

# Invocation

*Savitri*

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B H A V A N

*Study notes No. 31*

*INVOCATION is an occasional publication of SAVITRI BHAVAN  
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*This publication has been funded by SAIIER  
(Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research)*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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*Edited by Shraddhavan for Savitri Bhavan, Auroville  
Design by Prisma, Auroville  
Printed at All India Press, Pondicherry  
November 2009*

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In a new act of the drama of the world  
The united Two began a greater age.

*Savitri*, p. 411



# *The Mysterious Rose*

## *An autobiographical note by Huta*

In 1956 the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram gave me the work of decorating idols and arranging them in a temple which was one of the sections in her “Dolls and Idols” Exhibition. I completed the work of adorning the images. One day I was looking at them in the Mother’s Private Stores where I used to work. I was especially thrilled to see Mahakali. While contemplating her, my mind traveled back to the year 1950 when I had gone to the temple of Arasuri Ambaji – one aspect of the Divine Mother – near Mount Abu, with my father and my younger sister.

In the evening the priests burnt incense, lit lamps, rang bells and sang hymns. The atmosphere was truly heaven-haunted. I made arrangements for my father and sister to watch the ceremony, but I myself wandered around here and there. My heart was filled with marvellous peace. The ceremony was about to begin – the priests in saffron robes held bronze stands with tiny lamps in them. The crowd was thick now and I could not make my way back to the view of the innermost part of the temple. In sheer disappointment I stood in one corner. Suddenly, I felt somebody’s hand on my shoulder. I swung round with a start. It was a Sadhu in a white garb. He smiled at me, and asked me whether I wished to see Mahakali. I answered that I would love to. Then he led me to a special place, and both of us stood on a platform of cement. Now I could see everything, for the place where we stood was pretty high. The ceremony began with the sounding of many gongs. I was lost in the extraordinary atmosphere. Afterwards, the Sadhu pointed to an image. Shree Ambaji appeared before my eyes. I forgot my own existence and merged in her. I have no words to express this wonderful experience.

Afterwards the Sadhu led me to the innermost part of the temple and asked the priests to give me some holy water. One of them poured it into the hollow of my right hand, and I drank the water. I was extremely happy and about to take my leave, when the Sadhu said:

“Wait! The Mother wants to give you a flower. Which flower do you like the most?” I answered, “Any flower will do”. He still insisted on my telling him what particular flower I liked. So, with a smile, I said: “I love roses.”

As a matter of fact, at that time there was nothing in his hands, but, right in front of my eyes, he suddenly closed his right hand and then opened it and gave me a pink rose full of sweet fragrance. He asked me to eat it, and added that, if I could not do that then I should preserve it.

I thanked him and went away with my people. I never saw the Sadhu again, but the next morning before I left the place I heard from a priest that the Sadhu was a realized soul, and appeared only occasionally – especially in the evening – and that he never touched women. I raised my eyebrows. I was baffled.

I put the rose in a sandalwood box I bought for it. It remained quite fresh for several days, then gradually faded. Later on I transferred it to a silver box, and I still have it with me.

Several years later, when I had joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram I showed the Mother the silver box in which I had kept the rose, and told her how I had got it. She leaned forward from her couch and, while touching the box, smiled and exclaimed:

Ah! But I know this. It is I who sent you this rose through the Sadhu at that time. Keep the box in your meditation room.

I marvelled at her all-pervading Knowledge and Power.

According to the Mother this highly fragrant pink country rose signifies:

Surrender : To will what the Divine wills is Supreme Wisdom

The Mother also states:

Surrender is giving oneself to the Divine – to give everything one is or has to the Divine and regard nothing as one's own, to obey only the Divine will and no other, to live for the Divine and not for the ego.

Here I may relate a legend of ancient times:

A king called Daksha Prajapati had a daughter named Dakshayani or Sati. She married Shiva (the Lord of Transformation, according to the Mother) against her father's will. A grand ceremony or Yagna<sup>1</sup> took place at the king's place. He did not invite his daughter and her husband on the occasion, but Sati could not resist attending it in spite of her husband's warning. Unhappily, she was deeply humiliated by her father. She felt that it was disgraceful to go back to Shiva, so she plunged into a profound meditation and by the fire of Yoga-Agni ended her life. Shiva came to know of the incident, and his fury knew no bounds. At once he went to the king's palace and carried Sati's body over his shoulder and wandered about madly in the Universe, forgetting himself, his duty and everything else. This terrible situation played havoc with the Universe. All the gods and goddesses were in distress. At last they approached Vishnu (the Protector of the World, according to the Mother) and implored him to do something in order to save the Universe. With his Sudarshanchakra, Vishnu cut the body of Sati into 108 parts which were then charged with the Divine Consciousness and scattered over various parts of India. For India is a symbolic representation of the Universe. Wherever these parts fell, there temples were built in Sati's remembrance. It is said that her heart fell in the place which is called 'Ambaji' near Mount Abu. The 'Yantra' in the temple there was considered her heart. There is also a place called Kanakhal near Hardwara where the altar of the Yajna and the image of Sati are still kept.

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1 A Yagna is a sacred sacrifice offered to gods performed according to ancient Vedic rites. There are many forms of Yagna, each used to achieve a particular goal or result.



The whole story is symbolic. Shiva represents the spiritual Power, and Shakti the material Nature. The number 108 is mystical and occult. In the eyes of Hindu lore, the whole Universe is created by the permutation and combination of 108 elements. Also there are 108 beads in a rosary.

Regarding Kali the Mother wrote to me on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1965:

Kali is the  
Mother and  
Shiva is her  
son



Kali is the Mother and Shiva is her son

Wonderful are these verses from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* about Savitri herself who is the incarnation of the Supreme Mother – "Aditi":

Thou hast come down into a struggling world  
To aid a blind and suffering mortal race,  
To open to Light the eyes that could not see,  
To bring down bliss into the heart of grief,  
To make thy life a bridge twixt earth and heaven.

p. 536

# Rose of God

Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven,  
Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven!  
Leap up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,  
Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.

Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,  
Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!  
Live in the mind of our earthhood; O golden Mystery, flower,  
Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour.

Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,  
Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!  
Ablaze with the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,  
Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,  
Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre!  
Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme;  
Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the children of Time.

Rose of God, like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,  
Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!  
Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss:  
Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life beatitude's kiss.

Sri Aurobindo  
(SABCL 5:58)

## Two questions and Sri Aurobindo's replies

*Two questions have arisen in the mind in connection with Sri Aurobindo's poem "Rose of God".*

*1) Does the rose, of all flowers, most perfectly and aptly express the divine ecstasies or has it got any symbolic allusion in the Veda or Upanishad?*

There were no roses in those times in India – roses came in with the Mahomedans from Persia. The rose is usually taken by us as the symbol of surrender, love etc. But here it is not used in that sense, but as the most intense of all flowers it is used as symbolic of the divine intensities – Bliss, Light, Love etc.

*2) Are the seven ecstasies referred to there the following : Bliss, Light, Power, Immortality, Life, Love and Grace?*

No, it is not seven kinds, but seven levels of Ananda that are meant by the seven Ecstasies.

Sri Aurobindo

2 January 1935

(from the *Bulletin*, April 2009, p.40)

# ***Approaching Book Two of Savitri***

## ***By Dr. Alok Pandey***

*On March 1, 2009 Dr. Alok Pandey continued the tradition started by our late revered friend Dr. M.V. Nadkarni, concluding his post-Darshan Savitri Study Camp at the Sri Aurobindo Society Beach Office in Pondicherry with a closing session held at Savitri Bhavan. The Study Camp had dealt with Book One, as well as embarking on the early cantos of Book Two. In the closing session Dr. Pandey gave an overview of all these cantos, as well as a look at the next one, Book Two, Canto Three : The Glory and the Fall of Life.*

*Savitri*, as we all know, is not an intellectual poetry. Our intellect is so much dependent on the data of the senses, but here there is no data of the senses and the sense-mind. It is the result of a seeing from very high planes of consciousness. It is not just a seeing, but an action, the result of an identification with the Creative Consciousness. It is Knowledge and Power of the highest kind. What the senses can tell us, all that, Sri Aurobindo describes and brings it so close to us. These are not images, but facts of inner experience. Very often there is a tendency to interpret these descriptions as images, but the truth is just the other way round: if we look at it from the other angle, we would say that it is this physical world that is a world of images, shadows and reflections from a Reality that exists elsewhere in the Beyond. But the images that we see here are not perfect images, They are '*broken reflexes of an indivisible unity*'. Today as we were sitting in the Dining Room, someone read out a line that mentions '*seas of self*'. It is quite natural for the human mind to think that Sri Aurobindo is using these words metaphorically: we have seas on earth and in a similar image he is describing '*seas of self*'. But the reality is the other way round. Seas of Self exist, and our physical seas are nothing but a broken reflection of that. This physical world is an image and a symbol, trying to translate a deeper reality and truth. This is the first thing that we learn from *Savitri*.

The Book of Beginnings, which we just finished studying in our Camp, is in a way a summary, a seed of everything else that is to

come in the poem. The first Canto gives us the backdrop – not just the physical backdrop but the psychological and, still deeper, the spiritual backdrop, not only of this story, but of the great epic of Creation itself. It reminds us that Her touch is on every atom. There is a touch of benediction. The Mother has said in one of her Prayers that a kiss of benediction is laid upon the struggling atom. This is the first thing that Sri Aurobindo tells us, as a backdrop.

In the second Canto Sri Aurobindo tells us about The Issue. This is not just a story but a divine Event – an event of universal significance, a great drama that takes place in everybody's life. In us too, Satyavan is lost in the forest of Ignorance. In us too, Savitri struggles to liberate him from the clutches of darkness, from the forest of human life. In us too, Aswapati labours with his power of tapasya, to bring that love, that glory, that Grace, closer to us. In us too there is Dyumatsena, blind, fallen, forfeiting his kingdom; and this becomes not just a story of Savitri and Satyavan in far remote times, but the story of Man, the story of Creation. It is our own story, and as long as there is even one blind soul struggling in ignorance, *Savitri* would remain relevant, and not just relevant – it will be a power to redeem us.

In Canto Three, Sri Aurobindo tells us how this Lord of Tapasya, Aswapati, this power, uplifts the human soul from a state of ignorance to a state of Light and Knowledge – all the major experiences of the way. This ignorance is the result of a sense-bound mind, it is the result of ego, the great division. As the mind begins to be free from the clutch of the senses, from all that we see and hear and touch and believe to be real, as it begins to be liberated, the whole range of experience broadens. A new kind of knowledge, a wide world-knowledge, a new God-knowledge, begins to pour down in streams of inspiration, flashes of revelatory sight, as intuition. The human mind begins to change into something else than what it is right now, so heavily dependent upon the outside. It begins to awaken to the inside, and this inside illumines the outside with new lines, new colours, new views, new patterns, new meanings, new significance – even new ways of feeling. This is the first change, as the human soul draws out of a state of ignorance.

But for Aswapati this is not enough. He goes deeper into the heart of even these higher states. He discovers The Secret Knowledge, the Knowledge of the Triune Reality, the triple status of the one Divine, and the three poises in which the one Purusha plays with the one Prakriti: bound; witness; free – master and king. All this Aswapati discovers, which completes one line of yoga, the Vedantic yoga, the yoga of the soul's liberation and its utter unity with God.

Realisation of the impersonal universal, or the transcendent Divine, is one line of approach. It is enough if one wants only to come out of this circle of ignorance, and be lost in the coils of the Infinite, not to return. But Aswapati goes further. He must discover the Power that is at work in this cosmos. In Canto Five, 'The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness', Aswapati realises and becomes one with that great Power which has emerged out of the heart of the Supreme. This transcendent Power is at work in the blind atom, in the dumb mass, lost as mechanical Prakriti. It is at work in the countless worlds which have been fashioned out of the very substance of the Great Being. It is lying hushed in the heart of the Supreme. It is He who has brought this transcendent Power out of that hush, out of his own heart, and Space and Time are born. '*Space is himself, and Time is only He.*' This is the great secret. It is such a hope and such a joy to know that He is all this that exists, and He is also all that does not yet exist. This is the beauty of this creation.

In Book Two, which we just started, Sri Aurobindo reveals to us the secret of this creation. In the Gita it is spoken of as the Aswattha tree, the Creation, whose roots are above and the branches are below. The scientific view is just the reverse, quite naturally because we are in the ignorance and we see the roots below in matter and the soul flowering out of the mind. So very naturally we think soul is nothing but a glandular secretion in the human mind. This is a very homogenous and a very sympathetic crowd I would say, but if we were to speak about all this in certain other kinds of crowd people might say, "Oh, it is nothing but neurons babbling." If it is just a matter of babbling neurons then one could question the veracity of anything at all – including any theory or any hypothesis. But that apart, here in *Savitri* it is made clear that the whole story of creation

begins from above; and not only does Brahman become Time and Space – he enters into it.

There is a double descent which Sri Aurobindo speaks of. The first descent is the descent of the Shakti, the holocaust of the Supreme Mother, who has consented to enter into this world of ignorance and darkness and death, chosen to pass through the gates of this birth which is a death, for thus alone could creation be redeemed. She becomes all these countless energies and fills the bodies of the Purusha with forces and energies that play in many worlds. This is the first descent. The whole process starts in the Supramental Gnosis, where out of Himself four typical Truth-Forms emerge. Following the Vaishnava tradition, Sri Aurobindo speaks of these four Truth-Forms as the four personalities of the one Ishwara: Mahavira, Balram, Pradyumn and Aniruddh. Mahavira is the personality which represents Knowledge and Truth and Light; Balram the Strength and Force; Pradyumn, the aspect of Love and Beauty and Harmony; and Aniruddh, the power that organises this whole creation, its many rhythms, and holds them together and enters into its processes in detail. As a counterpart there are the four great Mahashaktis: Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, and Mahasaraswati. Thus far they are One even in their differentiation. But as creation leans towards the Overmind, Sri Aurobindo tells us that the first division begins to appear. It is an appearance, there is not yet the real division, but each power does its own work, though holding back all the rest behind. But just one more step and we have the world of the formateurs, what are called in the Indian tradition Prajapatis and Dhyanamurtis. The Mother has spoken of them as formateurs, She speaks of these four great Beings as the Being of Light and Truth, the Being of Bliss, of Life and Consciousness; and she tells how they become just their opposites – the fourfold Being who is One. As creation descends these formateurs ... though they look like creators they are not creators ... they are supposed to receive a Truth from above and reflect it and project it onto this Earth. Each picks up one aspect and goes on projecting that. His power is the power from above. But like all middlemen they are not very nice people : they hold back a lot of things, and the distortion begins to appear from there. I suspect that the malady or disease of middlemen started there. Mother has spoken about it, saying that they hold back something. Even in the return the same

thing applies. She speaks of how each of the great Beings that chooses to be a representative or an intermediary in the work, how each holds back something, not just in the transmission but in the return.

So one way or the other, each time creation descends one level, something is held back, something that becomes broken, something that becomes distorted – maybe just a little. And as it enters the level of what we now call the embodied mind, there is a fragmentation, a real division. At the level of the Mind we are always fighting, because it is my opinion versus your opinion, my idea versus your idea. Everything has become divided here.

As this Mind descends into the plane of Life, somewhere on the borders where Mind is subservient to Life, we have the birth of the great Asuras ... not in the original sense of the Vedic Asuras who are *asu-ra*, which is different; in the original Vedic sense the word means representing the Force aspect of the Divine, the sense in which Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Asuras in the Durga Stotra ... but the asuras who put their mind at the service of the Life-Force – this is their hallmark. They can be very brilliant minds, so we should not be too much carried away by human brilliance. There are great intellectuals who are great Asuras, because they use their brilliance of mind only to serve the interests of the Life-Force, and for aggrandising of the ego. They may be very capable people like Ravana, who was very good in playing music and had read the scriptures, but all their knowledge is at the service of the ego and the life-force.

Still further down, somewhere in the mid-worlds of Life we have those beings who have no consciousness of good or bad. They exist only for the expansion of the empire of joy and love: the Gandharvas, the Kinnaras, the great celestial musicians. Many of the Heavens and Hells are located in these vital worlds. Much of our Art, painting, poetry, is inspired from these vital worlds, and also many illnesses.

As the consciousness descends further, the energy becomes more and more turbulent and we have the lower vital worlds with their denizens: the Djinns, the Pisachas, the bloodsucking vampires who suck away energy whenever they enter any atmosphere. They feed on



the vital force of others. Wherever there is an accident these fellows are around, because they like to create an accident and they like to enjoy it. They love drama of a very low kind, and because of these denizens, these dark obscure forms, there is in human consciousness a love for tragedy, even an attraction for it. They push us towards failure, towards fall, sometimes on a seemingly heavenly road.

Still further on we have the plane which we read about yesterday, a plane where perfect forms exist, forms of beauty, and its little beings, the fairies, the gnomes, the imps, the elves, the dwarfish creatures. They can be very nice and sweet and helpful. They are like little physical gods who govern one or the other aspect of material creation. In the Indian tradition, they are even said to preside over some organs and illnesses. There are traditions in which if one prayed to these deities one could get rid of some illnesses – it used to be there.

Still further we have this atomic void, the Inconscient from which the world is being pulled out. This is the great Descent. Into all these worlds, the one Being has entered. So it is not a single descent but a double descent.

There is a third descent also, which is more relevant to us. The Infinite, within himself, has many many seeds or seedlings. He holds the jivatmans, the individual atman, the jiva, which is above time and space. These individual jivatmans are like so many centres of his Unity. Each projects a little ray into this creation, and through a process of evolution becomes the psychic being. The jivatman stands outside time and space, but projects something of itself, which would become first the psychic consciousness and then the psychic being which will play with creation and become a link between all the infinities of the Divine and this manifold play, the multiplicity of this material creation: therefore the immense importance of the psychic being in Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

There is a fourth descent, which is new. We are here for that: the descent of the new consciousness, of the Supramental Light and Truth and Power, for which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, their

Grace, have prepared this earth. We read those beautiful lines which describe this descent which Aswapati experiences. We can read those lines, and then proceed on to ‘The Glory and Fall of Life’. This descent happens to Aswapati as his soul, after rising out of a state of ignorance, and having discovered the Secret Knowledge, yet aspires to bring down a greater world which he knows to exist. He wants to bring the superhuman form into this world here. This is on page 80:

In a divine retreat from mortal thought,  
In a prodigious gesture of soul-sight,  
His being towered into pathless heights,  
Naked of its vesture of humanity.

The human consciousness cannot reach there. Aswapti is now climbing to levels where no mortal consciousness has ever gone – not even dared.

As thus it rose, to meet him bare and pure  
A strong Descent leaped down. A Might, a Flame,  
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,  
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,  
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs  
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain  
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany:

p.80-81

What Sri Aurobindo has brought down is not easy for the human consciousness to bear. Even one like Aswapati, Sri Aurobindo himself, as he is rising, prepared with so much tapasya, carrying within himself an aspiration that would call the very highest worlds down, even he, when he meets this descent ... And what a descent it is – something worth living for, something worth dying for, a thousand times being reborn for:

A Might, a Flame,  
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,  
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,  
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs

And penetrated nerve and heart and brain  
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany:  
His nature shuddered in the Unknown's grasp.

p. 81

It is not easy to receive the clasp of God. Every shred of ego is torn out. The Mother says in one of her passages 'My child, you are so small, so small, so small – how will you receive the Supermind?' One of the conditions put for receiving the Supermind is to be completely free from the ego, and being equal in all conditions and circumstances: equal to heat and cold, to the touches of pleasant and unpleasant, to ill-repute and good repute, ill-fortune and good fortune, to this or that way of thinking and way of life. If we look at it, we would feel that maybe for another hundred years we have to prepare ourselves for this. So all these schools which have sprung up all over the world, which are capitalising on the supermind in spiritual supermarkets, selling cakes of transformation for how many dollars I don't know, or rupees ... they are everywhere: with some nice music and some virtual reality we are made to experience something of the Supermind. Thank God, the Supermind doesn't come down like that. Mother says, 'My child, don't pull. Mostly you will end up pulling a vital being and think you are playing with God. If at all that violent ecstasy comes down, you will suffer a breakdown. So first play football, go to the Playground, go to the Gymnasium, don't be all the time meditating: prepare the body and brain and nerve.'

When we look at life from that view, we see that all the events of life and circumstances are such a beautiful preparation. When something good happens it is a preparation, when something bad happens it is a greater preparation. That is why the Mother says, 'When you ask for a prayer and I say yes, it is a Grace; when I say no it is a greater Grace.' *'Heaven's wiser love rejects the mortal's prayer.'* For her rejections are not rejections but only postponements. She never rejects, she postpones – and each postponement is a preparation for us. Many times people revolt, they say, 'Oh, they think I am not fit?! I am fit. God is not fit! He is not fit enough to accept me, who is so great, so beautiful, so intelligent! What does he know? He is losing some very precious person.' Vanity, vanity, vanity – the sole cause of so much

ill in this world! If only we could look at it like this and see that we are not ready. A thousand lives are nothing, if we have to be ready to experience even a touch of this:

A Might, a Flame,  
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,

Even with the eyes of the immortals we cannot see it.

A violent Ecstasy,

... the clasp of Mahakali, cutting off our head and wearing it in her garland – that is surrender and sacrifice.

... a Sweetness dire,

Not a weak sweetness, but a sweetness whose burden is difficult to bear. There is a line in *Ahana*, Sri Aurobindo's long poem, where he speaks of '*Bearing the burden of God's delight*' – so difficult! So here he says

... a Sweetness dire,  
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs  
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain  
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany:  
His nature shuddered in the Unknown's grasp.  
In a moment shorter than death, longer than Time, ...

What words can describe this? The power comes from a plane where all human sense of time is lost.

By a Power more ruthless than Love, happier than Heaven,

Can love be ruthless? Yes, divine love can be ruthless. When God takes to loving us, he tears away every covering of ego, strips us naked of all defence. What is the Hour of God? When God gives us a clasp. That is why in *The Hour of God* Sri Aurobindo says,

In the hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it. All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow.

(CWSA 12 :146)

That touch makes us defenceless. It is love, but we don't experience it as love. We say 'Oh, Divine – you are so cruel, so torturing!' In the exhibition we read about the Chaldean legend – the flowers of Divine Love. What a sacrifice! To receive a drop of that Love one has to be ready to lose one's life.

By a Power more ruthless than Love, happier than Heaven,  
Taken sovereignly into eternal arms,  
Haled and coerced by a stark absolute bliss,  
In a whirlwind circuit of delight and force  
Hurried into unimaginable depths,  
Upborne into immeasurable heights,  
It was torn out from its mortality  
And underwent a new and bournless change.

p. 81

What happens with this transformation? In a few lines Sri Aurobindo summarises it:

An omniscient knowing without sight or thought ...

At the level of our humanity we know things either by thought or by sight. It may be a higher sight – we might see a vision, or revelation takes the form of a thought. But here the knowing is by identity, how I know myself.

An omniscient knowing without sight or thought,  
An indecipherable Omnipotence,

How does it act, how does it work? It can use any instruments, all instruments, dispense with everything and yet it is omnipotent.

A mystic Form that could contain the worlds,  
Yet make one human breast its passionate shrine,  
Drew him out of his seeking loneliness  
Into the magnitudes of God's embrace.

This is the great transformation that Aswapati has experienced. He is given now the charge of this creation: '*This bizarre kingdom passed into his charge.*' (p. 86) – all its powers and forces and energies and beings. He must set it right. This transformation which he is experiencing individually must be for all. This is what he will ask subsequently, saying 'How can I be satisfied with my lonely mortal days – I who have looked upon thee and have experienced this? I want it for the entire humanity.' And Savitri will say, "My spirit's liberty I ask for all." So Aswapati must prepare the field; but he must first see the field, with all its possibilities and problems.

In our camp we finished Book Two, Cantos One and Two, and now we should read a little bit of Canto Three as a continuation – The Glory and the Fall of Life. This high transformation is envisaged, a practical omniscience and a practical omnipotence, for Man: an ecstasy, a sweetness, a love, a joy without limits. But now when Aswapati turns his gaze to the field of human life, what does he see? What is this human life for which he wants to bring down that power?

He crossed the limits of embodied Mind

p. 116

When we are in embodied mind we don't look at it like this, but he crosses beyond and looks at the fields of Life.

And entered wide obscure disputed fields

Much like our patta-transfer problems these are disputed fields, what belongs to whom we don't know.

Where all was doubt and change and nothing sure,  
Now he is seeing to where he has to bring this light, this consciousness.

A world of search and toil without repose.

We can recognise ourselves in it.

As one who meets the face of the Unknown,  
A questioner with none to give reply,  
Attracted to a problem never solved,  
Always uncertain of the ground he trod,  
Always drawn on to an inconstant goal  
He travelled through a land peopled by doubts  
In shifting confines on a quaking base.

p. 116

When we look at our own life, where is the certitude? We feel ‘This is definite’ – the next moment it changes. In the morning we take a resolution, in the evening we break it. One day we are convinced of something, another day we are unconvinced; a third day we are filled with doubts about everything, from ourselves to all that is around us, to God. The fourth day something happens and we are all joy and happiness again. This is human life – everything shifting, everything floating. Much further on in *Savitri* we read :

Always he builds, but finds no constant ground,  
Always he journeys, but nowhere arrives;

p. 337

This is our human life. All the time we journey but we arrive nowhere.

We can turn to the next page, page 117. What is the law of life here? We all start with great dreams and sometimes these dreams are nourished, sometimes they are thwarted, but at the end of it what happens? ‘*A huge inconsequence was her action’s law.*’ At the end we realise, ‘This is not what we really wanted.’ We were actually looking for something else. We go on and on, we build and rebuild, and destroy and rebuild. At the end we discover

A huge inconsequence was her action’s law,  
As if all possibility must be drained,  
And anguish and bliss were pastimes of the heart.

p. 117

We are not satisfied with only bliss. We want a little anguish. Our hearts are not happy with only peace, we are not happy only

sitting in the Ashram. We want to have chat, and not only pleasant beautiful thoughts. We must also discuss about problems – in other people, not our own of course! That is left to others to discover our problems, so we discuss somebody else’s problems, somebody else will discuss our problems, and that is our pastime, a universal pastime. Sri Aurobindo knows everything.

In a gallop of thunder-hooved vicissitudes  
She swept through the race-fields of Circumstance,

We are shaped by Circumstance in this ignorance. This is not the truth of our life, of our deeper soul, but outwardly this is how it is. We keep complaining of circumstances: ‘Oh, this is good, this is bad, what can I do?’ And all our life is we only complain, complain and complain. The Mother would tell us, ‘My child, never complain or grumble. When you complain, all kinds of forces enter into you.’ Of course, it is understood, adverse forces, wrong forces. ‘Never complain.’ She says, ‘What do circumstances matter? What matters is the attitude we have towards them.’ But in our ordinary consciousness, our life is swept through the race-fields of circumstance. We are shaped by circumstance. If we are in surroundings which are pleasant then we say, ‘Oh, I am so happy, I am so lucky, God is so kind.’ If the circumstances are not very nice to our ego we say ‘God is very unkind’. We have that famous aphorism of Sri Aurobindo; ‘Sir Philip Sidney said of the criminal led out to be hanged, “There, but for the grace of God, goes Sir Philip Sidney.”’ He was a great statesman and writer. When seeing a criminal his heart is full of compassion. The criminal is going to the gallows, and he says “But for the grace of God, I could have been there.” And then Sri Aurobindo says, ‘Wiser, had he said, “There, by the grace of God, goes Sir Philip Sidney.”’ (CWSA 12:426) Even when you go to the gallows it is a grace of God. That is the consciousness we can enter. But describing the way we are, he says :

Or, swaying, she tossed between her heights and deeps,  
Uplifted or broken on Time’s inconstant wheel.

Caught like a fly in the wheel of time. There is a giant wheel, I



think it is everywhere but we have seen it in India during festivals, and you go in it. As you are moving upwards, there is “Aah!” from everybody. As you are going down, you feel you are going to fall. This is human life. We don’t even realise that somebody else is calling the shots, if you are happy about it, like a fly mounted on the wheel of circumstance.

Amid a tedious crawl of drab desires  
She writhed, a worm mid worms in Nature’s mud,

A crawl of desires – from this object to that object to a third object. We are reminded of the great *mahavakya* in The Life Divine :

The ascent to the divine Life is the human journey, the Work of works, the acceptable Sacrifice. This alone is man’s real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe.  
(SABCL 18-19 : 42)

But the greatness in us is there still, that he will tell us.

Then, Titan-statured, took all earth for food, ...

It doesn’t matter whether it is a dinosaur size or the size of a worm – it is still that life crawling for drab desires.

Ambitioned the seas for robe, for crown the stars  
And shouting strode from peak to giant peak,  
Clamouring for worlds to conquer and to rule.  
Then, wantonly enamoured of Sorrow’s face,  
She plunged into the anguish of the depths  
And, wallowing, clung to her own misery.

Life is not satisfied with anything. Too much happiness it cannot bear – it must feel sad. Not only feel sad – it clings to its misery. This is the problem: when we are depressed it’s not just that we are

depressed – we enjoy our depression: ‘Ah, so nice we are depressed. After all I can be depressed also, I am human!’ Otherwise we feel ‘Only happy, only happy – something is wrong with us.’ Even sometimes doctors will doubt, you know: “Always happy? Are you OK?” We must have sometimes a pulled face, some tears ... that’s OK. We love this depression. Sitting in one room, the Lord knew everything, better than us.

In dolorous converse with her squandered self  
She wrote the account of all that she had lost,

What do we think during those moments of misery? ‘I lost this, I lost that, my life is useless, meaningless.’ It is nothing but a play of life. Nothing is lost because nothing was gained. To begin with, the idea itself was false: “I gain it, I have it, I possess it ...!” All belongs to God. When we live with that consciousness, what is gained and what is lost? But life feels like that.

Or sat with grief as with an ancient friend.

We must have a glass of beer in hand, and grief must sit on one side and depression on the other, and we must recount to each other our tales of woe – and feel happy that my grief is a little less than yours. And sometimes there is a competition there: if I am less unhappy, I am not happy about it: ‘Oh, what do you say? Your unhappiness is nothing – I’ll tell you what I have gone through in life.’ There is a great competition. Some people will make a show of their guilt, “I have confessed so many sins.” – “Oh, only so many? You don’t know how many sins I have committed and confessed.” This is human life.

A romp of violent raptures soon was spent,

Clubs, parties, all this ... violent raptures; thrills of the flesh, spent too soon.

Or she lingered tied to an inadequate joy

Half happy, half sad.

Missing the turns of fate, missing life's goal.

And why? When we were clinging on to these inadequate things, so many times God came and knocked at the door, "Come, come, come with me, come ..." There is a beautiful poem of Sri Aurobindo, "The Dream Boat", in which he describes this state.

*Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire  
With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?  
Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur.  
"Do you come now? Is the heart's fire ready?"*

The great God is asking, 'Do you come now? Is your heart's fire ready?' And then he describes the human state, like an accountant he is measuring.

*Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered,  
It recalled all that the life's joy cherished,  
Imaged the felicity it must leave lost for ever,  
And the boat passed and the gold god vanished.*

Then what happens? Once one has felt the touch of God's love, no love can satisfy. Once one has felt the touch of God's joy, no earthly joy can satisfy. Once one has felt the touch of God, the world appears hollow within the breast. So he says:

*Now within the hollowness of the world's breast inhabits –  
For the love died and the old joy ended –  
Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,  
And the gold god and the dream boat come not.* (SABCL 5:561)

So here we have :

Missing the turns of fate, missing life's goal.

p. 117

Then :

A scene was planned for all her numberless moods  
Where each could be the law and way of life  
But none could offer a pure felicity.

It is amazing: when we live in the life-world and are driven by the vital we don't even realise it. It can be really amazing. Just a few days back I received a mail from a student – a very bright student, very open to something beautiful – just about 19, a psychology student. She writes, “Da, there is this girl whom I am very fond of, and I tell her, ‘Why do you spend your life drinking and doing all this? There is a better way to live.’ But now I begin to feel ...” She doesn't realise how in company there are interchanges and how they can affect us. “I have begun to feel maybe I too should drink, before I can tell her with certainty.” As if, by that standard, every doctor must experience heart-attack! And for me the situation would be very difficult, being a psychiatrist, I must experience every malady of the mind. This is perverse logic, but life gives this logic. Who knows? We have already gone through it in the past, we don't have to go through everything in every life. We don't have to taste mire and say “Oh, it's very bad in taste.” But human life is like that, the vital moves us like that.

A spirit of her self and aim unsure,

The vital is never sure.

Tired soon of too much joy and happiness,  
She needs the spur of pleasure and of pain  
And the native taste of suffering and unrest:

We are restless because of peace. Earlier Sri Aurobindo describes why this spirit is pulled back from the unwilling gulfs: ‘*Our restless nether members tire of peace*’ We don't want peace, we want restlessness.

She strains for an end that never can she win.  
A perverse savour haunts her thirsting lips:

Only human beings can be so stupid as to like the taste of tobacco and alcohol. Animals won't take it. Mother tells the story of when a monkey was given alcohol: it immediately threw it away, because it tastes so horrible. And tobacco is so horrible in smell and everything. But human beings have some perverse savour. What kind of life we have drawn into ourselves!

A perverse savour haunts her thirsting lips.

People walk for miles to find a glass of drink and a cigarette.

For the grief she weeps which came from her own choice,

One chooses, then one suffers and one weeps. This is human life. We choose, we suffer, we weep. But sometimes we do worse things, like blaming someone else. So here he is saying :

For the grief she weeps which came from her own choice,  
For the pleasure years that racked with wounds her breast;

How many wounds the human consciousness endures through all the things that it tastes, and yet we want more: 'Maybe this time, maybe this one, maybe this is going to be really good.' Where is that perfection in the human scheme? And yet we seek for the pleasure *'that racked with wounds her breast.'*

Aspiring to heaven she turns her steps towards hell.

There are people who have visited Pondicherry. So, ask them, 'What did you do? Did you go to the Ashram?' – 'Ashram? Is there an ashram there also?' – 'So what did you do?' – 'We went to Rendezvous.' 'What else did you do? You didn't go to the Dining Room?' – 'Dining Room? What Dining Room?' 'What did you do?' – 'We had nice wine, Pondicherry is famous for wines.' We come so close, and we go so far. Something in the person's soul, I really believe, brought them so close, *'Aspiring to heaven'* and the steps turn towards hell, and one goes back and says 'Pondicherry is a lovely place.' 'Why?' – 'Because the wine is so good.' What about the Divine? That's not what we want.

Chance she has chosen and danger for playfellows;

God's protection we don't want. Mother says somewhere, to someone very close to her: 'My child, you are really going out of my protection again and again.' We don't want that. We want to have some danger, some fun.

Fate's dreadful swing she has taken for cradle and seat.

One can envisage all the fast-running motor-cycles ... '*cradle and seat*'. Sri Aurobindo in his description is so perfect that one can see the whole thing. Some people go with such a speed, and if they don't knock themselves down, they end up knocking someone else. In the Ashram recently we had at least four or five fractures, thanks to this.

Fate's dreadful swing she has taken for cradle and seat.  
Yet ...

Now here comes the hope. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo has examined in great detail the question : Can such a life be transformed? He says 'Yes, because in its heart there is still something beautiful and divine.' That is the hope of Life.

Yet pure and bright from the Timeless was her birth, p. 118

That is why. When we live in the world of life or by the world of life something in us still feels, a little bit of that memory still lingers in our heart, that joy we have left behind, that carefree laughter of the gods, the sense of an absolute power. What drives the reckless youth, self-confident, self-assured, but the memory in Life: 'Nothing can happen to me. I am all-capable.'? So here Sri Aurobindo sees that.

Yet pure and bright from the Timeless was her birth,  
A lost world-rapture lingers in her eyes,

That is why, when we see those adolescents where the life-force is at its peak, they don't worry about anything – '*careless laughter*'.

Her moods are faces of the Infinite:  
Beauty and happiness are her native right,  
And endless Bliss is her eternal home.

Life, fallen on earth; Life waking in the little reed, the grass we trample

with our foot, writhing in the worm, crawling in its insect flights; Life flying in the wings of the birds; Life reaching out to vast vistas of thought, to unconquered horizons; Life that goes beyond Man into domains that our embodied mind and cabined sight cannot see. All this is not a curse, it is a fall from the great heights.

In the Isha Upanishad there is a very beautiful description of this life. Where is its home? These waters which flow down : *matariswar dhadhati* – it is held in the bosom of the One. Life is one of the aspects of the Divine, which comes from its home of Bliss, and even in its worm-like food, even in pleasure and pain, it carries some memory of that original Delight. That is why human beings seek delight naturally. It is one thing that we do not find because we are in ignorance, or our hearts clutch at forfeited bliss, but life in us keeps seeking, because that is what it has come from. So this is the great description.

We are reaching closing-time, but we can read a little more, because we should not end with this sad state of affairs. Sri Aurobindo will show us Life's '*antique face of joy*'. He has shown us the mask it has worn. Life here has worn this mask of pain, of suffering, of perverse pleasure, of thrills of the flesh, of momentary beauty, but there is a deeper truth of life, the endless Bliss which is her home.

This now revealed its antique face of joy,

Now Aswapati sees Life as it is in its own home, not as it is found here.

A sudden disclosure to the heart of grief  
Tempting it to endure and long and hope.  
Even in changing worlds bereft of peace,  
In an air racked with sorrow and with fear  
And while his feet trod on a soil unsafe,  
He saw the image of a happier state.

That is why, in spite of everything, in spite of sorrow, suffering, failure, fall, disaster, tragedy, something in us yet hopes – because, deep within, Life carries the memory of a happier state. This Aswapati sees.

As far as heaven, as near as thought and hope,  
Glimmered the kingdom of a griefless life.

p. 118

And what is this kingdom? What a description this is, on page 119:

Too high and glad for mortal lids to seize  
But near and real to the longing heart  
And to the body's passionate thought and sense  
Are the hidden kingdoms of beatitude.

If we plunge deep inside we can feel some touch of that beatitude.

In some close unattained realm which yet we feel,  
Immune from the harsh clutch of Death and Time,  
Escaping the search of sorrow and desire,  
In bright enchanted safe peripheries  
For ever wallowing in bliss they lie.

There are kingdoms, there are beatitudes, in which one can always  
wallow in bliss, not in suffering and sorrow.

In dream and trance and muse before our eyes,  
Across a subtle vision's inner field,  
Wide rapturous landscapes fleeting from the sight,  
The figures of the perfect kingdom pass  
And behind them leave a shining memory's trail.  
Imagined scenes or great eternal worlds,  
Dream-caught or sensed, they touch our hearts with their depths;

They wake up the heart to a beauty, to a joy

Unreal-seeming, yet more real than life,

When they touch us, our hearts wake up to a glad communion with  
our own deeper states.

Happier than happiness, truer than things true ...

And now comes one of Sri Aurobindo's ironical punches :



If dreams these were or captured images,  
Dream's truth made false earth's vain realities.

Someone asked Sri Aurobindo "I feel love for the Divine inside, and I feel happiness inside when I turn to you. Is it all real or is it imagination?" Sri Aurobindo says, 'These feelings are spiritual feelings, they are real experiences.' They are subjective. Experiences are not only seeing visions. These subjective states when we feel the nearness of God's embrace – we feel it with an inmost heart. And Sri Aurobindo says here, "Let them say if they are dreams or imaginations ...":

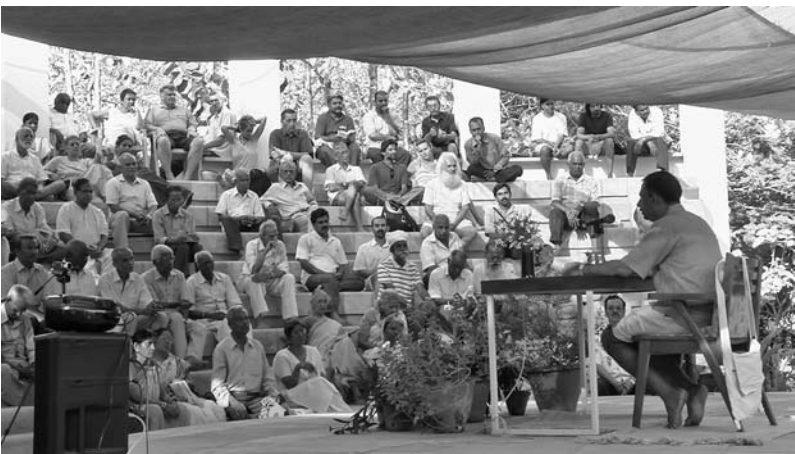
If dreams these were or captured images,  
Dream's truth made false earth's vain realities.  
In a swift eternal moment fixed there live  
Or ever recalled come back to longing eyes ...

Once we have touched that state we can call it back, so it is not just imagination. And what are these worlds?

Calm heavens of imperishable Light,  
Illumined continents of violet peace,  
Oceans and rivers of the mirth of God  
And griefless countries under purple suns.

p. 119

We will close here, and hope to continue in August.



*Dr. Alok Pandey speaking at Savitri Bhavan on August 22, 2009*



*The Savitri Bhavan team, June 2009*



*Our guests from the Ashram arriving for the 10th Anniversary  
Celebration on August 8 2009*

## *The Activities of Savitri Bhavan*

The activities at Savitri Bhavan can be categorized under three headings – ‘Outreach’, ‘Learning Materials’ and ‘Research Projects’. ‘Outreach’ covers activities which aim to present the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in its purity, but in ways that are accessible to people of different ages, psychological types and educational and cultural backgrounds : classes and courses of different kinds, exhibitions, film-shows and other special events. Outreach activities are held in the four languages of Auroville – English, Tamil, French and Sanskrit – and relate to the three primary focuses of our work : Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*, the lives, work and vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and the aims and ideals of Auroville, as they relate to that vision. To support these activities, Learning Materials are created or acquired. Four departments take care of different types of materials and make them accessible to the interested general public: the Reading Room, the Huta D. Hindocha Collection, the Audio-Visual Section, and the House of Mother’s Agenda. The Publications Section produces our journals and other publications. Research projects support the creation, exploration and sharing of Learning Materials and Publications.

In this issue we are presenting some reports about activities under each of these headings. Representing ‘Outreach’ is Mrs. Bhuvanasundari’s article about the classes she is leading on behalf of Savitri Bhavan at Arul Vazhi school in the Auroville settlement of Promesse. For ‘Learning Materials’, there are descriptions of the work of the Reading Room and the Audio-Visual Section. The articles by Martin and Shraddhavan which follow are outcomes of research projects.

## ***An Outreach Programme in Tamil***

Report by Mrs. S. Bhuvanandari

Under the Outreach programme of Savitri Bhavan, *Savitri* reading in Tamil was started at Arulvazhi educational centre in Promesse, Auroville, on November 12, 2008. The timing of the programme is from 5.30-6.30 pm once a week. The reading and explaining of *Savitri* in Tamil is being done by Aurovilian S. Bhuvanandari, using the Tamil translation of the late Shri Ravi Arumugam IPS. Photocopies of the text are prepared at Savitri Bhavan and kept at Arulvazhi Centre for the students' use. Bhuvanandari's transport is arranged and paid for by Savitri Bhavan.

The classes are well attended and received by students of various schools. On an average 20-25 children in the 10-14 years age-group are participating regularly. The session usually starts with an invocation to the Divine Mother consisting of 20 lines in Tamil from Book Three, Canto Two, 'The Adoration of the Divine Mother', and closes with chanting of OM all together.

In the six-month period from January 1 to June 30 2009, two cantos of *Savitri* were covered: Book Four, Cantos One and Two – The Birth and Childhood of Flame and The Growth of the Flame. During this time, the following observations were made:

- The students' knowledge of Tamil is improved by going through the poetic style of the translation from Sri Aurobindo's original *Savitri*.
- The children are very regular in attending the class.
- The Aurovilian who leads this class is gaining enthusiasm from the response of the children, as they are keen learners.

At the end of January the day of the class was changed from Wednesday to Friday. Since the children are coming after their school hours, we thought of devoting 40 minutes of the time to *Savitri*, and using the remaining 20 minutes for telling them stories of moral value from the Puranas, Epics and the Mother's life.

In February, at the suggestion of veteran Aurovilian Shri Varadharajan and with his guidance, the children were asked to copy down some of the 'seed lines' from *Savitri*, both in English

and Tamil translation. The children have been asked to read those lines, and to memorise them in due course. It is amazing to note the interest shown by the children in learning new words in both English and Tamil, such as ‘compassion’, ‘universe’, ‘sanctuary’ and so on.

On April 4 2009, in commemoration of the arrival of Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, and in view of the fact that 2009-10 is being celebrated as the centenary of this event, a function was organised at the Sri Aurobindo World Centre for Human Unity in Bharat Nivas, Auroville. On this occasion, students who are attending the *Savitri* class recited 14 lines from ‘The Adoration of the Divine Mother’ in Tamil. It is proposed to nurture the talents and interest of the students in reciting new seed lines from *Savitri* for other future programmes.

I wish to share a passage from Champaklal-ji’s ‘Reminiscences of my childhood’, which appeared in the June 2009 issue of the journal *Awakening*:

The sweet voice of my father is still ringing in my mind. When he read *Okhaharan* [a religious epic] in his melodious voice, not only would the room be filled up but what is surprising, more than half the audience would be children. And they came early to occupy their seats, such was their interest. So captivating was my father’s discourse that no instructions were needed to keep the children quiet, even those who could not understand sat quietly. It is only now that I understand fully how deep an impact the vibrations of his voice must have left on their inner beings.

These words reinforce my confidence that the vibrations of Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem *Savitri* will benefit the participating students.

It is gratifying to note that on one occasion the children of the 4<sup>th</sup> Standard requested a collective prayer in order to hasten the recovery of a sick child of their teacher. The teacher too believes that the prayer of these children, arising from their hearts, will certainly bring the blessings of the Almighty. I felt that this incident indicated the awakening of the psychic being in the children and that this was felt by their teacher.

## ***Savitri Bhavan Reading Room***

Report by Mirajyoti Sobel

Since its foundation, Savitri Bhavan has dreamed to be an “inspiring centre of Savitri Studies, housing all kinds of materials and activities to enrich our understanding and enjoyment of Sri Aurobindo’s revelatory epic *Savitri*”.

Right from the beginning in 1999, when the first permanent building was inaugurated, the Reading Room has been an integral part of this purpose to offer a privileged space of research and study, a help to everyone who wants to know more about the Vision and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

At present, in 2009, the Reading Room houses a specialised collection of almost 2000 books, acquired by purchase or donation, as well as unpublished materials in various forms. These include :

- Materials dealing with *Savitri*, such as translations in 9 Indian and 6 European languages, as well as studies of *Savitri*, and artworks inspired by Sri Aurobindo’s epic. The aim is to maintain a Reference Collection of *Savitri*-related materials that is as complete as possible.
- The complete works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the latter in both English and French, along with a selection of compilations from their works.
- Books by other authors, relating to the Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother
- Dictionaries and Reference works to aid our study of *Savitri* and the other writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother
- A section of materials on Auroville.
- A section of books and journals in Tamil.
- An ‘Introductory’ section comprising basic materials on the main focuses of Savitri Bhavan, namely *Savitri*, the lives, work and vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and the Aims and Ideals of Auroville. This is intended to assist people who are approaching these topics for the first time.
- A growing collection of Research Papers prepared at Savitri Bhavan, by other Aurovilians, or by outside researchers who have deposited copies of their work with us.

The Reading Room also holds issues of 24 periodicals. Seventeen of these are in English, and seven are in various other languages, published by the Sri Aurobindo Centers and Associations around India.

We are currently in the process of establishing an **Audio-visual Space**, where individual users can access audio and video recorded materials relating to our collection.

The daily work of the Reading Room team consists of:

- maintaining and expanding the collection by donation and purchase; whenever possible valuable out-of-print editions are acquired, if necessary in photocopied form.
- registering new acquisitions to keep the catalogue up to date.
- preservation of materials through repair, re-binding, lamination, etc.
- maintaining the materials in order on the shelves.
- receiving and assisting users, and answering queries.

In 2008, when the Reading Room was able to take over the entire First Phase Building, which until then had been serving as a multi-purpose space, it was felt how much, for more than 8 years, a special atmosphere had been gradually built up in this 3-room building with its small shaded outside terrace surrounded by trees. We welcome readers and researchers to this space that is consecrated to silent study and exploration in the light of Savitri – “The Truth that has come from the Sun”. This is the *raison d’être* of Savitri Bhavan’s Reading Room.

## ***The Audio-Visual Section***

By Margrit Mala

The wish to give a place and order to the many audio-visual recordings created or collected in Savitri Bhavan arose when I discovered more and more what beautiful material exists. Often these recordings are beautiful gems full of devotion and wisdom, which are touching; they help to keep the inner aspiration “on fire”, give knowledge and enthusiasm and kindle our hearts anew for the Divine.

Several years ago we in Savitri Bhavan started to play the recordings of the Mother’s Playground talks, “Entretiens – Questions and Answers”, regularly every week, providing for those who attended the texts of each talk in the original French along with an English translation. That programme still continues.

From time to time we would show special films, such as “The Mother – Glimpses of Her Life”, “Sri Aurobindo and His Dreams for the Future of Mankind”, “The Genius of India” based on “The Renaissance in India” by Sri Aurobindo, and others. These were films available from the Ashram or made here in Auroville. Now Savitri Bhavan too is producing beautiful films: since 2005 we have been able to show, several times a year, a new film made by Manohar from Huta’s *Meditations on Savitri* paintings. In August 2009 the latest one was of Book Five, the Book of Love. This is the twelfth film in this series. Eventually all these films will be made available on DVD by Huta’s Havyavahana Trust. We have also been working with Ashram photographer Sudha Sundaram to make a beautiful film from her Darshan photographs of the Mother.

Over the years we have also built up a collection of audio and video recordings of the many guest speakers who have spoken to us at Savitri Bhavan. The earliest one is a film of the ceremony on November 24<sup>th</sup> 1995 when Nirodbaran laid the Foundation Stone of Savitri Bhavan and invoked the Blessings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on our project. The latest is of the concluding session of Dr. Alok Pandey’s Darshan Study Camp on *Savitri* held at the Sri Aurobindo Society Beach Office in Pondicherry from August 16-22. Continuing the tradition established by the late Dr. M.V.



Nadkarni, the concluding session was held at Savitri Bhavan on Sunday August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Transcripts of many of these talks on *Savitri* have been published here in *Invocation* or in our Tamil journal *Prarthana*.

Audio and in some cases video recordings have also been made of many musical offerings and other special events. Moreover all the talks given by Sraddhalu Ranade on Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga* since January 2003 have been recorded, at first simply in audio form and since the end of 2005 as DVDs. There are now over 200 of these talks. Over the last two years more of our regular courses are being recorded, including now the *Life Divine* reading group as well as the weekly class on 'The English of *Savitri*'.

At the same time we are acquiring copies, as they appear, of other audio and video recordings relating to *Savitri*, to the lives, work and vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and to the aims and ideals of Auroville.

Together, all these materials constitute a growing resource of inspiring materials, of lasting value.

Now a new phase has started at Savitri Bhavan: as the building has grown, events and recordings are increasing, and there are wider possibilities to make all these valuable audio and visual resources accessible to individuals and to groups, for study and research, for learning and enjoying.

The effort in the Audio-visual section is to organize and catalogue all these materials so that they can be made readily available. Lists have been prepared of all the recordings of Savitri Bhavan guest-speakers, from 1998 up to date. There are now with the Audio-Visual Library the possibilities to listen to talks in English by such speakers as Nirodbaran, Professor Arabinda Basu, Udhar Pinto, Professor Manoj Das, Jhumur Bhattacharya, Dr. Nadkarni and many more. In Tamil we have talks from Dr. Prema Nandakumar, S. Mahalingam, Sundarajan, Ms. Ananthi Durai and others.

Detailed track lists have also been prepared for the complete *Savitri* readings of Nirodbaran and of Shradhdhavan, showing the contents and duration of each track. These are helpful to those who would like to hear a particular section, or to follow in the book while listening to the recorded readings. This has been done considering the needs of

people for whom English is not their mother tongue, who struggle to understand words and have the wish to understand well.

These lists are available at Savitri Bhavan. Individuals can access the materials in the new Audio-visual space being established in the Reading Room. For groups, opportunities to see or hear them can be arranged on request. Copies can be provided of some of our own materials, and for other materials in the public domain we can give information about suppliers.

Another work in the Audio-visual section at present is to link, whenever possible, the recorded materials with the corresponding texts. This has already been done for the Mother’s talks, “Entretiens – Questions and Answers”, “On the Dhammapada”, “On Thoughts and Aphorisms” and “Notes on the Way”, where accompanying leaflets have been produced which provide the transcript of her original French alongside the English translation. It has also been done for some of the Mother’s recorded messages and declarations.

Most of these recorded materials are touching and show new perspectives for a Life Divine. We invite all who are interested to contact us about these opportunities to learn more about the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s work and their vision of the future for mankind.

*Photo by Ireno Guerci*



*Full-Moon Gathering*

# *Calendar of events*

## *April - September 2009*

### **April**

4: 99th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry – the final session of Dr. Alok Pandey's series of 12 talks on 'Practicing Sri Aurobindo's Yoga'.

13: Earth Day: 'Messages from Water' and 'Water Crystals in Motion' two films by Masaru Emoto.

18: 'The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge' – a talk by Sraddhalu on Book 2 Canto 15 of Savitri

26: 'Remembering Sri Aurobindo' - Professor Arabinda Basu shared his reminiscences.

### **May**

16-17 'Being Well' - two-day workshop led by JV Avadhanalu.

18: 'The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother' - half-day workshop led by Ashesh Joshi

30: Centenary of Sri Aurobindo's Uttarpara speech – 'Sri Aurobindo's Second Major Spiritual Realisation : The Cosmic Consciousness and the Divine as all beings and all that is' – presentation by Shraddhavan.

### **June**

6: 'Matrimandir – a Labour of Love' – film-show for the Mirra Women's Group of Auroville.

### **July**

9: 'The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother' - half-day workshop led by Ashesh Joshi

18: 'Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and Savitri in the Mahabharata' – a talk in Tamil by Bhuvanandari.

20: 'The Aim of Life' – a film on Integral Education, based on the book edited by Shri Kireet Joshi.

27: 'The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother' - half-day workshop led by Ashesh Joshi

### **August**

Throughout the month two major exhibitions were on display: in the Picture Gallery, Huta's *Meditations on Savitri* paintings of Book One,

Cantos Three, Four and Five – ‘The Yoga of the King’ and ‘The Secret Knowledge’; in the corridors of the Main Building an exhibition prepared by the Sri Aurobindo Archives, ‘Sri Aurobindo: the Revolutionary Years’ giving a comprehensive view in texts and photos of Sri Aurobindo’s political activity in the first decade of the 20th Century.

8: 10th anniversary of the inauguration of our first permanent building by our beloved elder brother and patron Nirodbaran on the auspicious date of 8.8.99. A thanksgiving gathering was held in front of the Mother’s Chair, attended by Ashram Trustee Manoj Das Gupta, Jhumur Bhattacharya, Professor Arabinda Basu, Sraddhalu Ranade and many other old friends.

12-13: ‘The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’ - two half-day workshops led by Ashesh Joshi.

17: ‘Book Five, the Book of Love’ – premiere of the latest film prepared by Manohar of Huta’s *Meditations on Savitri* paintings.

22: ‘The Traveller of the Worlds’ - the concluding session of Dr.Alok Pandey’s post-Darshan Savitri Study Camp in Pondicherry was held at Savitri Bhavan.

27: ‘The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’ - half-day workshop led by Ashesh Joshi

## **September**

3: ‘The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’ - half-day workshop led by Ashesh Joshi

10: ‘The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’ - half-day workshop led by Ashesh Joshi

15: Inauguration of the Medhananda Archive in the Savitri Bhavan Reading Room, with a talk on Ashram Librarian Medhananda and a demonstration of his creation ‘The Eternity Game’.

17: ‘The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’ - half-day workshop led by Ashesh Joshi.

21: The start of four courses of the University of Human Unity to run September 21 – December 14 : ‘The Philosophy of Language through Sanskrit Grammar’ and ‘The Veda in the light of Sri Aurobindo: Twelve Hymns to the Rising Sun’ led by Vladimir Iatsenko; ‘The Philosophy of Evolution (2) – Mind and Supermind’ and ‘The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo (2) – An Introduction to *Savitri*’ led by Rod Hemsell.

26: Durga Puja – The Mother’s Chair was kept in the Hall for silent concentration throughout the day.

# *Allusions in Savitri*

*A note by Shraddhavan*

The English verb ‘to allude (to)’ is defined in Chambers 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary as meaning ‘to convey an indirect reference in passing, to refer without explicit mention, or with suggestion of further associations.’ From this comes the noun ‘allusion’ – an indirect reference. Allusion is one of the standard tools of the poet, and poets in all languages use it, especially in the third sense mentioned above, to give a ‘suggestion of further associations’ which the poet would like to call to the mind of his readers without elaborating on them in detail or even mentioning them directly.

In *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo makes full use of this possibility to enrich the complex web of endlessly reverberating suggestions his mantric lines are weaving. While his prose writings were aimed at awakening the modern intellect, a full appreciation of his masterwork *Savitri* still ‘Awaits, concealed, the grasp of unborn men.’ To be spontaneously stirred by all the wide variety of allusions in the poem, one would have to share not only Sri Aurobindo’s profound knowledge of the Vedas and Upanishads, but also his assimilation of the Classical literature of ancient Greece and Rome, as of European and Indian poetry, as well as his deeper understanding of Christian symbolism. These are the main kinds of allusion we find in his epic : to the Vedas, to Classical Greek and Roman mythology and literature, to later Indian mythology and literature, to English and European poetry, and to Christian concepts. But here and there we find other kinds of allusions – for example historical or political ones, such as the unmistakable allusion to Hitler which comes in the course of Aswapati’s passage through the terrible world of falsehood.

Its heart was drunk with a dire hunger’s wine,  
In others’ suffering felt a thrilled delight  
And of death and ruin the grandiose music heard.  
To have power, to be master, was sole virtue and good:  
It claimed the whole world for Evil’s living room,

Its party's grim totalitarian reign  
The cruel destiny of breathing things.

p. 214-15

Here I will try to give some examples of each of these main categories :

### 1) Vedic :

References to lines or images from the Vedas are the most common kind of allusion that we come across in *Savitri*. This is not surprising, for of course the whole basis of *Savitri* comes from the Vedas. As Sri Aurobindo himself mentions in his 'Author's Note' to the poem, he has seen this tale as 'one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic Cycle'. Indeed *Savitri* can be seen as the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's plan to re-explain the fundamental knowledge of the Vedas and the Vedanta to humanity.

The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak  
From the reclining body of a god.

As our reader Professor S. Subbian pointed out in an article published in *Invocation* no. 11 (pp 11-12) this image alludes to a hymn to the Divine Dawn, which Sri Aurobindo discusses in *The Secret of the Veda* (CWSA Volume 15 p.481) quoting a passage where the darkness of night is described as falling away like a black woven robe, revealing the radiant limbs of the Dawn. In a letter Sri Aurobindo mentions that these lines correspond for him not to an imagined image but to a profound experience.

In a later passage we find him describing the action of the goddess of Inspiration (Vedic Saraswati):

In the deep subconscious glowed her jewel-lamp;  
Lifted, it showed the riches of the Cave  
Where, by the miser traffickers of sense  
Unused, guarded beneath Night's dragon paws,  
In folds of velvet darkness draped they sleep  
Whose priceless value could have saved the world.  
A darkness carrying morning in its breast  
Looked for the eternal wide returning gleam,  
Waiting the advent of a larger ray  
And rescue of the lost herds of the Sun.  
In a splendid extravagance of the waste of God

Dropped carelessly in creation's spendthrift work,  
Left in the chantiers of the bottomless world  
And stolen by the robbers of the Deep,  
The golden shekels of the Eternal lie,  
Hoarded from touch and view and thought's desire,  
Locked in blind antres of the ignorant flood,  
Lest men should find them and be even as Gods.

p. 41

While these lines may for a moment remind us of tales from the *Arabian Nights*, of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, or Aladdin and his Lamp, or other fairy-tales where hidden treasures are guarded in caves by dragons, if we look deeper we see that they are full of Vedic images whose psychological significance has been brought out by Sri Aurobindo in *The Secret of the Veda*. The 'miser traffickers of sense' and 'the robbers of the Deep' are those Panis and Dasyus who have hidden the true knowledge from us in the Cave of the subconscious, guarded by 'the Dragon of the Dark Foundation' – the endless serpent of Night and inconscience. The rescue of the lost herds of the Sun – the rays of true knowledge – from that cave is the work of the Angirasa rishis, in another of those 'symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle' to which Sri Aurobindo refers. This myth re-echoes down the centuries in myths and legends from other cultures, and perhaps even lies at the origin of those Arabian and European tales that are now recounted to children.

While it is the goddess of Inspiration, Sarawati, who holds up her lamp to reveal all these treasures hidden in the subconscious darkness, in another passage it is Sarama, Intuition, the Vedic hound of Heaven, who is alluded to as leading Aswapati to unsuspected knowledge :

A traveller between summit and abyss,  
She joined the distant ends, the viewless deeps,  
Or streaked along the roads of Heaven and Hell  
Pursuing all knowledge like a questing hound.

p. 39

She appears in 'the legend of the recovery of the lost cows from the cave of the Panis by Indra and Brihaspati with the aid of the hound Sarama and the Angirasa Rishis.' Sri Aurobindo adds 'The conception of the Dawn and the legend of the Angirases are at the very heart of the Vedic cult and may almost be considered as the key to the secret of the significance of Veda.' (*The Secret of the Veda* (CWSA 15 p.124))

So it is not surprising that we should find many references to these myths throughout *Savitri*. If we follow further on the trace of this allusion in *The Secret of the Veda* we come across an extraordinarily interesting passage, which not only tells us something about Sri Aurobindo's early spiritual experiences, but also connects Sarama to Greek legend and to Homer :

My first contact with Vedic thought came indirectly while pursuing certain lines of self-development in the way of Indian Yoga, which, without my knowing it, were spontaneously converging towards the ancient and now unfrequented paths followed by our forefathers. At this time there began to arise in my mind an arrangement of symbolic names attached to certain psychological experiences which had begun to regularise themselves; and among them there came the figures of three female energies, Ila, Saraswati, Sarama, representing severally three out of the four faculties of the intuitive reason,—revelation, inspiration and intuition. Two of these names were not well known to me as names of Vedic goddesses, but were connected rather with the current Hindu religion or with old Puranic legend, Saraswati, goddess of learning and Ila, mother of the Lunar dynasty. But Sarama was familiar enough. I was unable, however, to establish any connection between the figure that rose in my mind and the Vedic hound of heaven, who was associated in my memory with the Argive Helen and represented only an image of the physical Dawn entering in its pursuit of the vanished herds of Light into the cave of the Powers of darkness. When once the clue is found, the clue of the physical Light imaging the subjective, it is easy to see that the hound of heaven may be the intuition entering into the dark caverns of the subconscious mind to prepare the delivery and out-flashing of the bright illuminations of knowledge which have there been imprisoned.

The Secret of the Veda (CWSA 15 p. 36)

## **2: Ancient Greek and Roman mythology:**

There are fewer of these allusions, and they are not so central to the symbolism of *Savitri*.



We find several references to Dionysus, the Greek god of Wine (= Soma, the intoxicating delight of the divine ananda) and his female worshippers the maenads who used to dance in a circle around his image as it was carried around the countryside. For example, at the beginning of Book Four, our earth is imaged as a maenad, circling in worship around the Sun, her God :

A Maenad of the cycles of desire  
Around a Light she must not dare to touch,  
Hastening towards a far-off unknown goal  
Earth followed the endless journey of the Sun. p. 349

There are also several references in *Savitri* to Dionysus' Roman counterpart Bacchus, and his attendants, the satyrs and fauns. The satyrs were imaged with a human head and face and the ears and body of a goat, standing and dancing upright on their back legs.

Other composite figures from Greek mythology mentioned in *Savitri* are the chimaera, the griffin, and the centaur. The griffin has an eagle's head and wings, the body and tail of a lion. It appears only once, but in one of the most mysterious lines of *Savitri*, which we have discussed a little in *Invocation* no.10 on pages 27-29 : 'In the griffin forefront of the Night and Day' (p. 25). The chimaera (also spelt 'chimera') has a lion's head, a serpent's tail, and a goat's body. It has come to mean any wild or impossible idea or fancy. Sri Aurobindo says :

Earth's winged chimaeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,  
The impossible God's sign of things to be. p. 52

The centaur, a man's head, arms and torso united with the body of a horse, is a powerful symbol of the union of mind and vital. There are five references to it in *Savitri*, which we shall not go into here. There are also allusions to the various different kinds of nature spirits, the dryads, naiads and nymphs and to the dangerous Sirens, the Gorgon monster Medusa, and to Circe, an enchantress who entrapped Odysseus and his companions on her island in the course of his travels described in Homer's epic 'The Odyssey'.

The first fair life that breaks from Nature's swoon,  
Mounts in a line of rapture to the skies;

Absorbed in its own happy urge it lives,  
 Sufficient to itself, yet turned to all:  
 It has no seen communion with its world,  
 No open converse with surrounding things.  
 There is a oneness native and occult  
 That needs no instruments and erects no form;  
 In unison it grows with all that is.  
 All contacts it assumes into its trance,  
 Laugh-tossed consents to the wind's kiss and takes  
 Transmutingly the shocks of sun and breeze:  
 A blissful yearning riots in its leaves,  
 A magic passion trembles in its blooms,  
 Its boughs aspire in hushed felicity.  
 An occult godhead of this beauty is cause,  
 The spirit and intimate guest of all this charm,  
 This sweetness's priestess and this reverie's muse.  
 Invisibly protected from our sense  
 The Dryad lives drenched in a deeper ray  
 And feels another air of storms and calms  
 And quivers inwardly with mystic rain.

p. 355-56

Sri Aurobindo also uses the Greek word 'Titan' 60 times in *Savitri*, as equivalent to the Indian Asura; and he mentions two of the Greek Titans by name : Enceladus who is said to be imprisoned by the gods beneath the Sicilian volcano, Mount Etna, and Prometheus who defied the Olympian Gods to give mastery of fire to human beings. They both appear in the "Man of Sorrows" passage in Canto Four of Book Seven.

The Greek 'python' appears 5 times in *Savitri*. This primal serpent power was the original ruler of the important Greek sacred site of Delphi, until he was dislodged after a great battle by Apollo, the Sun-God, the master of Inspiration, music and poetry. Sri Aurobindo seems to associate this Python with the Dragon of the dark foundation, the embodiment of Inconscience.

But the Greek mythological figure appearing in *Savitri* with the most resonance is definitely the Sphinx. The meaning of this enigmatical figure has been explored in an article in *Invocation* no. 24, pages 56 to 63. In the same article the legend of Daedalus and Icarus

is discussed, as well as a line from the Roman poet Virgil, which we shall come back to later.

### 3) Christian Allusions

Our colleague Martin Sobieroj explores some of the Christian allusions from *Savitri* in his article elsewhere in this issue. We have also added a letter from Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna) on the same topic. In this letter, Amal makes it clear that Sri Aurobindo refers to the figure of Christ as an exemplar of the sufferings that the incarnate Divine, the Avatar, must undergo in the present state of earthly evolution.

Here I would like to add three references related to this theme, which are strictly speaking literary allusions.

All three are to the famous Christian allegory of the spiritual life *The Pilgrim's Progress* written by John Bunyan, an early Protestant activist in 17<sup>th</sup> century England, while he was imprisoned for defying the authority of the official Church (in his day this was the Church of England not the Catholic Church). Bunyan was a prolific writer, but this is the only work of his that is still appreciated as literature. At one time, it is said, it was second only to the Bible in popularity, and Sri Aurobindo refers to it in some of his letters as well as in *Savitri*. It is as vivid and enthralling as an early novel – but the characters all have allegorical names. At the beginning of the book the central character, 'Christian', is liberated by a vision of Christ the Saviour. A great burden of Sin falls from his back, and he leaves his ordinary life through a little wicket gate to start on his pilgrimage towards the heavenly goal. Sri Aurobindo refers to this small, inconspicuous, secret way out, in Book Five of *Savitri*.

As if a wicket gate to joy were there  
Ringed in with voiceless hint and magic sign,  
Upon the margin of an unknown world  
Reclined the curve of a sun-held recess;

p. 392

On his journey Christian meets guides and enemies. Early on, he is welcomed by a benevolent figure who gives him a wallet and a scrip. The wallet contains food to sustain him on his journey; the scrip (a writing, a scripture) is to sustain him spiritually. But further on he falls asleep at noon, wakes late and hurries on his way, only to find towards evening that he has lost his precious wallet and scrip. It is a

major setback – he has to retrace his steps to find them, and he falls into the hands of the Adversary, the terrible Apollion. Sri Aurobindo refers to this incident in the following passage in Canto 7 of Book Two, ‘The Descent into Night’, which describes the way in which the consciousness is clouded in the world of Falsehood :

Even wisdom, hewer of the roads of God,  
Is a partner in the deep disastrous game:  
Lost is the pilgrim’s wallet and the scrip,  
She fails to read the map and watch the star. p. 626

The third allusion to *Pilgrim’s Progress* appears in Book Six :

In the market-place of Matter’s capital  
Amidst the chafferings of the affair called life  
He is tied to the stake of a perennial Fire; p. 447

On Christian’s journey he meets a brave companion, Faithful, who is a great support to him on the way. But when they reach the city of Vanity Fair ... a place where only worldly material values prevail – ‘Matter’s capital’ ... Faithful tries to preach the Gospel there. He is arrested, tried, and burnt at the stake in the market place – a thing which was actually happening in England only shortly before the time when Bunyan was writing. The clue here is the word ‘chafferings’: the old word ‘chaffer’, meaning to bargain or haggle, hardly in use after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, exactly gives the flavour of Bunyan’s language and the scene he depicts in his book.

The passage where this reference occurs is discussed in Martin’s article. Narad is describing the role of the Avatar and the sufferings he has to face because of the resistances of the world. In the previous sentence appears a reference to Greek mythology – one of the ‘centaur’ allusions, and the most mysterious, because it obviously refers not just to the general qualities of a centaur but to a particular incident :

He wears the blood-glued fiery Centaur shirt ... p. 447

We have found that this refers to the death of the Greek hero and demi-god Hercules (whose twelve labours Ashram Librarian Medhananda has interpreted as the sadhana of a great yogi). Through his labours he had become immortal and could not be killed. So his enemy used a terrible ruse to induce him to take his own life: the pain of wearing a

shirt that had been steeped in the blood of a centaur dying with hate in his heart was so terrible that even the great hero could not bear it. Once put on, the shirt could not be removed. That terrible pain is alluded to in this line. The second line of this two-line sentence reads :

The poison of the world has stained his throat.

Here is an allusion that is familiar to most Indians : the great god Shiva is known as Nilkanth, ‘Blue-throat’, because to save the world he swallowed all its poison and held it in his throat ... which was stained and became blue.

This passage as a whole is a very clear example of how Sri Aurobindo used allusions from many traditions to give a vast and universal significance to his poem.

*(to be continued)*



*Shraddhavan giving her presentation on Sri Aurobindo's  
Uttarpara Speech, May 30 2009*

# ***Christ in Savitri***

*By Martin Sobieroj*

*Martin was born in Germany where he first wished to study Christian theology, but eventually became a Librarian. He discovered Sri Aurobindo in his student days, and first wrote to the Mother and received her reply in 1964. He joined Auroville in 1992 and worked with the House of Mother's Agenda. He has been associated with Savitri Bhavan from its earliest days, and is now a member of our research team.*

In November 1933 a disciple asked Sri Aurobindo,

*While looking at the Mother when she came on the terrace, I suddenly saw in her lap a baby whom I took to be Jesus Christ as it resembled his figure. The vision lasted for about a minute and I saw it with open eyes. Could it be true?*

Sri Aurobindo answered, "It may be so — as Jesus was the child of the Divine Mother." (CWSA 25:90) He also points out, "If the Mother was present in the life of Christ, she was there not as the Divine Manifestation but as one altogether human. For her to be recognised as the Divine would have created a tremendous disorder and frustrated the work Christ came to do by breaking its proper limits." (CWSA 26:447) In another letter he stated, "The Mother's vibhutis would usually be feminine personalities most of whom would be dominated by one of the four personalities of the Mother. The others you mention (Christ, Buddha, Chaitanya, Napoleon, Caesar, etc.) would be personalities and powers of the Ishwara, but in them also, as in all, the Mother's force would act. All creation and transformation is the work of the Mother." (CWSA 25:78)

Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight,  
Above the silence of the wordless Thought,  
Formless creator of immortal forms,  
Nameless, investitured with the name divine,  
Transcending Time's hours, transcending Timelessness,  
The Mighty Mother sits in lucent calm

And holds the eternal Child upon her knees  
Attending the day when he shall speak to Fate.

*Savitri*, p. 661

This passage in Book X, Canto IV of *Savitri* recalls immediately the Christian image of the Virgin Mary with the Christ-child on her lap. To the faithful this image is epitomized in the icon of the Mother of God, the ‘Theotokos’ of Orthodox provenance. There was a similar picture for Isis and Osiris in Ancient Egypt, and indeed the attribution of the title Theotokos (The One who gives birth to God) to Jesus’s mother Mary was strongly influenced by the Egyptian presence in Alexandria and the Near East.

Sri Aurobindo raises this image to an absolute level. For him, the Trinity of Christian Dogma comprises the Father in Heaven as the Transcendent Absolute, who descended as the Jiva to the earth, with the Holy Spirit as the Brahmic Consciousness uniting both and descending in Christ at his baptism and the apostles and Mary at Pentecost. Mary stands for Para Prakriti, Maha Maya, the Cosmic Creatrix whose child Jesus is. For Sri Aurobindo her Ascension, the day of her death on 15 August – which is by Divine Providence also his birthday and the day of Indian Independence – symbolises the transformation of Matter, which will result in a New Heaven and a New Earth, already predicted by Master Theon of Jewish origin to the Mother at Tlemcen.

The Mother’s role in this work is of course by far not over. In November 1968 while meditating on the transformation of Christianity she said:

One wonders what it will take to shake all this.

*[Mother goes again into a meditation, then gives a start]*

There was in my hand a vase containing Divine Love [pomegranate] flowers; I wanted to hand it to you, and when it came above my knees ... Did you see that movement?

Yes.

It was the vase falling on my knees. It didn’t fall on the floor, it fell here ... What does it mean?

(MA 2.11.68)

To us the meaning seems clear. She is the one who spreads Divine Love over the world.

A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,  
A Power into mind's inner chamber steal,  
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors  
And beauty conquer the resisting world,  
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,  
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss  
And earth grow unexpectedly divine. p. 55

But before this miraculous transformation can happen the Divine must descend to Earth again and again and deliver it by his complete identification with it, including its pain, suffering, ignorance and death. This is also the story of Yeschua, Jesus of Nazareth.

Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change;  
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:  
It fears the pure divine intolerance  
Of that assault of ether and of fire;  
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,  
Almost with hate repels the light it brings;  
It trembles at its naked power of Truth  
And the might and sweetness of its absolute Voice.  
Inflicting on the heights the abysm's law,  
It sullies with its mire heaven's messengers:  
Its thorns of fallen nature are the defence  
It turns against the saviour hands of Grace;  
It meets the sons of God with death and pain. p. 7

The Divine has sent his messenger to bring Light, Truth and Grace to man. But man is so afraid to lose his natural roots in the abyss that he does everything he can to stop the Divine's action. He doesn't even refrain from sullyng the Divine messenger with his mire in which he finds a safe base.

The Mother said on 3.6.60:

When Christ came upon earth, he brought a message of brotherhood, love and peace. But he had to die in pain, on the cross, so that his message might be heard. For men



cherish suffering and hatred and want their God to suffer with them. They wanted this when Christ came and, in spite of his teaching and sacrifice, they still want it; and they are so attached to their pain that, symbolically, Christ is still bound to his cross, suffering perpetually for the salvation of men. (CWM 10:59f)

A glory of lightnings traversing the earth-scene,  
Their sun-thoughts fading, darkened by ignorant minds,  
Their work betrayed, their good to evil turned,  
The cross their payment for the crown they gave,  
Only they leave behind a splendid Name.  
A fire has come and touched men's hearts and gone;  
A few have caught flame and risen to greater life. p. 7

Human beings do not easily understand the Divine Messenger. The Saviour's Sun-thought is darkened by their minds, it is brought down to a more easily understandable level and by that falsified. Could Christ ever have imagined that in His name bloody torture and extermination would happen centuries later, that the very Church which underwent cruel martyrdom in the first centuries, would become itself the source of untold sufferings?

The Mother said on 6 July 1960:

I can only say that the writers of the Gospels have tried to reproduce exactly what Christ taught and that they have in a certain measure succeeded in transmitting his message. It is a message of peace, brotherhood and love. But it is better to keep silent about what men have done with this message. (CWM 10:64)

"I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled!" says Jesus in Luke 12:49. Only a few have understood something. The Divine withdraws and has to wait for centuries or millennia for the full outflowing of the seed He has planted.

He who would save himself lives bare and calm;  
He who would save the race must share its pain:  
This he shall know who obeys that grandiose urge. p. 445

The Divine, watching the desperate struggle of the Jewish people (which understood itself as ‘The Chosen Race’) against the Roman oppressors, witnessing their sacrifices and martyrdom, descended to tell them in John 18:36: “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My attendants would be struggling so that I would not be delivered to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not from here.”

The Great who came to save this suffering world  
And rescue out of Time’s shadow and the Law,  
Must pass beneath the yoke of grief and pain;  
They are caught by the Wheel that they had hoped to break,  
On their shoulders they must bear man’s load of fate.

p.445

Jesus made a clear distinction between His Kingdom and the world’s. Being shown a coin depicting the Roman Emperor He says in Matthew 22:21: “Render then the things that are Caesar’s to Caesar and the things that are God’s to God.” But this distinction didn’t help him either. He got caught and broken by the wheel of the powers that are. But there is more to it than just the political implications. Christ came not only to show that his Kingdom is not of this world, He came much more to open the gates of access to the Kingdom of Heaven. Sri Aurobindo says: “Christ’s kingdom of heaven means bringing down the divine Ananda, our Satyayuga, upon the earth.” (CWSA 16:411)

Heaven’s riches they bring, their sufferings count the price  
Or they pay the gift of knowledge with their lives.  
The Son of God born as the Son of man  
Has drunk the bitter cup, owned Godhead’s debt,  
The debt the Eternal owes to the fallen kind  
His will has bound to death and struggling life  
That yearns in vain for rest and endless peace.

p. 445

The Divine has bound his creature to death, now he takes upon Himself the consequences. His life and death balance the dark account of mortal ignorance. One of the greatest boons He gives is Peace. In John 14:27 Jesus says: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Now is the debt paid, wiped off the original score.  
The Eternal suffers in a human form,  
He has signed salvation's testament with his blood:  
He has opened the doors of his undying peace. p. 445

In Christian belief the crucifixion is the symbol of the atonement of man with God which shows us how to escape from the natural Law.

The Deity compensates the creature's claim,  
The Creator bears the law of pain and death;  
A retribution smites the incarnate God.  
His love has paved the mortal's road to Heaven:  
He has given his life and light to balance here  
The dark account of mortal ignorance. p. 445

For Sri Aurobindo, Jesus Christ was a minor avatar in the line of Vishnu. He said that Christ was an emanation of the Lord's aspect of Love. (CWSA 16:411) Christ belongs to the line of Krishna, an avatar of goodness, charity, love, harmony. Christ realised himself as the Son who is one with the Father – he must therefore be an *amśāvatāra*, a partial incarnation, according to Sri Aurobindo (CWSA 22:408). For the Mother, Krishna was an Avatar, while Buddha and Christ – who both preached compassion – were emanations. “Jesus is one of the many forms which the Divine has assumed to enter into relationship with the earth” (MA 23.6.72) she tells the children of Auroville.

In the following lines of *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo alludes clearly to the well-known story of Jesus as given in the Gospels.

It is finished, the dread mysterious sacrifice,  
Offered by God's martyred body for the world;  
Gethsemane and Calvary are his lot,  
He carries the cross on which man's soul is nailed;  
His escort is the curses of the crowd;  
Insult and jeer are his right's acknowledgment;  
Two thieves slain with him mock his mighty death.  
He has trod with bleeding brow the Saviour's way. p. 445

The appearance and disappearance of the Messenger guarantees the final outflowing of the Godhead. The Avatar of sorrow and suffering

must come before there can be the Avatar of divine joy. The inner descent and the external Avatarhood help each other.

The higher organisation of the future will rise above pain and grief. Pain is a possibility which has to be exhausted and man has been selected as the instrument to bring it into existence, in a limited space, for a limited time, and work it out of the cosmos. In the light of this idea the Christian doctrine of the Son of Man on the cross acquires a new significance and man himself becomes the Christ of the universe.

He who has found his identity with God  
Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light.  
His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death.  
Hewn, quartered on the scaffold as he falls,  
His crucified voice proclaims, 'I, I am God;'  
'Yes, all is God,' peals back Heaven's deathless call.  
The seed of Godhead sleeps in mortal hearts,  
The flower of Godhead grows on the world-tree:  
All shall discover God in self and things. p. 445

But first he must identify himself with the world, though this may pass completely unnoticed by the outward observer.

But when God's messenger comes to help the world  
And lead the soul of earth to higher things,  
He too must carry the yoke he came to unloose;  
He too must bear the pang that he would heal:  
Exempt and unafflicted by earth's fate,  
How shall he cure the ills he never felt?  
He covers the world's agony with his calm;  
But though to the outward eye no sign appears  
And peace is given to our torn human hearts,  
The struggle is there and paid the unseen price;  
The fire, the strife, the wrestle are within.  
He carries the suffering world in his own breast;  
Its sins weigh on his thoughts, its grief is his:  
Earth's ancient load lies heavy on his soul;  
Night and its powers beleaguer his tardy steps,  
The Titan adversary's clutch he bears;  
His march is a battle and a pilgrimage. p. 446

The Mother observes on 20.8.60.:

Christ must have experienced the weight of the cross as the weight of a whole world of darkness, unconsciousness, universal bad will, total incomprehension, something ... And it really felt like that ... as if I were carrying a frightful weight – which was frightful because of its darkness, not because of its weight. (MA 20.8.60)

Bliss into black coma fallen, insensible,  
Coiled back to itself and God's eternal joy  
Through a false poignant figure of grief and pain  
Still dolorously nailed upon a cross  
Fixed in the soil of a dumb insentient world  
Where birth was a pang and death an agony,  
Lest all too soon should change again to bliss. p. 221

“This has nothing to do with Christianity or Christ but only with the symbol of the cross used here to represent a seemingly eternal world-pain which appears falsely to replace the eternal bliss. It is not Christ but the world-soul which hangs here” says Sri Aurobindo in a letter on *Savitri* written in 1948.

In this struggle the Avatar may be completely alone, like Christ who in vain asked his disciples to stay awake with him in Gethsemane as he faced the ordeal ahead of him – they all fell asleep.

Life's evil smites, he is stricken with the world's pain:  
A million wounds gape in his secret heart.  
He journeys sleepless through an unending night;  
Antagonist forces crowd across his path;  
A siege, a combat is his inner life. p. 446

Jesus was criticised for sitting with sinners at table. Nobody understood that He did this out of his love for the fallen ones to bring them back. “And as He was reclining at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and reclined together with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, Why does your Teacher eat with the tax collectors and sinners? Now when He heard this, He said, Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill. But go and learn

what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" (Matthew 9:10-13):

Even worse may be the cost, direr the pain:  
His large identity and all-harboursing love  
Shall bring the cosmic anguish into his depths,  
The sorrow of all living things shall come  
And knock at his doors and live within his house;  
A dreadful cord of sympathy can tie  
All suffering into his single grief and make  
All agony in all the worlds his own. p. 446

He is the victim in his own sacrifice. As the whole creation originates in the self effusion of the Origin so the Divine brings the world back to Himself through His self effacement in form.

This seed-self sown in the Indeterminate  
Forfeits its glory of divinity,  
Concealing the omnipotence of its Force,  
Concealing the omniscience of its Soul;  
An agent of its own transcendent Will,  
It merges knowledge in the inconscient deep;  
Accepting error, sorrow, death and pain,  
It pays the ransom of the ignorant Night,  
Redeeming by its substance Nature's fall. p. 331

The Mother said on 16 June 1960:

The story of Christ, as it has been told, is the concrete and dramatic enactment of the divine sacrifice: the Supreme Lord, who is All-Light, All-Knowledge, All-Power, All-Beauty, All-Love, All-Bliss, accepting to assume human ignorance and suffering in matter, in order to help men to emerge from the falsehood in which they live and because of which they die. (CWM 10:61f)

He meets an ancient adversary Force,  
He is lashed with the whips that tear the world's worn heart;  
The weeping of the centuries visits his eyes:  
He wears the blood-glued fiery Centaur shirt,  
The poison of the world has stained his throat.

In the market-place of Matter's capital  
 Amidst the chafferings of the affair called life  
 He is tied to the stake of a perennial Fire;  
 He burns on an unseen original verge  
 That Matter may be turned to spirit stuff:  
 He is the victim in his own sacrifice.  
 The Immortal bound to earth's mortality  
 Appearing and perishing on the roads of Time  
 Creates God's moment by eternity's beats.  
 He dies that the world may be new-born and live. p. 447

There is an anti-divine hostile force hidden in us that aims at marring God's work. Christ repelled its advances three times. If we die to the world the adversary loses the hook by which to catch us. Christ's own death and resurrection are signs of the victory. "Become passers-by" says Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas.

Even if he escapes the fiercest fires,  
 Even if the world breaks not in, a drowning sea,  
 Only by hard sacrifice is high heaven earned:  
 He must face the fight, the pang who would conquer Hell.  
 A dark concealed hostility is lodged  
 In the human depths, in the hidden heart of Time  
 That claims the right to change and mar God's work.  
 A secret enmity ambushes the world's march;  
 It leaves a mark on thought and speech and act:  
 It stamps stain and defect on all things done;  
 Till it is slain peace is forbidden on earth.  
 There is no visible foe, but the unseen  
 Is round us, forces intangible besiege,  
 Touches from alien realms, thoughts not our own  
 Overtake us and compel the erring heart;  
 Our lives are caught in an ambiguous net. p. 447

Wherever yoga or Yajna is done, there the hostile Forces gather together to stop it by any means, says Sri Aurobindo. Saint Peter admonishes his brethren: "Be sober; watch. Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking someone to devour."

(1 Peter 5:8)

An adversary Force was born of old:  
 Invader of the life of mortal man,  
 It hides from him the straight immortal path.  
 A power came in to veil the eternal Light,  
 A power opposed to the eternal will  
 Diverts the messages of the infallible Word,  
 Contorts the contours of the cosmic plan:  
 A whisper lures to evil the human heart,  
 It seals up wisdom's eyes, the soul's regard,  
 It is the origin of our suffering here,  
 It binds earth to calamity and pain.  
 This all must conquer who would bring down God's peace.  
 This hidden foe lodged in the human breast  
 Man must overcome or miss his higher fate.  
 This is the inner war without escape.

p. 47-48

The Saviour cannot expect to be welcomed. He will encounter suspicion, hostility, hatred. The beings entrenched in their darkness hate the light he endeavours to bring. As it is said in John 3:19 f.: "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For every one who practices evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works be reproved."

Hard is the world-redeemer's heavy task;  
 The world itself becomes his adversary,  
 Those he would save are his antagonists:  
 This world is in love with its own ignorance,  
 Its darkness turns away from the saviour light,  
 It gives the cross in payment for the crown.  
 His work is a trickle of splendour in a long night;  
 He sees the long march of Time, the little won;  
 A few are saved, the rest strive on and fail:  
 A Sun has passed, on earth Night's shadow falls.

p. 448

"And He called a little child to Him and stood him in their midst and said, Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like little children, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens." (Matthew 18:32 f.)



Yes, there are happy ways near to God's sun;  
 But few are they who tread the sunlit path;  
 Only the pure in soul can walk in light.  
 An exit is shown, a road of hard escape  
 From the sorrow and the darkness and the chain;  
 But how shall a few escaped release the world?  
 The human mass lingers beneath the yoke.  
 Escape, however high, redeems not life,  
 Life that is left behind on a fallen earth.  
 Escape cannot uplift the abandoned race  
 Or bring to it victory and the reign of God.

p. 448

Sri Aurobindo says:

The Asiatic mind is indeed still incurably prone to the older type of imagination which took and still takes so many inspiring forms, second coming of Christ, City of God, the Divine Family, advent of Messiah, Mahdi or Avatar, – but whatever the variety of the form, the essence is the same, a religious or spiritual idealisation of a possible future humanity. (CWSA 15:609)

The final victory comes when Christ returns with the invincible Power of God. Revelation 6:2 tells us: 'And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he who sits on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.'

The Mother refers to this passage in Her Agenda from 20.3.65:

Even the Christians, yes. St. John said that there would be a new earth – that there would be, in fact, a new Christ, who corresponds to that of the Hindus.

*Kalki?*

Yes, Kalki. The description is very similar. (MA 20.3.65)

A greater power must come, a larger light.  
 Although Light grows on earth and Night recedes,  
 Yet till the evil is slain in its own home  
 And Light invades the world's inconscient base  
 And perished has the adversary Force,  
 He still must labour on, his work half done.

p. 448-49

In Integral Yoga the cross is the symbol of the strong and perfect union of soul and nature. Mother says it will truly become the flower of transformation:

The cross is the symbol of transformation, you know: Matter (*transversal gesture*) penetrated by the Spirit; and the junction is the transformation. A tremendous Force came, like that, for this cross to become truly ... the flower of transformation.

(MA 31,12.69)

But because of our fall into the impurities of ignorance it became the symbol of suffering and purification. The necessity of purification arose first. Christ will have to return with the sword of God into a world that rejected him. Love has to return with irresistible Power.

Two or three days ago, I read an Aphorism of Sri Aurobindo's (you might know it). I forget the words, but he says that Christ came to purify humanity but didn't succeed, and he said he would come back, but this time, holding the sword of God ...

169 - Christ came into the world to purify, not to fulfill. He himself foreknew the failure of his mission, and the necessity of his return with the sword of God into a world that had rejected him.

I was asked what's "the sword of God" (!) I said it was the irresistible Power.

(MA 11.10.69)

The sword of God is the power that nothing can resist.

170 – Mahomed's mission was necessary, else we might have ended by thinking, in the exaggeration of our efforts at self-purification, that earth was meant only for the monk and the city created as a vestibule for the desert.

171 – When all is said, Love and Force together can save the world eventually, but not Love only or Force only. Therefore Christ had to look forward to a second advent and Mahomed's religion, where it is not stagnant, looks forward through the Imams to a Mahdi.

On these aphorisms of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother commented:

Love alone as preached by Christ failed to transform man. Force alone as preached by Mahomed did not transform man, far from it. That is why the consciousness which is at work to transform mankind, unites Force with Love, and the One who must realize this transformation will come on earth with the Power of Divine Love. (CWM 10:261)

We find this idea expressed also in *Savitri* in the canto ‘The Triple Soul Forces’, where it is shown that Love and Power must unite:

“Madonna of suffering, Mother of grief divine,  
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth  
To bear the unbearable sorrow of the world.  
Because thou art, men yield not to their doom,  
But ask for happiness and strive with fate;  
Because thou art, the wretched still can hope.  
But thine is the power to solace, not to save.  
One day I will return, a bringer of strength,  
And make thee drink from the Eternal’s cup;  
His streams of force shall triumph in thy limbs  
And Wisdom’s calm control thy passionate heart.  
Thy love shall be the bond of humankind,  
Compassion the bright key of Nature’s acts:  
Misery shall pass abolished from the earth;  
The world shall be freed from the anger of the Beast,  
From the cruelty of the Titan and his pain.  
There shall be peace and joy for ever more.” p. 506-07

The Mother says,

That is the meaning of original sin: the perversion which began with the mind.

That part of humanity, of human consciousness, which is capable of uniting with the supermind and liberating itself, will be completely transformed – it is advancing towards a future reality which is not yet expressed in its outer form; the part which is closest to Nature, to animal simplicity, will be reabsorbed into Nature and thoroughly assimilated. But the corrupted part of human consciousness which allows perversion through its misuse of the mind will be abolished.

This type of humanity is part of an unfruitful attempt – which must be eliminated – just as there have been other abortive species which have disappeared in the course of universal history.

Certain prophets in the past have had this apocalyptic vision but, as usual, things were mixed, and they did not have together with their vision of the apocalypse the vision of the supramental world which will come to raise up the part of humanity which consents and to transform this physical world. So, to give hope to those who have been born into it, into this perverted part of human consciousness, they have taught redemption through faith: those who have faith in the sacrifice of the Divine in Matter will be automatically saved, in another world – by faith alone, without understanding, without intelligence. They have not seen the supramental world nor that the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself. (CWM 9:300f)

For Christianity this possibility of liberation from Original Sin and the natural law is seen as Man's becoming one with Christ who will create the new being out of him. True faith means of course total trust and complete surrender to the Saviour. Otherwise it is powerless, mere words. The Christian apocalypse sees the New Creation concomitant with the destruction of the old. The New Creation will replace the old one of Death, Falsehood, Suffering and Darkness. Christ came to prepare and fulfil this promise and he will surely return in the final victory.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more.

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.

And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will be no more, nor will there be sorrow or crying or pain anymore; for the former things have passed away.

(Revelation 21)

The cycle then is closed. The Divine Child has spoken to Fate. Earth is brought back to its Origin, transformed.

Late will he know, opening the mystic script,  
Whether to a blank port in the Unseen  
He goes or, armed with her fiat, to discover  
A new mind and body in the city of God  
And enshrine the Immortal in his glory's house  
And make the finite one with Infinity.

p. 72



*Professor Arabinda Basu shared his sweet memories of  
Sri Aurobindo on April 25th 2009*

## *The Saviour's Way* *from a letter of Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna)*

I have carefully re-read those lines on page 445 of *Savitri* strikingly reminding us of Christ with their references to Gethsemane and Calvary, bleeding brow, crucifixion, two thieves and the last words "It is finished." We both saw that if the verse immediately following these lines

Hewn, quartered on the scaffold as he falls (VI:2:445)

had not been there we would have had a consistent picture reminiscent of the final act in the life of Jesus.

May I now point out that there is an explanation for the line which looks quite incongruous. Up to the expression:

He has trod with bleeding brow the Saviour's way (Ibid.)

Sri Aurobindo is considering the Saviour under the aspect of the story of Christ going to his death on the Cross. But the very mention of "the Saviour's way" shows that he is using this story as a powerful illustration of a spiritual phenomenon wider than it. And after the full stop at the end of the line I have just quoted he passes from the particular aspect to the general case. For the next line is:

He who has found his identity with God... (Ibid.)

This "He" is any Saviour and what follows the line has the aspect of a generality though not necessarily forgetting the particular aspect. Thus the reference to the Saviour being "hewn, quartered on the scaffold" is not unnatural or irrelevant: such a death is also part of the Saviour-history. The line in which this phrase occurs leads on

to another immediately after it in which, as I have said, the Christ-aspect is not forgotten:

His crucified voice proclaims, “I, I am God.” (VI:2:446)

But “crucified” here is metaphorical while still keeping a link with the Christ-remembrance.

Looked at thus, the entire passage starting with the Christ-aspect and ending with this remembrance and bringing in the middle the cruelty of the scaffold impresses me as a triumph of poetic art in which everything essential is vividly woven together with an eye at once to a famous particularity and to a comprehensive generality.

As regards your highly original idea of what must have been really the last words of Jesus on the Cross, namely, “I, I am God” – as caught by Sri Aurobindo’s vast vision – the aspect of generality which I have presented would not nullify it but lead to it indirectly. For, what Sri Aurobindo says about all Saviours must apply to Christ. There is even a special touch here, however generalised, in regard to him in the adjective “crucified” qualifying “voice”. So, according to me, your contention can stand. All the more since Sri Aurobindo has used the last words from John’s Gospel – “It is finished” – which show Jesus in full control and conscious of the Divine Plan rather than in a state of dereliction as suggested by Mark’s report and, after him, Matthew’s: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani” – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” – an echo of the beginning of Psalm 22.

The words, “I, I am God”, are, as you yourself said, typical of the Sufis whose doctrine and realisation are a blend of Islam and Vedanta and the Bhakti cult. Their crowning word is identity with God. In Christ’s manifold declarations the Sufi element (which in the language current in the New-Testament period would be called “Gnostic”) is most prominent in the words put into his mouth by John’s Gospel: “I and my Father are one.”

(14.1.1990; Life-Poetry-Yoga II, p. 3)

## *Sâvitrî* \*

(by Paul Verlaine – translated from the original French  
by Shraddhavan)

Pour sauver son époux, Sâvitrî fit le voeu  
De se tenir trois jours entiers, trois nuits entières,  
Debout, sans remuer jambes, buste ou paupières:  
Rigide, ainsi que dit Vyâsa, come un pieu.  
Ni, Sûrya, tes rais cruels, ni la langueur  
Que Tchandra vient épandre á minuit sur les cimes  
Ne firent défaillir, dans leurs efforts sublimes  
La pensée et la chair de la femme au grand coeur.  
— Que nous cerne l’Oubli, noir et morne assassin,  
Ou que l’Envie aux traits amers nous ait pour cibles,  
Ainsi que Sâvitrî faisons-nous impassibles,  
Mais comme elle, dans l’âme, ayons un haut dessein

To save her husband, Savitri vowed  
Three days and nights entire to stand  
Upright, not moving limbs or breast or eyes –  
Rigid, says Vyasa, as a stave.  
Not your cruel rays, O Surya, nor the langour  
Chandra spreads at midnight o’er the peaks  
Could cause to fail, in their sublime attempt,  
The mind and flesh of that great-hearted girl.  
— Whether Neglect, that mournful black assassin,  
Or bitter-featured Envy target us,  
Like Savitri let’s keep ourselves unmoved –  
But like her, cherish in the soul a noble aim.

\* Taken from *Savitri : Indische Sproke uit het Sanskrit* by J.Ph. Vogel  
[Dutch translation of Vyasa’s Savitri], published in 1917 by Sheltema &  
Holkema’s Boekhandel, Amsterdam, recently sent to us by a friend.



# ***The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo: Mantra, Metrics and Meaning***

## ***References to Savitri***

***by Rod Hemsell***

*From September to December 2008, our Aurovillian brother Rod Hemsell gave a series of twelve lectures for the University of Human Unity on Sri Aurobindo's poetry, entitled The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo: Mantra, Metrics and Meaning. The lectures were held at Savitri Bhavan and recorded on video. Transcripts were prepared from the recordings. From these Rod has kindly allowed us to make a selection of passages that relate specifically to Savitri.*

### **Talk no.1**

The kind of poetry that Sri Aurobindo bases his theory on is basically classical, mythical poetry - the poetry of Homer, Vyasa and Valmiki, the poetry of Virgil. The subject matter of those poets was heroic, the heroic time when the gods and men conversed, when the gods were visible, and the poet mediated between them. He says that to read Homer in the original Greek is literally to bring down the gods from Mount Olympus. The poetry of the Veda is also meant to bring down the gods, to reveal them, to allow that Word to express itself which reveals that of which it speaks to the hearer. It is Divine speech. Sri Aurobindo says that Savitri is the Goddess of illumined speech. He refers to her continually in *Savitri* as the Word, the Rhythm, the Sound, and the Silence. She is the Word and the Silence. That 'Word' comes from somewhere else, and it comes on a kind of rhythm, it is carried by a rhythm which you hear and through which you see.

Sri Aurobindo speaks about this at length in *The Future Poetry* where he says that our present age is perhaps further than any other from such a view. And then he says, "A greater era of man's living seems to be in promise, but first there must intervene a poetry which will lead him towards it."<sup>1</sup> This is a theory of poetry as a revelatory power and guide, a kind of intercessor whose purpose is to "cleave the darkness, raise the Earth-soul to Light, and bring down God into the lives of men"<sup>2</sup>.

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1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry* (1997 ed.), p. 218
  2. *Savitri* pp. 172, 699

Sri Aurobindo defines three fundamental determinants of poetic metre or rhythm: accent, stress, and quantity. He points out that English poetry is usually constructed on the principles of accent and stress. So I will demonstrate, and we will hear again and again examples of these principles. Don't worry about understanding these principles analytically. They can only be heard. But after you hear them you can distinguish and define how they work. He points out that the lack of a certain subtlety and power has been responsible for the deficit in English poetry of the principle of quantity - a certain lack of subtlety and power. What could that possibly be, that degree of subtlety and that degree of power which would enable the English poet to bring forth this principle of quantity which is the outflow of the Spirit?

I would suggest that it is especially because he possessed a certain extraordinary subtlety and power of poetic consciousness that Sri Aurobindo was able to discover this secret. His consciousness, the yogic consciousness, combined with his poetic genius, enabled him to see this, to do this. He said, "It requires a great poetic force which adds the atmosphere of the unexpressed reality of the thing in itself."<sup>3</sup> Even the thing itself doesn't express this degree of its reality, its Truth. Even the person, even the flower, even the sunrise, even the vast movement of human civilization doesn't express outwardly the innermost truth of itself. It labours, it lives, it exists for that purpose; but temporal reality is limited; the thing itself, the Being of the thing is unlimited, infinite. Whitehead says that in philosophy we always move from the finite to the infinite and from the infinite to the finite in our attempt to allow the truth of things to become self evident and then to express that truth. We go from the most incremental here and now specificity to the most general ideal truth. We constantly try to relate them to each other in order to understand what things really are and not just what they appear to be, because their appearance is not the full expression of what they are.

Sri Aurobindo says that it is the atmosphere of the unexpressed reality of the thing itself, which it is in the power of rhythm, of word music, as of all music, to create. Here the poet, as Sri Aurobindo says, is not inventing poetry. The poet is channeling from the vital plane, from the mental plane, from the higher mind or Overmind,

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3 Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, (1997 ed.), p. 327

from the psychic plane. The poet is the channel of the thing itself. In his book, *Letters on Poetry*, he says “Poetry comes always from some subtle plane through the creative vital and uses the outer mind and other external instruments for transmission only. The most genuine and perfect poetry is written when the original source is able to throw its inspiration, pure and undiminished, into the vital, and there takes its true native form and power of speech, exactly reproducing the inspiration without alteration, of what it receives from the godheads of the inner or superior spaces.”<sup>4</sup>

He is speaking about the poetry of the godheads, the principles, the universal truths of things in their manifestation, so that we can come to know both the limited manifestation and that divine reality which is trying to express itself in Things. “If the substance, rhythm, form, words, come down all together ready formed from the plane of poetic creation, that is the perfect type of inspiration. The Overmind is the ultimate source of intuition, illumination, or heightened power of the planes immediately below it - higher mind, intuitive mind, poetic intelligence - it can lift them up into its own greater intensity or give out of its intensity to them or touch or combine their powers together with something of its own greater power. Or, they can receive or draw something from it or from each other...”<sup>5</sup>

In another letter he says that in all of poetry there are only a few lines that have been touched by the Overmind inspiration directly. He also explains that his endeavour in writing *Savitri* was to write from that plane. In response to a critic who was criticizing his repeated use of so called “highlight words”, he said, “What of one who lives in an atmosphere full of these highlights, in a consciousness in which the finite, not only the occult but the earthly finite, is bathed in the sense of the Eternal, the Illimitable infinite, the immensities or intimacies of the Timeless? A new art of words written from a new consciousness demands a new technique.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Talk no. 5**

“The intimate and intuitive poetry of the future will have on the one side all the inexhaustible range and profound complexities of the

4 Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Poetry* (1972), p. 5

5 Ibid. p. 7

6 Ibid. p. 81

cosmic imagination of which it will be the interpreter and to that it must suit a hundred single and separate and combined and harmonic lyrical tones of poignantly or richly moved utterance, and on the other it will reach those bare and absolute simplicities of utter and essential sight in which thought sublimates into a translucidity of light and vision, feeling passes beyond itself into sheer spiritual ecstasy and the word rarefies into a pure voice out of the silence.”<sup>7</sup>

Imagine harmonizing in sound all the richness of cosmic emotion. That is Sri Aurobindo’s idea of the poetry of the future, which he was in fact to write himself, for these ideas were written down in 1922, and *Savitri* was composed especially between 1930 and 1950.

“The sight will determine the lyrical form and discover the identities of an inevitable rhythm and no lesser standard can prevail against the purity of this spiritual principle.”<sup>8</sup> The poetry of the future, for Sri Aurobindo, is therefore the poetry of spiritual vision and intuition:

“The decisive revealing lyrical outburst must come when the poet has learnt to live creatively only in the inmost spiritual sight and identity of his own self with the self of his objects and images and to sing only from the deepest spiritual emotion which is the ecstasy of the feeling of that identity or at least of some extreme nearness to its sheer directness of touch and vision.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Talk no. 7**

Beyond those ranges of poetic achievement, Sri Aurobindo used his creative genius and vast knowledge of poetry to deliberately further the transformation of consciousness. He used it as the spiritual master uses *mantra*. So it may be a very long time before typical literary knowledge and appreciation finds out what Sri Aurobindo was up to. You can find out what he was up to, because you want to know, spiritually, what it was. So you have already invested it with a value that is sufficient for you to become interested in reading it. You will read *Savitri* because he wrote it. But we also know, from what we have read so far here, that he cultivated a type of poetry which he felt went far beyond the usual forms of *sutra* and *mantra*, and beyond the range of spiritual teaching, and even far beyond the range of

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7 Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry* (1997 ed.), p. 282

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

epic poetry. He attempted to manifest new forces of consciousness through a powerful kind of word-music and inspired speech. And he developed a whole psychology to explain it. If you read the letters from the thirties on poetic inspiration, he is speaking about the ability of Overmind inspiration to descend through other planes of mind and elevate consciousness.

When he says that Savitri can bring down God into the lives of men, he is not just speaking metaphorically. Savitri is an entity, a vibrational being who is invoked through sound and rhythm and image to manifest extraordinary states of stillness, peace, power, beauty, here in the physical world. This is not going to be something that is appreciated widely in the literary world anytime soon. It is not what people are looking for.

Another thing that Sri Aurobindo does in his poetry, that is often done in epics, is to utilize the metaphor of the journey. Odysseus journeyed, and at each point along the way of his journey he had very significant experiences, and eventually he arrived, and there was a completion or fulfillment of the heroic spirit. Beowulf went on a long journey to destroy the monster, as did Gilgamesh. In the extraordinary case of Gilgamesh, after slaying the monster (symbolic of his own lower nature) with the help of his friend, the friend dies of wounds and Gilgamesh, distraught, journeys into the netherworld to discover the mystery of death. There he receives the robe of immortality. Like Nachiketas in the Katha Upanishad, and like Savitri, it is from death that he receives the secret of life. This is the old idea of the epic. In *Savitri* we have another kind of journey. We have the journey of the self to find its soul, and passing through an inner death on the way. There are a few other familiar themes that Sri Aurobindo uses, such as self-sacrifice and salvation, but this theme of the journey is present throughout. For example Aswapati's journey in the book entitled "The Traveller of the Worlds" is through the worlds or planes of consciousness; he is not journeying through any worlds that we know about.

As one who between dim receding walls  
Towards the far gleam of a tunnel's mouth,  
Hoping for light, walks now with freer pace  
And feels approach a breath of wider air,  
So he escaped from that grey anarchy.

p. 173

In the previous Canto he had an experience of grayness and anarchy and now he is walking through a narrow passage and feeling a breath of air, and he is ready to undertake a new stage of his journey. Here is another example of the inner journey from the previous page,

Adventuring once more in the natal mist  
Across the dangerous haze, the pregnant stir,  
He through the astral chaos shore a way  
Mid the grey faces of its demon gods,  
Questioned by whispers of its flickering ghosts,  
Besieged by sorceries of its fluent force.  
As one who walks unguided through strange fields  
Tending he knows not where nor with what hope,  
He trod a soil that failed beneath his feet  
And journeyed in stone strength to a fugitive end.  
His trail behind him was a vanishing line  
Of glimmering points in a vague immensity; p. 172

This is just the flow of the journey. It doesn't have any particular story content. So what is it?

I am going to move forward here to Savitri's journey, just to give you another example of this metaphor. In Book Seven, "The Book of Yoga", one of the Cantos is called "The Parable of the Search for the Soul". Here she is moving inwardly to discover her soul and realizes that she has to refocus herself in order to search deeply for it.

Then journeying forward through the self's wide hush  
She came into a brilliant ordered Space.  
There Life dwelt parked in an armed tranquillity;  
A chain was on her strong insurgent heart.  
Tamed to the modesty of a measured pace,  
She kept no more her vehement stride and rush;  
She had lost the careless majesty of her muse  
And the ample grandeur of her regal force;  
Curbed were her mighty pomps, her splendid waste,  
Sobered the revels of her bacchant play,  
Cut down were her squanderings in desire's bazaar,  
Coerced her despot will, her fancy's dance,  
A cold stolidity bound the riot of sense. p. 495

So we know that she has toned down, somewhat, her adventurous spirit. She is searching for her soul, which is other than her normal self-experience. In order to do that it is necessary to do these things: to enter into a tranquility of mind and heart and cut down the wasteful squanderings of one's energies. This is a "soul motive" of audibly intense significance. A few pages along, we read:

Here was a quiet country of fixed mind,  
 Here life no more was all nor passion's voice;  
 The cry of sense had sunk into a hush.  
 Soul was not there nor spirit but mind alone; p. 498

|                    |                    |                    |                    |

Soul was not there | [nor spirit] [but mind] [alone]  
 (a choriamb, an iamb, an anapaest, and an iamb)

Here you can hear how quantitative metre overrides the accentual and makes of it more or less normal speech. It is normal speech with a strong or grave content; a strong inner movement is taking place. The difference between this and normal speech is that everything here is weighted with meaning. What you have to be sure that you hear when you read it is that particular meaning. It is nonsense if you try to read it in any kind of artificial or predetermined way. That is perhaps an exaggeration, but if you understand that he is saying something that is real, and that you can experience it right now as you read it – if we are making an inner effort to find our soul right now, which should always be the case when reading *Savitri* – then the message will be heard. Mental quietude is a prerequisite of this journey.

Here was a quiet country of fixed mind,  
 Here life no more was all nor passion's voice;  
 The cry of sense had sunk into a hush.

When you read those lines please allow time for the cry of sense to sink into a hush: no feeling, no sensation, no sound, no voices, no passions.

Into a firm and settled space she came  
 Where all was still and all things kept their place.  
 And all things kept their place. p. 498

I am going to move ahead now on our metaphor of journey, to...

So she fared on across her silent self. p. 500

We have to be willing to undertake this journey if this is going to mean anything. If we do take it, then everything that is described will be there for us. It will not be anything abstract or invented or merely poetic.

To a road she came thronged with an ardent crowd  
Who sped brilliant, fire-footed, sunlight-eyed,  
Pressing to reach the world's mysterious wall,  
And pass through masked doorways into outer mind  
Where the Light comes not nor the mystic voice,  
Messengers from our subliminal greatnesses,  
Guests from the cavern of the secret soul.

p. 500

These messengers are approaching this outer world of sensation and thought from somewhere else deep inside; she comes to this road where they are seen. Now we are on this road, in this silent mind, and we start to hear messages from our deep inner soul.

Into dim spiritual somnolence they break

So in that state of almost sleep, deadness of sense, these brilliant messengers try to come through into this outer wall of existence. This happens to her at the end of the Canto which is called "The Entry into the Inner Countries" for a very good reason. It is necessary to come here on the way to find the soul. One of these messages is given to us in the form of a voice that Sri Aurobindo referred to in "the form and the spirit" of the future poetry, as "speech, action, circumstance that convey soul qualities". This messenger speaks to her:

"O Savitri, from thy hidden soul we come.  
We are the messengers, the occult gods  
Who help men's drab and heavy ignorant lives  
To wake to beauty and the wonder of things  
Touching them with glory and divinity;  
In evil we light the deathless flame of good  
And hold the torch of knowledge on ignorant roads;  
We are thy will and all men's will towards Light.  
O human copy and disguise of God  
Who seekst the deity thou keepest hid  
And livest by the Truth thou hast not known,  
Follow the world's winding highway to its source.



There in the silence few have ever reached,  
Thou shalt see the Fire burning on the bare stone  
And the deep cavern of thy secret soul.” p. 501

This is the journey that Sri Aurobindo narrates in this Canto. It is clearly not a physical journey to distant lands nor a geologist's explorations into the earth's caverns. And where has anyone seen a fire burning on a bare stone? Only in our deepest depths of self-reflection, under the burning compulsion of the will to discover in ourselves a knowledge and a love greater than anything we find outside in the world of illusions, can we imagine such a thing: an inner fire that needs no material fuel to burn.

Then Savitri following the great winding road  
Came where it dwindled into a narrow path  
Trode only by rare wounded pilgrim feet. p. 501

When you read these lines of narrative, if you are not one of those rare individuals seeking your soul, with wounded feet from a long and difficult search, you will gloss over this as if it was just poetry, which is fine. People gloss over it as if it was only poetry all the time. But, at some point it will grab you, and you will be on the path.

The first section of the following Canto of *Savitri*, now firmly on the path to find her soul, entitled “The Triple Soul Forces”, is only five pages long, quite self-contained, and it tells a story with which we are familiar. At the same time it is apparent that the story it tells, in very plain, straight forward language, is all metaphor and symbol; it is not a story at all. For example, in the first part Savitri, seeking her soul and listening to her inner voices, hears and sees a form of herself, an inner soul identity whose appearance and circumstance express a double aspect of herself and the world – sorrow and pity.

Here from a low and prone and listless ground  
The passion of the first ascent began;  
A moon-bright face in a sombre cloud of hair,  
A Woman sat in a pale lustrous robe.  
A rugged and ragged soil was her bare seat,  
Beneath her feet a sharp and wounding stone.  
A divine pity on the peaks of the world,

A spirit touched by the grief of all that lives,  
She looked out far and saw from inner mind  
This questionable world of outward things,  
Of false appearances and plausible shapes,  
This dubious cosmos stretched in the ignorant Void,  
The pangs of earth, the toil and speed of the stars  
And the difficult birth and dolorous end of life.  
Accepting the universe as her body of woe,  
The Mother of the seven sorrows bore  
The seven stabs that pierced her bleeding heart:  
The beauty of sadness lingered on her face,  
Her eyes were dim with the ancient stain of tears.  
Her heart was riven with the world's agony  
And burdened with the sorrow and struggle in Time,  
An anguished music trailed in her rapt voice.  
Absorbed in a deep compassion's ecstasy,  
Lifting the mild ray of her patient gaze,  
In soft sweet training words slowly she spoke:  
"O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.  
To share the suffering of the world I came,  
I draw my children's pangs into my breast.  
I am the nurse of the dolour beneath the stars;  
I am the soul of all who wailing writhe  
Under the ruthless harrow of the Gods.  
I am woman, nurse and slave and beaten beast;  
I tend the hands that gave me cruel blows.  
The hearts that spurned my love and zeal I serve;  
I am the courted queen, the pampered doll,  
I am the giver of the bowl of rice,  
I am the worshipped Angel of the House.  
I am in all that suffers and that cries.  
Mine is the prayer that climbs in vain from earth,  
I am traversed by my creatures' agonies,  
I am the spirit in a world of pain.  
The scream of tortured flesh and tortured hearts  
Fall'n back on heart and flesh unheard by Heaven  
Has rent with helpless grief and wrath my soul.  
I have seen the peasant burning in his hut,

I have seen the slashed corpse of the slaughtered child,  
Heard woman's cry ravished and stripped and haled  
Amid the bayings of the hell-hound mob,  
I have looked on, I had no power to save.  
I have brought no arm of strength to aid or slay;  
God gave me love, he gave me not his force.

p.. 503-04

As Sri Aurobindo said that the new epic poetry must do, these lines “ensoul the mind” with the stark realities of suffering and helplessness. But, as far as “story” goes, there is only a recalling and naming, a bringing to consciousness of certain intensities of reality; there is no peasant burning or child being murdered or woman being raped. There is a dramatically moving characterization of the essence of womanhood. There is a disturbing characterization of the essence of brutality. And there is a shocking revelation of the impotence of a certain spirituality to change this nature of events. These are sounds that carry to us images with which we can identify subjectively; their sole purpose is to awaken in us a deeper inner focus and point of view, and a profound and vivid awareness.

On the next page, just to illustrate how this form works: after her soul expresses/realizes the spirit of love and pity and helplessness, there comes another voice, a more somber sound. This one is the voice of the man of sorrows, and we take on his fallen human perspective.

“I am the Man of Sorrows, I am he  
Who is nailed on the wide cross of the universe;  
To enjoy my agony God built the earth,  
My passion he has made his drama's theme.  
He has sent me naked into his bitter world  
And beaten me with his rods of grief and pain  
That I might cry and grovel at his feet  
And offer him worship with my blood and tears.  
I am Prometheus under the vulture's beak,  
Man the discoverer of the undying fire,  
In the flame he kindled burning like a moth;  
I am the seeker who can never find,  
I am the fighter who can never win,  
I am the runner who never touched his goal:

p. 506

So, not only are we exposed to divine pity, we are exposed to human suffering, in just two short pages of this journey. We are brought close to the soul of pity and the soul of suffering, in ourselves, because we need to remember these things, we need to expand our ordinary, superficial, outward view, our mundane daily passions and personal lives, and to come to terms with existence, its heights, and its depths. This spiritual journey soars and falls and soars and falls, again and again, because that is necessary to awaken our consciousness.

Savitri too will speak, after she hears these two voices within; and her words will bring forcefully home to us the whole background of these feelings, as well as the additional urge of the divine within us to bring about another reality of experience – an urge to definitively change the nature of this reality itself. Could we have envisioned such an almost unimaginable possibility without being brought into touch with this powerful spiritual context through poetry?

And Savitri heard the voice, the echo heard  
And turning to her being of pity spoke:  
“Madonna of suffering, Mother of grief divine,  
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth  
To bear the unbearable sorrow of the world.  
Because thou art, men yield not to their doom,  
But ask for happiness and strive with fate;  
Because thou art, the wretched still can hope.  
But thine is the power to solace, not to save.  
One day I will return, a bringer of strength,  
And make thee drink from the Eternal’s cup;  
His streams of force shall triumph in thy limbs  
And Wisdom’s calm control thy passionate heart.  
Thy love shall be the bond of humankind,  
Compassion the bright key of Nature’s acts:  
Misery shall pass abolished from the earth;  
The world shall be freed from the anger of the Beast,  
From the cruelty of the Titan and his pain.  
There shall be peace and joy for ever more.”

p. 507

This is inspired, visionary speech. It is the music of poetry that reveals the meaning of our ability to feel compassion. It is the voice of the soul on its epic journey of self-discovery *in us*, but with a new enthusiasm,

a new determination, a dynamism of spirit imparted to us by the poet of transformation. Savitri's mission, her soul's sensibility - deeper than pity - is not only to embrace, to console and to give hope, but to bring a force into the pity, and a wisdom that changes the nature of the human situation. The new soul force doesn't just give solace. It transforms pity into the power to save. This is an epic journey of the Soul and the Spirit into new realms of possibility.

We shall explore a little bit more some of the overriding metaphors that Sri Aurobindo uses to inform us of our own being, the soul's journey being one, ascent to the heights of spiritual consciousness being another, descent into hell another; there are many metaphors and tones of our being to be discovered. In traditional epics the apocalyptic vision is a common theme which we will also find here. And by this exploration, we can get a sampling of some of the different movements. This particular movement is quite strange and unique in the whole scope of *Savitri*; it is especially in this one Canto, and only another short section or two dwell upon the theme of human suffering like this.

But here it is possible to see how the metaphor of the wounding stone, the circumstance of helpless confrontation with suffering, and the speech of dialogue with noble representatives of life's anguish, all of these conventional forms of drama and epic are used here in a way that is not at all conventional. What is being looked at are subjective, inner values, something that only the human soul is capable of: no other creature on earth is capable of understanding grief and suffering, - not of merely experiencing it, but understanding it and confronting it, as a principle, with its opposite. This is uniquely and profoundly human. So this journey and this meeting, these personifications of love and pity, and of pain and suffering, personified in these three voices, are revealed in their depth and power. I think this is what Sri Aurobindo means when he says that the epic and the narrative, the standard form, can be used to convey this new spiritual vision. And then it is not circumstance at all that is being narrated; it is a largeness of human experience, and divine experience, and superhuman experience, - all of a subjective quality that the poetry intensifies in us.

*(to be continued)*

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