read them:

To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose.

Now doom, fate – how to change fate? This is the question that she is facing, and what fate? – a fate which cannot change. We can change everything – how do we change death? So here it is:

*To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose.
At the Unseen's knock upon her hidden gates
Her strength made greater by the lightning's touch
Awoke from slumber in her heart's recess.
It bore the stroke of That which kills and saves.*

So this is the background. Something woke up within her heart. She is awake physically, but something wakes up here, because she has to bear the stroke of death.

*Across the awful march no eye can see,
Barring its dreadful route no will can change,
She faced the engines of the universe;
A heart stood in the way of the driving wheels:
Its giant workings paused in front of a mind,
Its stark conventions met the flame of a soul.*

This can really stop, the moment it reaches the flame of the soul. Then the lines follow:

*A magic leverage suddenly is caught
That moves the veiled Ineffable's timeless will:
A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule,
One mighty deed can change the course of things;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.*

p. 19-20

So it is this contact with the soul, the inmost soul, which turns a prayer, our actions, even thought, into a luminous key to open the doors of the highest and deepest possibilities. But this must be found first. But of course, every time we read *Savitri* – I not only believe it, I am sure it is everybody's experience – its very atmosphere is uplifting, so definitely we move ahead, there is no doubt about it. That we lapse back into the place from where we started is of course our problem. But by reading we make it a little easier.

Remembering the Mother

Talk by Narad at Savitri Bhavan

February 18, 2007

Since 2002 we have been holding gatherings at Savitri Bhavan where people share their personal memories of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Some of these accounts have been collected and published in book form by our friends Varadharajan and Shyamala, under the title Darshan. A second volume is now in preparation. To give a sample of this activity of Savitri Bhavan we have chosen this talk of Narad, gardener, musician and poet. He was the first to receive Blessings from the Mother for public reading of Savitri in Auroville; he was responsible for preparing the first slides of Huta's Meditations on Savitri paintings, which the Mother arranged to be shown in the Ashram theatre, and later in Auroville, in 1972 as part of the celebrations of Sri Aurobindo's Centenary; and he has been a close friend of Savitri Bhavan since its beginning, helping us develop the garden, and guiding the OM choir, initiated by him, which meets weekly here in the aspiration to receive and express the new music.

I would like to begin with a few lines from *Savitri*:

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

p.49

*Alive in a dead rotating universe
We whirl not here upon a casual globe
Abandoned to a task beyond our force;*

*Even through the tangled anarchy called Fate
And through the bitterness of death and fall
An outstretched Hand is felt upon our lives.
It is near us in unnumbered bodies and births;
In its unslackening grasp it keeps for us safe
The one inevitable supreme result
No will can take away and no doom change,
The crown of conscious immortality, . . .*

p. 59

I have so many things to tell you that I had to write them out so that I wouldn't forget some of these very special moments with Mother. This is a talk similar to the one I gave on Feb. 14th last year in the Hall of Harmony. As Mother had written to me though Pavitra she told me not to try to reconstruct my inner experiences as she said it would bring about a deformation that would render them quite useless. So I can only say that 12 years after Sri Aurobindo left his body, in a very short period of time I had His Darshan twice – Mother confirmed it – and again on 9.9.99. Since then He has spoken to me on at least one occasion when I was coming down the steps of the Nursing Home. I had asked Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna) a question about the poetry that was coming to me. The question was: 'If a line feels not quite right and one shouldn't use the mind, what should one do?' Amal replied, 'Appeal. If you are patient there will always be an answer.' As I went down the steps I heard Sri Aurobindo say, 'Go deeper, go deeper.' I think I can also share two experiences in the small meditation room at the top of the steps of the Ashram. One was the first poem I received through the Grace of Sri Aurobindo, four short lines:

*These are the currents of my life,
Engulf them in Thy sea,
The tangled threads of daily strife
Reweave to image Thee.*

The second is quite humorous. I was always drawn to His photograph in the Mediation Room and once asked one of the elder sadhaks why. He responded, 'Because the Presence is there.' I would go there as often as possible and one day when I was in a special mood of consecrating myself to the Lord I prostrated myself in front of His

photo. Then in a voice so sweet and carrying an overtone of the divine humour, He said to me:

And it's good for the circulation too.

I had my first experience of the mystical at a very young age – perhaps five or six years old. My mother was dying and the doctors were unable to cure her of an extremely high fever. As there was nothing more they could do and they had given up on her, her brothers decided to bring a monk who had lived on Mount Athos in Greece to our home in a small town in New Jersey in the U.S. They had heard that he had the power of healing. His name was Father Afanasi and he was a healer. I remember his black robes, none too clean, and his tall yet humble presence. He entered the room where all of us were standing around my mother's bed. He said nothing but held a dish of holy water in his left hand. With his right hand he threw the water three times on my mother's face. Almost instantly she got out of bed, said she was fine, and went to the kitchen to prepare food for the family.

My father was a Roman Catholic who converted to my mother's religion, the Russian Orthodox faith, when my little brother was dying and the local priest demanded money to pray for him. Although the music of the Russian church was to me more beautiful than any other choral music I had ever heard, I revolted against religion at an early age, feeling there must be something more. So I studied the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, including his bio-dynamic practices, and shortly thereafter met a Pandit and began the study of Raja Yoga. At the same time I was preparing for an operatic career for the Metropolitan Opera, on a scholarship from one of the leading mezzo-sopranos of the day, Regina Resnick, and I began taking voice lessons from her teacher, Rosalie Miller. At Hunter College I met the writer and philosopher, Rene Fulop-Miller, who befriended me, and through him I met Dimitri von Mohrenschildt, who was to become a lifelong friend.

To quickly conclude this introduction: I was offered a scholarship to Shantiniketan by the Pandit I had been studying with since my late teens. I worked two jobs at the same time for many months to earn enough to come to India, and followed him to California. I waited

week after week and he kept delaying, having been enticed by wealthy ladies in Riverside, California, and finally, as my funds were dwindling – after working 16 and 18 hours a day! – he said, ‘Everything has fallen through. If you truly want to do yoga, go home to your family and practice *samata* – equality.’ I looked him in the eye and said, ‘No! I am going to India.’ And almost, as if by miracle, within a day or two I met Dr. Judith Tyberg, Jyotipriya, whose name was given to her by Sri Aurobindo. At a very young age she travelled alone to India to find the secret of the Veda. She told me of this extraordinary experience. She had been raised as a theosophist – her entire family was in the Theosophical Society in California – and she went to Benares to find the secret of the Veda, and in a few days a man came to her after hearing the professors at the University tell her that there was no secret, and gave her a typewritten manuscript – it was a copy of the *Secret of the Veda* long before it was published. The man was Arabinda Basu. After reading it Jyotipriya said, ‘I have nowhere else to go, I need not seek anything else’ and she came immediately to the Ashram. She became a Professor of Sanskrit and founded the East-West Cultural Center, one of the focal points of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s work in America. It was here that I saw the photographs of Mother and Sri Aurobindo for the first time.

When I was nineteen, perhaps, I heard in the Pandit’s group a man who said, ‘Oh, yes, I know Aurobindo, he’s that man who can say things in twenty words when he could have used one.’ I was twenty-two years old and Jyotipriya said, ‘Why, you must come to Mother.’ In those days one had to send a photograph and a sample of one’s handwriting – not just a photo. Mother’s reply came back very quickly by telegram:

Tell him he may come and stay as long as he likes.

Oh, can you imagine that for a young man? So I boarded a Japanese freighter bound for Japan, with a Blessing Packet from Mother! Near Alaska we ran into a typhoon. The deck was loaded with redwood logs, 200-300 feet long. I watched them break off like toothpicks in the sea. Nothing was left on the deck. I was invited to join the Captain on the bridge and watch this tremendous force of Nature. His officers

were kneeling and praying and he said, 'If we go one more degree we will capsize.' Knowing nothing, I still knew that Mother would not allow this ship to go down and the seas calmed and we made it through to Japan. Then, because it is not easy to get to Mother, we had two weeks in Tokyo and then Kyoto where, while waiting for another ship to come, I visited some of the gardens Mother had seen.

I went to one garden that was so magnificent one could not apply adjectives to express its beauty. There I met a monk who took us around to each building and in the most perfect English I have ever heard, he told us the entire story of how each building had been constructed. I asked him if I could come back the next morning and ask him a few questions. I had seen a tree just outside, a huge pine tree, maybe 90 feet tall, and it was wrapped in straw about half its height, and I wanted to know about this. So I returned the next morning at 8 o'clock sharp. I knocked on the door and as I knocked it opened and he was there. 'Come in, come in', he said. I replied, 'Sir, I'm so very happy to...' 'Slow, ...no English', he said. No English? He took me over to a building and showed me a bronze plaque that was on each building. He had memorized each plaque from an Englishman, and since that fellow had perfect diction, he also had perfect diction. So I had to go very slowly. I said, 'Please tell me about that tree'. He said, 'Tree sick, - give medicine. Two hundred years more, tree OK.'

So I boarded a French freighter bound for Madras. It was delayed one hour, then another hour. I was down in the hot smelly hold and wondering, 'When am I going to get to Mother?' Suddenly my name was called. I had not filled out the proper exit permit and the Japanese officers said I had to leave the ship. I pleaded with them to no avail. There were some French sailors who motioned to me and showed me a place where they could stow me away. Then I had this feeling from Mother, 'No, you must stay in Japan.' And I stayed for another few weeks and had an experience that was so beautiful. As I was singing for people, they asked me to come to a Children's Orchestra and to sing for them. You see, this was all the Grace, all the Divine Grace. I went there: every child was blind. They had formed an orchestra of blind children. They played for me and I sang for them. Then I managed to get to Hong Kong. I was then helped get a flight

to Madras and I made my way from Madras to Pondicherry – after many, many adventures in the south China sea – and the bus from Madras to Pondicherry cost me three rupees. I had about ten rupees left. Dayabhai took me in at Park Guest House, then Parc a Charbon. I arrived on November 23rd 1961, and I had just turned 23.

On the morning of November 24th I had my first Darshan of Mother. The old balcony – on what we now call Balcony Street – brought one so close to Mother. I have seen in the exhibition people’s accounts of how they felt that Mother looked at each one individually...there is no question about it. Each of us knew the moment She looked on us. In fact, one time She looked at me and her eyes turned into diamonds and the diamonds hit me right here (in the chest) and I fell back three feet. I told my friend Marilyn Widman about these spinning diamonds that bored through my heart and she said, ‘Oh, that’s not such an interesting experience – Janina has made a painting of it, it’s in the Ashram Library, go and have a look at it.’ So I went to the Library and felt the experience again because there it was in the painting. Mother’s eyes were absolutely spinning in the painting. So I guess many people have had that experience, but for me it was very special. Sam Spanier, the founder of Matagiri, was interviewed on film and he recalls his first Darshan under Mother’s balcony and remembers being slightly nudged from where he was standing because it was where I always stood, just under Her feet, and I gently pushed him!

My first interview and experience with Mother and the opening She made in me cannot be described, as words fail, but I can relate some of our conversation. Each time I went to see Mother I had the same experience, of entering a room without walls. Another friend of mine, Bob Zwicker, also has had this experience. I recall that it was a very large room and one had to walk some distance to reach Mother’s feet. But now I see that it’s a small room, and with not even a step and a half you could be there. Nonetheless, the journey to Mother’s feet is long and might encompass one or many lifetimes. My first interview lasted about an hour. When you go to Sri Aurobindo’s room and you are coming out and you see where They sat together to give Darshan, and then you turn to go out, there is Mother’s chair and that is where we had our interviews with Her. In those days no one else was in the

room. You were alone with Mother. Today no one stops me when I put my head on Her chair and footstool.

Mother spoke to me for some time about music. She asked me, ‘Is the music with you now?’ I said, ‘Yes, Mother, it is always with me.’ It was recurring music that came all the time. Mother looked at me and smiled and said, ‘Not always.’ And then She took it away for many years, to work on other aspects, especially that of helping me to ‘empty out’. Mother spoke to me about Chopin, which was very interesting. She said that Chopin’s music is that most often heard on the subtle planes, but She said, ‘I don’t know why.’ Then She said,

You must bring down a new Music!

It was Her first *adesh* to me. At the time I was studying opera and more than opera, concert lieder and art song. So poetry and music were very much intertwined. I said, ‘Mother, I don’t know anything about combining words and music.’ Mother replied,

No, no, you must go far above words and bring down the pure music.

After more than 47 years of listening to thousands and thousands of works of music, seeking the new music everywhere, and singing – but not often, having given up all thought of a concert career – about seven years ago I had the experience that the New Music was to descend in a collective body – one body with many tones, opening in surrender and aspiration. So I began, by Her Grace, the OM Choirs in the Ashram and Auroville which I will tell you about later.

I go back to the Ashram, my first days. Mother made me an Ashramite and put me on Prosperity She also gave me permission to teach music in the school (which I did rather poorly) with the only proviso that I should teach only Western music. I also formed an Ashram Choir with many of the people who are still with us today, Manoj Das Gupta, Richard Pearson, Rathna, Dolly, Lilou, Kokila and many others. The story of our singing to Mother is very interesting. There were many good voices among the young men and women who joined, yet even

more important, an enthusiastic willingness to rehearse and a joy in singing that infused each work we sang. Having sufficient sheet music for a cappella choir, primarily from the religious repertoire, we soon built a program of choral music covering many centuries.

Everyone had an aspiration to learn the scores and to blend their voices, individually and by section, one of the great challenges for all choirs. After numerous rehearsals I can say that we had developed into a finely honed ensemble. Most of the singers were in the late teens and early to mid twenties and we all expressed an aspiration to sing for Mother. I wrote to Mother of our wish to sing for Her but received no reply. During this time I was seeing Marilyn Widman regularly and she, in her role as an elder sister, encouraged me to write Mother again. I did so and once again there was no reply. I felt that Mother was too involved in Her work to be able to devote the time to listen to our choir.

Being a callow youth I was deeply influenced by Marilyn who insisted that I write Mother again since She may not have received my letter or was too busy to answer. Marilyn instructed me to write Mother that we would sing for Her under Her balcony on a fixed date and hour. This time Mother replied, fixing the date and time, and saying that it would be better if we would stand by the Samadhi. She would come down the stairs and sit by the window overlooking the Samadhi.

Although at times I have been deeply pained that I troubled Mother and disturbed Her work, I also realize what an extraordinary blessing She gave us. We were all shocked when we entered the ashram courtyard and found that it was filling up rapidly, for little did we realize how quickly the word had spread that there would be a special darshan.

A place was made for the choir on the east side of the Samadhi looking up towards the window where Mother was seated. Suddenly, all was silent and it was time to begin our choral offering. The choir was facing Mother and since I was conducting I faced the Samadhi. All was silent as I gave the tones to the various voice parts. I brought my hands up, gave the downbeat and the most awful cacophony resounded through the Ashram courtyard!

The first piece was a total disaster! It was so completely out of tune it was painful. In fact, Dimitri said it was the most excruciating music he had ever heard! I realized then that we had a serious problem in that we had not rehearsed out-of-doors and the wind was playing havoc preventing the different sections from hearing each other! And there were still six or more works to sing.

At this point I turned around and lifting my eyes to the window where Mother sat, I prayed simply: ‘Mother, we are singing for You, please help us.’ The remainder of the concert was perfect, not a missed note, everyone in perfect harmony, a blend of voices that would make the angels proud. As we concluded, we all looked to Mother in gratitude and today, more than forty-five years later, I can remember the joy amongst all of us for this very special Darshan. As everyone began to leave the courtyard I met Dimitri who told me that after our out-of-tune rendition of the first piece on the program, each composition thereafter was indeed perfectly sung.

Now, in those days I was a pretty wild fellow. Mother knew this of course, as She knew everything about my soul. So, one day at about 6:00 in the morning, a young man comes to me and says, ‘Nolini would like to see you.’ I went to Nolini and he said the most extraordinary thing to me. He said, ‘Mother wants you to know that She gives you complete freedom in the Ashram...but with that comes total responsibility.’ This lesson has stayed with me all my life and though I have faltered and fallen innumerable times, I remember that Sri Aurobindo tells us not to do anything that we would not do in front of Mother. Since my vital was a bit too active and my visa was expiring, I went back to the U. S. in 1962, but before I left I wrote Mother on a number of topics. On the same paper She would give Her answers. I would write on the envelope, ‘To Divine Mother from Richard’ and She would cross out ‘To’ and ‘From’ and write ‘From Divine Mother to Richard’.

My parents were devastated. I was virtually disowned, because leaving the Church was a terrible and unforgivable thing to do. Mother wrote,

Will they not understand if you tell them frankly that you have a way of your own?

In that letter I had also asked Mother some additional questions. ‘Mother, These problems are now confronting me and I turn to You for their solution. Now that I definitely know that this Yoga is my path and that You are truly my Guru, I don’t really know what to do next. Since my visa is expiring I must leave India. Should I visit Europe and the Middle East or return directly to America?’ Mother replied,

Return directly to America.

Then I wrote to Her about marriage and She replied

No doubt and no hesitation – you must marry.

I then asked about my future work – because Mother had totally up-ended me. I didn’t know where to go, what to do: this force that She had put in me...I couldn’t go back to...I don’t know, that world. So I wrote Her as to what should I do: ‘Mother, I feel that I can offer myself to the Divine through developing my voice and singing or through returning to school to study choral music, eventually forming a choir. As both of these ways require intense work, I would like to know which way is most pleasing to the Divine, or if I should do one now and the other later on, or both simultaneously? Please help me with this question.’ Mother replied at the bottom of my letter;

One or the other. Because the most important thing is not so much what you choose but the spirit in which you will do it. Keep living in you the spirit of consecration and all will be all right. With blessings, Mother’

Then there was this wonderful young man, an extremely handsome young man, who invited me to go all through Europe with him and, of course, to meet many beautiful young ladies. His name was Ivan. I wrote to Mother, ‘If I return through Europe should I go with Ivan Lara? I am not sure whether it is good for me to be with him.’ Mother wrote,

Better not.

And you know, when I next met Mother she went through each question in detail, without referring to anything – (and in the intervening weeks She had seen thousands and thousands of people and read innumerable letters) – in just the order I had written to Her. And most interestingly, at the end, she told me about this man, this wonderful fellow. She said,

It is better not to be with people who live outside of themselves, as it were.

Oh, at the bottom of my first letter She wrote,

Go on boldly, following your way with joy and confidence, taking great care of one thing only – never to forget the Divine. Blessings, Mother.

When I returned to the U.S. I worked at various jobs to put food on the table. I married Anie and did whatever I could for Mother's work. I took up the work of the handmade watercolour paper, which I asked Mother to name, and She gave it the name, Arvind. I made contact with the pre-eminent watercolour artists in the U.S. and sent them samples of the paper and they were all ecstatic about it and wrote glowing assessments. But although the samples were fine, the quality-control was lacking. The first ream of paper that arrived was ruined by sea water because it was improperly packed. The interesting thing at this point was that the handmade watercolour papers from England, the Whatman papers, had just gone out of business because of labour costs and there was only one Italian paper available, and the Ashram had a chance to make millions of dollars. I apologized profusely to Mr. Dyson who was head of the English firm based in the U.S. and told him, 'We will send another ream at our cost and it will be fine.' But the second ream arrived with the paper full of black spots. The rag had not been properly cleaned! This was 100% rag, handmade watercolour paper. Then I met a man from Long Island who was an expert in making handmade watercolour paper and had been doing it from his home for many years. He told me that if I would get a ticket

for him to go to the Ashram he would go and share his expertise and teach the people how to make handmade paper properly. I wrote to Mother, and then on a beautiful card She sent me, She wrote:

This is all a dream in the air and cannot be realised.

And then She sent word to me,

If they cannot do it properly, then it has to be left.

And so I left it.

I share with you a brief anecdote here concerning an inspiration I had. I thought that if I could learn to hook a rug I could make a beautiful carpet for Mother's feet. I purchased wool and monk's cloth and drew Her symbol and with Anie's help I hooked a rug in Mother's colours, blue and white. The rug was a circle about three feet in diameter. I sent it to Mother and received the following letter on July 26, 1963, from Amrita, one of Her secretaries:

This is to inform you that the Mother received yesterday the beautiful symbol carpet sent by you. The Mother started using it the very day of its receipt. The Mother is sending you both Her special Blessings. Please find the same enclosed herewith.

Mother would send me birthday cards every year and sign them with Her love and blessings, but one year, 1964, She sent a card with a quote from Sri Aurobindo which has been the source of so much of my inspiration:

It is by a constant inner growth that one can find a constant newness and unfailling interest in life.

On the right side of the card Mother wrote,

To Richard with love and blessings for a luminous and progressive year.

In the mid 1960's I was working at various jobs and at one point got a position in a record store. In those days classical music was on long-playing vinyl records. So I thought I would write Mother, and wrote a two page letter to ask Her what composers She had heard before Her arrival in Pondicherry. I put together a chronological list of composers since the time of Debussy and Ravel. Mother wrote me a beautiful letter which has unfortunately been lost, possibly destroyed at my parent's home, in which She said She would be very happy to listen to all of the records I would send Her. She underlined the last composers She had heard, namely Debussy and Ravel and wrote,

I probably have heard almost everything they have written.

But from that time forward She had not heard any of the composers I had listed. So, with the help of a musicologist who was the manager of the record store, I put together a box of fifty long-playing records with all the great composers from that time on and selected their best compositions., I included electronic music, atonal music, 12 tone music, and even the Doors, the rock and roll group. Mother listened every afternoon for one hour until She had heard everything.

In the mid 1960's Anie and I were in a car accident in a blizzard on an ice-covered hill on a major parkway. Two elderly ladies had stalled their car perpendicular to traffic and there was no way to stop or get around their car as it was completely blocking the road. I crashed into them and Anie's head went into the windshield. She had to have numerous stitches but Mother said there would be no scars and there were no scars. I was guided to break open Vitamin E capsules and apply the oil to the stitches. Finally – you know in those days one recovered very little – today it is millions and millions of dollars if you burn your tongue on a cup of coffee at MacDonald's – but we received \$3000.00 for medical expenses. I immediately wrote to Mother wanting to send Her the money for She had saved Anie's life and mine. Mother wrote back,

Why don't you use the money to come for the inauguration of Auroville?

The cost of each ticket was \$1500.00! When we arrived Mother gave me permission to photograph the entire inaugural ceremony with all the young people putting the soil of their country into the urn. The photographs have become part of Auroville's archives.

I had the incomparable blessing of going to Mother many times during that period. The first meeting, when I brought Anie to meet Her, was with a man from Los Angeles, Anie, and myself. This gentleman, Isadore, was not for this yoga. Mother looked at him for a moment and smiled at him and then turned to Anie and said,

This is not the first time we have met. You have been with me many times before, many, many times.

Imagine that! Then She turned to me and said,

You don't want to come to Auroville in a few years? I feel you can do something there.

I said, 'Yes, Mother, whatever is Your Will.'

We returned to America in March 1968. Then I began a period of - I was in fact already working as a manager of a restaurant specializing in French cuisine, in a very exclusive area of New York City, and then became a partner in another restaurant in Greenwich Village, which became famous for its food and its atmosphere. I was making a lot of money for the first time in my life. Then a day came when I began to hear this voice. The voice was saying constantly, 'Go to California and help Jyotipriya.' So I wrote to Mother. No answer. A month went by and I wrote again thinking, 'Surely Mother, there has to be something...' because the voice wasn't stopping. Then I received a telegram from Mother.

My answer to you was so positive that I thought I had written it.

So we left New York immediately for California to work with Jyotipriya. But my stay in the U.S. was not to be 'a few years', for

Udar wrote just after that saying, ‘Mother has asked me to write and tell you that She wants you to prepare to come and build the gardens of the Matrimandir.’ I wrote back asking Mother whether She wanted me to pursue formal studies or practical work in the field. Mother said,

A combination of both would be best.

So I worked during the day with a landscape design and installation firm and learned so much. I went to college at night and met a great teacher and learned plant combination theory and many other aspects of sub-tropical horticulture while continuing to work with Jyotipriya. Each Sunday Jyotipriya would host speakers from all faiths, yogi’s, high priests, etc. The East-West Cultural Center was on Vermont Street at the time and there was a large dilapidated building in the back. I had the inspiration to remodel this building and make it into an art center. I must tell you, in all honesty, that I had absolutely no capacity in the area of construction, electrical or plumbing work, carpentry, etc. In fact, my father would cringe when I picked up a screwdriver! This then is an example of the Divine Grace, for I completely remodelled the building in a Japanese style with Shoji screens, rush mats, subdued lighting, etc. and built a stage that held a grand piano where Dane Rudyard would play, and where the first exhibition of Champaklal’s paintings was held. With the help of Sam Spanier we had the paintings framed in New York City and then shipped to Los Angeles.

My work with Jyotipriya was filled with joy for she encouraged me in everything and shared so much of her life and experience, especially with Mother. Once, I memorized the first three cantos of Book One of *Savitri* and she had me give a recitation in the library. I also wrote to Mother on October 18, 1967; ‘Dearest Mother, I am radiantly happy and grateful to be here helping Jyotipriya. I feel Your Presence and Force and Sri Aurobindo’s pouring down. I pray that I may become purer and more open to Thee to become more effective as an instrument. I aspire for an increasing calm and receptivity. Before Thy Feet...’ Mother wrote a very large ‘**blessings**’ at the end of the letter. I remember once Jyotipriya telling me of perhaps her last darshan of Mother. She was in great pain with arthritis and other ailments and with much difficulty managed to walk up to Mother’s

room. As she came before Mother, Mother said to her, ‘But you are all right!’ I could tell you many beautiful memories of my time with Jyotipriya but I should return to the subject of horticulture.

Almost all of my life has been connected with flowers and gardening. Since the age of eleven I was mowing lawns at a fire house and a petrol station. Not knowing much about plants, my father, who was in electronics at the time building transistors for the war effort, decided one day that he would become a landscaper and I worked with him and learned about landscape design, plant species, planting techniques, etc. So you see, now I can look back 50 years and see that all this was worked out by the Divine Grace. From the experience with my father in temperate climate plants I was sent to California to work with Jyotipriya and at the same time learn about sub-tropical species, preparing me for the eventual contact with tropical plants for the Matrimandir Gardens. In fact, while working with Jyotipriya, I had to earn money to support us and found a job at a garden center in Beverly Hills, in one of the wealthiest parts of the city. The famous Hollywood actors would come in to purchase plants and I would assist them. The owner was a very kind elderly man who had no children. One day he called me into his office and said, ‘I have no children and I have come to love you as my son. I want to retire soon and hand over the business to you.’ The property alone was worth many millions of dollars! But Mother wasn’t interested in money but in helping the soul in each of us to come forward and lead the being on the path of the Integral Yoga. Nine months had passed and suddenly I receive the briefest note from Mother;

A bientot. (See you soon.)

So then we prepared to leave immediately. Anie went first as I had to sell whatever possessions we had. I arrived once again in December 1969.

We went up to Mother on Anie’s birthday, December 18th, and it was at this time that Mother spoke to me of the Matrimandir Gardens. Her voice was so strong and clear. Afterwards, Anie wrote her account of the meeting with Mother as did I. Here are a few excerpts from

Anie's account:

At 9:00 a. m. Mother sent Champaklal to call us in. We were the first to see Her that day and it wasn't surprising as I had already intuited that She would call us first. We walked over to Mother and She greeted me with Bonne Fete then said Bon jour to Richard. I then placed the gladioli and roses at Her feet and gave Her the paperweight. She looked at it with great interest then handed me my card and bouquet of flowers. Richard then handed her the soil of Auroville and the seeds of 'Bird of Paradise' (Mother's significance, Supramental Bird). Mother said,

What is it?

and Vasuda explained.

Mother looked very deeply and with much seriousness at Richard. Mother gave Richard a red rose and handed him Her symbol pin saying,

This is for you from Her.

I then pinned it on Richard's kurta. Then She looked with penetrating eyes into Richard for a long while then smiled very sweetly and lovingly. I then placed my head at Her feet and Richard did so and simultaneously we made pranam to Mother. She placed Her hand gently upon my head. Afterwards Richard said it felt as though Mother had put Her fist to his head with a tremendous amount of pressure and force. When we looked up at Her She handed me the seeds and soil and said,

You keep these.

She looked at us and said,

They have told you that I want something very beautiful done with the gardens at the center around the Banyan

tree? Have you talked to Richard Pearson? I have chosen all the flowers.

I now come to my recollection of the next moment and will add Anie's remembrance at the end. Mother looked at me and said:

It must be a thing of great beauty – of such a beauty that when men enter they will say, 'Ah, this is it', and they will experience physically and concretely the significance of each garden. In the Garden of Youth they will know youth, in the Garden of Bliss, they will know bliss and so forth. One must know how to move from consciousness to consciousness.'

Then Anie remembers Mother saying (almost the same as my recollection):

It must be an expression of that state of consciousness which we are trying to bring down.

Then She mentioned the various aspects of the Gardens and while naming them She turned to Richard and with strong emphasis said,

Power!

She said to Richard,

Will you draw some kind of plan? And when it is ready present it to me?

Richard said, 'Yes, Mother.'

Mother said,

It must be very beautiful.

Anie said, 'It will be Mother, because it is for You.'

Then Mother looked at Richard and said,

I would like you to begin with the Garden of Unity.

Now when it comes to art and drawing I have only left thumbs. I have absolutely no capacity as an artist or an architect – I'm virtually hopeless. I worked with Pierre LeGrand on certain sketches but nothing came, and for years nothing came. I will share with you something I have rarely spoken about to anyone. For years I had the sense of failure and inadequacy in not being pure enough, open enough, sincere enough, aspiring enough, sufficiently emptied out of the little self to catch the vision to manifest the Gardens. Carrying this with me, one day I spoke to a Yogi who told me, 'There is no failure. The time for the Gardens to manifest has not yet come.' Looking back and remembering Mother's words in wanting me to begin with the Garden of Unity, I realized that only with Unity and Harmony can the descent of the Gardens begin, for I believe they are already formed in the subtle physical world and it needs only our collective aspiration and unity for them to manifest.

I was 31 years old and one night I had a dream. This was in 1970 and I saw 'our house.' Mother said She wanted us to have the first house built in Auroville at the Centre, in the place called 'Peace'. Of course, it was never done, as so many things were never done, but that's all right. I dreamt of this house, a beautiful house. It was round and people were sitting all around on a beautiful white carpet and there was one light coming from above in the centre into the middle of the room. Matrimandir had not yet begun but now I know that the Matrimandir is our house, the House of the New Creation, a house for all of us, and Mother gave me the blessing to see it. Anie had a dream shortly after that and I recount part of it here:

My dearest Richard, I have just had the most wonderful dream about you, which I shall record... You and I and some other people were walking about what seems to have been a campus. We were standing in front of a very large structure which appeared to be that of St. Paul's School in England where Sri Aurobindo studied. (I had seen a picture of the school before

going to sleep as I am again reading 'Life of Sri Aurobindo'). Forming a pinnacle around the top of the school were some tree tops which appeared to have no trunks or roots in the earth.

Suddenly with a great burst of energy you said, 'I must get them for my teacher.' With this you began to scale the wall of the school by rope, with a pair of pruning clippers. All were aghast, but suddenly the branches began to fall and we could see you in the top pruning away.

When we went to see the branches they were all golden and shimmering. When you came down we were all rejoicing and there was much happiness and joy in the atmosphere. You said, 'Now we can transplant them in the earth.' Afterwards we all began to walk about among the most beautiful plants and flowers I have ever seen, but nothing I could clearly identify. The dream ended here.

I felt so good as I woke up immediately after the dream. It seems to have been more like an experience than a dream.

I hope you are much stronger today and I shall see you hopefully around 5:00.

With love in Their Light, Anie

Anie sent the account of her dream experience to Mother and Mother wrote:

It is not quite a dream and it is a very good indication about the work you are doing.

I hope Richard will recover soon. The packet enclosed is for him.

With love and blessings, Mother

Then Mother gave me the work (the blessing, really) of reading *Savitri* every week under the Banyan, and then at the Centre where we all stayed, in the area called 'Peace', where I read for 10 years.

When the excavation for the Matrimandir was to begin I wrote to Mother asking if it would not be better if Aurovilians did the work and She replied that it would be better if Aurovilians did the work of building the Matrimandir.

I found a good location for the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery with a large canyon at the back and a lower road on the south side with a grove of mango trees (the only shade around). With protective fencing we could keep out the herds of goats that would wipe out months of work in a few hours. I wrote to Mother and She gave Her blessings for the site. The early 70s through the mid-70s were a time of many difficulties in Auroville. Very little food at times, almost no amenities, and there was an aspect of superiority I guess you might say, from some of the workers on the construction, looking down on people who were doing ‘flowers’. So Mary Helen wrote to Mother and Mother replied that the Gardens were as important as the Matrimandir itself. At a later time I built a shade house with a back wall of rock, on the top of which I made a drip system. As the water moistened the rock beneath, all kinds of ferns and shade and moisture-loving plants could be grown. Mary Helen took up this work and wrote to Mother that she was experimenting with the Japanese style for the ‘Auroville’ Gardens. Here Mary Helen made a mistake because she meant the Matrimandir Gardens as there were no Auroville gardens that she was working on at the time; our only focus and dedication was to build the Gardens of the Matrimandir. Mother replied to Mary Helen’s letter:

Naturally it will be in the Japanese way.

Now, just briefly, I’ll share with you what has come to me about the Gardens. I spoke to 50 people this morning, mostly members of the Golden Chain, graduates of the Ashram school system, but also others who wish to offer their labour to help build the Matrimandir Gardens. You see the Golden Chain people come out every Sunday when I am here and alternate Sundays when I am away, and the moment we are together there is this joy that fills everyone with the beauty of the work and the devotion they bring to it. And now Aurovilians are beginning to join the work. So this is what I have experienced about the Matrimandir Gardens. You see, they begin in a counter-clockwise direction, with Existence – Existence is first, Consciousness following Existence, and then Bliss. So, Sachidananda, Sachidananda manifested on the earth. Now as a result of Sachidananda there is Light. With Light there comes Life. So, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life. From Life naturally evolves Power. So, Existence,

Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life, Power, the first six gardens. Power brings Wealth, Wealth utilised properly is Usefulness or some translate it as Utility. Usefulness bring Progress, the ninth garden, Progress leads to Youth, an eternal Youth, Harmony, an indivisible Harmony, and the last Garden, Perfection, perfect Perfection... which leads us again to Sachidananda.

When people wanted to join us in the work at the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery we wrote to Mother asking Her permission. She replied:

If people are sincerely wanting to work in harmony and collaboration, there is no need of asking my permission.

With love and blessings

One of the greatest joys of my life was sending flowers to Mother. When we were preparing the first revision of the small book on flower significances by Lizelle, Mother was asked, through Tara, if She would give comments on the flower significances. Mother agreed. On March 23rd 1971 I wrote Mother: ‘Dearest Mother, Richard Pearson and I have completed the first draft on the book of the significances of flowers. We now have many points to be clarified and I would like also to send You some of the new flowers from the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery. Could Richard P. begin to see you in March?’ Mother replied:

Richard can come once a month with a few flowers, the 3rd Tuesday of every month starting 16th March.

And so, this great blessing was granted me and I began sending flowers to Mother. More than 60 significances were given by Mother to flowers grown at the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery. All the beautiful hibiscus with Auroville names, with the exception of one grown by an Ashramite, were grown in the Nursery and sent to Mother. I would come in by motorcycle with the flower carefully protected from the wind so it would be undamaged, and give it to Tara who would take it upstairs to Mother. When the flower was shown to Mother she would express great delight. From downstairs in the Ashram courtyard, I could hear Her saying things like, ‘*Magnifique...*’ These flowers

were, of course, the Hawaiian varieties sent to India where, through many of the seed and plants exchange programs I was fortunate to initiate, I received them from Bangalore. The flowers were huge and extraordinarily beautiful. Mother named them all at first with Auroville's name, such as 'Charm of Auroville', 'Sweetness of Auroville', 'Blossoming of Auroville', etc. Then later She said that they would have to have a wider significance for the rest of the world so She gave the name New Creation, i.e. 'Charm of the New Creation', 'Beauty of the New Creation', 'Concentration of the New Creation', 'Manifold Power of the New Creation', 'Ideal of the New Creation', 'Progress of the New Creation', 'Usefulness of the New Creation', etc. So, as Auroville is the New Creation these hibiscus bear the dual name. I might mention that there is one other flower that bears a dual name, 'Miracle', which is also known as 'Air of Auroville'. How blessed we are to breathe this atmosphere. Among the wonderful names that the Mother gave that reverberate in my consciousness and will reverberate for ever, named from Auroville and grown in the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery, are: 'Remembrance of Sri Aurobindo', 'Joyous Endurance' (and many other forms of Endurance), 'Opening to Sri Aurobindo's Force', 'To live only for the Divine', 'Joy of Union with the Divine'.

There are many more experiences I could tell you about the work of the Matrimandir and Gardens, such as my having the great blessing to be the first to take Champaklal and Nirodbaran to the Matrimandir Chamber, the many visits of Dyuman and the yearly Flower Shows at the Nursery that were a special experience in harmonious collaboration. Each year for Mother's birthday we would collect all the flowers we could find for which She had given significances and set up tables according to the significances. Mary Helen would do the flower arrangements, Ray and Deborah would provide vases, others would collect the flowers, someone would do the calligraphy, still others would arrange tables, tablecloths, etc. and all would see that the whole Nursery was clean and vibrating with beauty. Then buses filled with Ashramites would come and walk together with Aurovilians to see the flower displays. It was a time of happy communion. Two brief anecdotes I'll relate concerning the workers. The first was a letter to Mother asking if I could begin training some of them in horticultural

techniques such as pruning, soil preparation, etc. Mother replied through Shyamsundar that they can learn the work and, if careful, do it. On February 23 1971, I wrote Mother and asked Her if it would be a good idea to hold a meditation at the Banyan tree on February 28th to aspire for the manifestation of the Garden of Unity. Mother replied ‘*Yes. Whatever is the most convenient time.*’ Lastly, there was a problem with stealing in the Nursery. A group of the workers were caught with a bag of mangoes which they were devouring. I wrote Mother about this and She said that if it was only food they could be forgiven this time.

I worked with Richard Pearson to update the botanical information for the first revision of the Flower Book, and with Mary Helen who did many of the line drawings and worked with Mary Aldridge to assure that all plant descriptions, grammar and punctuation were absolutely correct. During this time we had the great blessing of asking Mother numerous questions on flowers and plants and Her answers illumine for us the importance the flowers in our lives and sadhana. For example, I wrote to Mother asking what effect the Supramental would have on flowers and Mother’s reply was that flowers would be among the first to respond to the Supramental as their entire life is an aspiration for Light. I also wrote and asked Her, ‘If our flower offering depends on our state of consciousness, does it help to learn the significance of flowers, even if it is purely mental to begin with?’ Mother wrote back, ‘Yes, surely.’

Then there was the cyclone in 1972. A huge branch of the Service Tree was broken off. You must have read what Mother has said about our consciousness being responsible for that. The branch was on the south side of the tree and a large and very heavy stub remained. I saw the young men beginning to cut the stub and in the way they were doing it, without an undercut, the bark would have been torn off all the way down the trunk. Since I had worked for many years with my father pruning trees, I asked if I could help. Parichand and I were very close. He was my elder brother. He said, ‘Yes, go up.’ And I showed them how to cut and we worked the whole day and at the end that huge stub came off perfectly and you can see today that it has healed completely. When I came down from the tree Parichand

came to me and said, 'Mother has sent you this Blessings Packet to care for the tree for the rest of your life.' I still have that Blessings Packet with me.

All through the 70's I had bouts of amoebic dysentery and I was in the Nursing Home many times. At one point I was so ill and in so much pain that I just felt I should leave the body. So I wrote to Mother saying, 'What should I do? Should I take this medicine (which was horrible medicine called Flagyl) or should I just put myself in your hands and let happen what happens and just pray to you?' Mother replied to take the medicine and pray to Her. After some time I understood that so little of myself was given to Her, so much was still closed, that the medicine was necessary. Years have passed and I still recall the experience of Marilyn Widman who became ill and said she would trust only in Mother come what may. When she was very ill, word was sent to Mother and Mother said that if she did not go to Jipmer she would die. Marilyn died and I don't think anyone can make a judgement on an individual soul's decision.

Now I would like to speak about the OM Choir that is held here in the charged atmosphere of Savitri Bhavan. Regarding the OM Choir, Mother told us to sit in a circle and have no preconceived idea of what we would sing. When I wrote to Her about using an organ She wrote back saying,

It is better without the organ.

Today OM Choirs are beginning in many areas of the U.S. and in other countries. The New Music is descending in all who aspire for a New World and the Life Divine on earth. The New Music through the power of OM has the power to transform and heal. At each Om Choir I read from *Savitri* and recently from all that Sri Aurobindo and Mother have written about OM. Certain composers, and I know of at least two, who were devotees of Sri Aurobindo, attributed their compositions to His Grace and Force, in aspiring to bring down the New Music. We also have examples of a cellist and other instrumentalists seeking through their devotion the road to the New Music. But in the Ashram and in Auroville the OM Choirs are receiving the Force directly to the

extent that we are open and aspiring through collective harmony for its descent. I have written rather extensively on the OM Choirs so I will conclude by mentioning that people have experiences of healing as well as many visions during the music of this sacred collective gathering.

For my birthday in 1972 I received a great surprise. I had been seeing Huta often and then Mother had asked me to photograph her *Savitri* paintings. She wrote,

Richard

If it is possible for you to keep 1 day a week or certain hours a day to do the work of Savitri, I would be very happy because I am sure you can make a success of it. See how you can arrange and let me know for the final arrangement.

Love and blessings, Mother.

On my birthday in 1972 I went to Mother (I believe it was the day before or the day after, as my birthday was on the day that Mother regularly met with Satprem) and She greeted me with a vast smile and a powerful and joyous ‘Bonne Fete’. After She handed me my card I placed my head on Her feet. Knowing only a little of the work of transformation of the body that She was doing from reading *Notes on the Way*, I didn’t want to take too much of Her time. So many people were still going to Her while She was working on the cells. I began to get to my feet and Mother said:

Look at your card.

I opened my card and there was the old name, Richard, and the new name, Narad. Then I broke down in tears and I don’t know how long I stayed with my head on Her feet.

During the years of Mary Helen’s heroic battle with cancer we read *Savitri* many times, at least eight times cover to cover, usually at night before she retired. One night I had left *Savitri* downstairs where we were working on a dictionary of words and terms in *Savitri* entitled *Lexicon of an Infinite Mind*, taken from a line in *Savitri*. I went into

Mary Helen's study and picked up her copy and opening the book found Mother's note to her;

*I am with you – fear not.
Blessings.*

I shall close these remembrances with a few anecdotes. The first was told us by Udar when we were recording some of his reminiscences. One time, on Darshan day, the rain was pouring down on all of us, absolutely drenching people. And so naturally many put up their umbrellas. Mother came out and looked on all, bringing the Divine Grace into each of us and then when She went inside She said to Udar,

You see, Udar, I send down the Grace and they put up their umbrellas to stop it!

Udar told me that he then vowed never to use an umbrella again. Gauri, his daughter told me, "Yes, so then he trudged into Mother's rooms, pouring water over Her carpets and over the floors. So we said to him one day, 'Maybe you could wear a raincoat and just keep your head bare?' And so he did from then on."

I have to tell you this amusing story. It was about 1978 and I was exhausted from the work in Auroville at the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery. I went to Nolini and said, 'Nolini, I need my batteries recharged.' He stood very still and put his hands on my head for what seemed like two minutes and then said, 'They are recharged.' I could have floated out of his room. Then Anima, remembering my old name, composed a rhyme and began saying, 'Ree-chard, recharged, Ree-chard recharged.' There are many letters from Nolini and the other secretaries, and more personal correspondence with Mother, but it is time to bring these remembrances to a close.

In 1980, on my birthday, I went to Nolini who had been my guide (along with another who is still living so I shall not mention his name) for a long time. He would come to me in the night and teach me – I don't know what, because with this sieve for a head I couldn't begin to understand those things with the mind even if I tried. Once, when

I approached him after two weeks of intense teaching, I said, 'I know you are coming every night.' He said something like, 'What of it?' he said humorously, 'Maybe it's your own soul!' He just made light of it, smiling with his undertones of love and joy. On that day Mary Helen and I presented him with 100 different flowers of Psychological Perfection in all sizes, colours, shapes and fragrances, a huge platter. He took them and gave them to Anima and said, 'Be sure to give back the platter.' He motioned us to sit down, saying, 'Take any chair, all chairs are equal.' (There were only two!) I had written him a long letter about the problems in Auroville and asked why we had to go through such difficulties. Very quietly and very deeply he said, 'It need not be that way. You see, She is trying a thousand different ways.' Then he turned to Mary Helen and pointing to her said, 'Your body...' and then he turned pointing to me and said, 'and your body...' and then he pointed to himself and said, 'and my body... We think they are different bodies. They are not. They are all her body. She has put a part of herself into each of us. Truly.'

I conclude with these words of Mother written to me and Anie, but certainly for all of us:

The love and blessings are always and everywhere with you both.

*She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent, ...
All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.* Savitri p. 314

*This is the knot that ties together the stars:
The Two who are one are the secret of all power,
The Two who are one are the might and right in things.
His soul, silent, supports the world and her,
His acts are her commandment's registers.
Happy, inert, he lies beneath her feet:*

*His breast he offers for her cosmic dance
Of which our lives are the quivering theatre,
And none could bear but for his strength within,
Yet none would leave because of his delight.*

p. 63



Savitri Bhavan News

From November 2008 to March 2009

Calendar of special events:

2008

November 9: “How to Listen to Indian Music” by Shantanu Bhattacharya and family. This was a lively demonstration of the essential features of Indian classical music, arranged for us by Professor Kittu Reddy as part of his regular series of classes on *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, when we came to study what Sri Aurobindo wrote about Indian music.



November 16: *About Savitri* – a 35 minute film based on Huta’s book *About Savitri* Part One. The soundtrack is a recording of the Mother’s own readings from Book One, Canto One of *Savitri* along with her comments and explanations. We saw the lines of *Savitri* as they were read by the Mother. Then as she gave her comments the corresponding paintings made by Huta inspired

by the Mother's comments, and guided by her, were shown. This film, prepared by Savitri Bhavan in 2004 at Huta's request as a pilot project, created an atmosphere of profound concentration which was deeply appreciated by those present.

November 17: On the 34th anniversary of the Mother's passing, concentration was held throughout the day in front of the Mother's Chair. This is the chair which she would use when sitting for meditation in Huta's apartment, donated to Savitri Bhavan by Huta in October 2001.

November 23: The afternoon session of the 'Auroville – Tamil Nadu' seminar, organized by the Tamil Heritage Centre of Auroville and attended by delegates from many Sri Aurobindo Centres all over the State, was held at Savitri Bhavan. A programme was presented by students of the Arul Vazhi outreach school. As well as yoga asanas, some of the students recited from *Savitri* and performed dance movements to the lines.

November 24: Darshan Day : A young newcomer to Auroville, Drupad from Goa who works at Deepanam School, is a mime artist. He aspires to express his relationship with *Savitri* through mime. On this Darshan day in the evening, he shared with us his initial attempt in this direction, by exploring Sri Aurobindo's 'Author's Note' to his epic in a mime performance at Savitri Bhavan, supported by young local musicians from the Mohanam project in Kottakarai village, and the sound and light team from the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium of Bharat Nivas. A lot of young people attended this original presentation, which ended just in time, as heavy wind and rain announced the onset of cyclone Nisha!

December 1 – 31: Throughout the month, we were privileged to display a series of portrait-drawings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother made in pencil and charcoal by our Aurovilian friend Shakti. These remarkable works, undertaken as a concentration by the artist on photographs – some familiar, others less well-known – of the Master and the Mother, lined the walls of the upper corridor and hall of Savitri Bhavan. Many of those who

saw them were impressed and moved. One Ashram photographer who was familiar with all the original photographs remarked ‘She has brought them to life’. Shakti allowed us to use one of her drawings as the frontispiece for *Invocation* no. 29.

December 17: On this day a new weekly study circle on Sri Aurobindo’s *The Life Divine* was started. We proceed on similar lines to the *Savitri* Study Circle, reading Sri Aurobindo’s words together and doing our best to understand exactly what he is saying.

December 21: Mrs. Anandhi Dorai of Chennai gave a talk in Tamil “Satyavan”.

2009

January 3 – April 4: In the New Year, Dr. Alok Pandey, at our request, started a series of 12 weekly talks exploring *The Practice of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga*. As these classes were not held on February 21st (The Mother’s Birthday) and 28th (Auroville’s Birthday), the course extended up to April 4th, closing on the day of Sri Aurobindo’s arrival in Pondicherry.

January 5: *Meditations on Savitri* : Book Three, The Adoration of the Divine Mother – the latest film in this series being prepared by Manohar at Huta’s request – was shown for the first time, in the Hall.

January 14 – March 7: *Mantra-Art*, an exhibition of text-images in pencil and water colour by Dutch artist Jacques De Jong (1939 – 2002), was displayed in the upstairs corridor and hall. Jacques used to visit Pondicherry often and was inspired in much of his work by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In 2003 we displayed some of his *Savitri* paintings. Once he wrote out the whole of text of *Savitri* – almost 24,000 lines – on a single board about 1m. square. That powerfully charged piece did not form part of this exhibition, but the 20 sheets shown were expressive of his consecrated concentration in the atmosphere of the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as well as his great artistry.

January 17: On this day we were happy to re-open the picture-gallery for Huta's *Savitri* paintings, which had been closed during the rainy season. The gallery is open daily 3 – 6 pm, including Sundays.



February 14 – March 9: Once again this February we were privileged to host another exhibition of little-known photographs of the Mother arranged by Loretta. This year the theme was *The Mother and Flowers*. The display included many beautiful examples of items used or worn by the Mother, decorated with flower paintings made by disciples. There were also a number of very beautiful flower photographs lent by Narad. As usual, this exhibition attracted a very large number of appreciative visitors from Pondicherry and Auroville, as well as groups from Centres, and local school children

February 14: In the evening, accomplished musician Ladislav, who lives and teaches music in the Ashram, presented his musical offering to the Mother for her Birthday in our Hall, performing *Three Partitas* by J.S. Bach on solo violin in front of a rapt audience.

February 18: Another musical offering on the theme *Adoration of the Divine Mother* was presented by Mrs. Deepshika Reddy with an ensemble of musicians and singers from the Ashram. Lines from *Savitri* as well as from Sri Aurobindo's book *The Mother* were read, along with Sanskrit chants and bhajans and songs in several languages.

February 22: In the morning, Sraddhalu Ranade gave an illuminating talk in the Hall, on *The present global crisis in the light of the Supramental working*.

February 22: In the evening, outside in front of Sri Aurobindo's statue, a new film was shown entitled *The Mother's Darshan 1965-1973*. This was prepared at Savitri Bhavan by Tatiana from Darshan photos of the Mother taken by Sudha Sundaram and selected by the Mother herself.

February 23: The following evening, in the same location, Manohar gave a first showing of his latest film on Huta's *Savitri* paintings photographed by Giorgio M., accompanied by the Mother's recitations and organ music. This was *Meditations on Savitri: Book Four, The Book of Birth and Quest*.

March 1: Resuming the tradition initiated by the much-missed late Dr. Mangesh Nadkarni, Dr. Alok Pandey gave the concluding session of his Darshan Study Camp on *Savitri* – held at The Sri Aurobindo Society's Beach Office in Pondicherry from 22-28 February – with a summary session at Savitri Bhavan. His talk focused on Book One, Canto 5 and the first three cantos of Book Two. Besides Dr. Alok-ji's illuminating talk, this was the occasion of a happy reunion of *Savitri*-lovers, reminding us of earlier days.

March 4: *Meditations on Music* : Savitri Bhavan hosted for the Kalai cultural group an exceptionally beautiful solo sitar performance by Mustaq Husain Khan.

March 10: A gathering was held in front of Sri Aurobindo's statue under the rays of the Full Moon. Participants enjoyed reading from



Savitri, hearing Sunil-da's music, singing Sri Aurobindo Mantra, and closed with a silent concentration. It is intended to continue this practice regularly on Full Moon nights.



March 26: Dr. R.L. Kashyap of the Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastriar Institute of Vedic Studies (SAKSI) in Bangalore, gave a talk on *The Background for understanding the Veda*.

Savitri Reading Circle on Skype

Readers may be interested to know that it is now possible to join a *Savitri* Reading Circle on Skype. It is being hosted in the US by Aubrey Hornsby and Shari Hindman, and is open to *Savitri*-lovers round the world. For more information, please contact sharilhindman1@comcast.net.

Regular events continue as usual. We remind all our readers that they are most welcome to join any of the activities at Savitri Bhavan if they are in our area. If we are given advance notice of group visits, special programmes can be arranged on request.



Dr. Jai Singh's class on 'Cultivating Concentration' is appreciated by visitors.

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. Savitri Bhavan is a project of SAIER (Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research)

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

Auroville Unity Fund (SAIER)

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

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Auroville International Township Branch

Kuilapalayam, Auroville - 605101 INDIA

Auroville Unity Fund Foreign Account No. 10237876508

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Savitri
is a Mantra
for the transformation
of the world

The Mother