

Invocation

Savitri

B H A V A N

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**Celebrating the Centenary of
Sri Aurobindo's Arrival
in Pondicherry
April 4, 1910 – 2010**

This year is consecrated to Sri Aurobindo.

To understand his teaching better
and try to put it into practice,
is certainly the best way of
showing our gratitude to him
for all the light, knowledge and force
which he has so generously brought to the earth.

May his teaching enlighten and guide us,
and what we cannot do today,
we shall do tomorrow.

Let us take the right attitude in all sincerity.

The Mother
(Message for 1972)



The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge

Talk by Sraddhalu – April 18, 2009

Book Two, Canto Fifteen of *Savitri* : where are these worlds, and what do they mean?

When we read *Savitri* there are passages which deeply touch us, where we sense their profound truth. But there is also an understanding of our mind, of regions, worlds, planes of consciousness, and sometimes we feel a gap between what has touched us deeply and a more formal intellectual understanding of the planes of consciousness, and as we go along we try to bridge these two.

This canto comes just after ‘The World-Soul’, Canto Fourteen of Book Two, in which Aswapati enters the psychic world, where he feels the beings that have left their earthly bodies and are in deep internatal trance preparing for their next birth. After those passages, he goes to the soul, the essence, the origin of the whole cosmos through the psychic.

*His soul passed on, a single conscious power,
Towards the end which ever begins again,
Approaching through a stillness dumb and calm
To the source of all things, human and divine.*

There he sees the Two-in-One, ‘the deathless Two-in-One’ – Ardhanishwara – and goes still further to the Divine Mother herself, She ‘Who brought them forth from the Unknowable.’ In a gesture ‘as of worlds thrown away’ she half-parts her eternal veil, and he falls down at her feet ‘unconscious, prone.’ This is the completion of Canto Fourteen.

The new canto ‘The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge’ tells us what happens next.

*After a measureless moment of the soul
Again returning to these surface fields
Out of the timeless depths where he had sunk,
He heard once more the slow tread of the hours.*

This is the return from the depths of the psychic world to ‘*these surface fields*’. As those depths were experienced in a timeless consciousness, with the return, from the realm of time this is seen as ‘*a measureless moment of the soul*’; although it takes place in a moment of timelessness, it is a measureless moment seen from the realm of time. And when he has come back, he is changed, changed in a way that makes possible all that follows in this canto.

*All once perceived and lived was far away;
Himself was to himself his only scene.*

Having been into that world which is the very substance of Truth, the return here makes all that is experienced in these surface fields



Sraddhalu arriving at Savitri Bhavan on April 18, 2009

seem to be far away and almost unreal, and his own consciousness is all that remains. His status is no longer in the little surface being, but above.

Above the Witness and his universe

This ‘Witness’ with a capital W is the witnessing consciousness in the mind, where he was earlier in the Self of Mind and in the *manomaya purusha* peering out at the universe around him. But now he is above

both the Witness and the universe, in this region in the subtle body, the region above the head where the consciousness above the mind is mapped. Here the consciousness opens out into a vast peace and light, which is felt at first as something unformed and yet the source of forms.

*Above the Witness and his universe
He stood in a realm of boundless silences
Awaiting the Voice that spoke and built the worlds.
A light was round him wide and absolute,
A diamond purity of eternal sight;*

The character of that consciousness :

*A consciousness lay still, devoid of forms,
Free, wordless, uncoerced by sign or rule,
For ever content with only being and bliss;
A sheer existence lived in its own peace
On the single spirit's bare and infinite ground.*

This is the vastness of a peace which is the beginning of the realm of the spiritual. It is not the consciousness of the Ignorance but the starting point of the regions beyond Ignorance. In a sense, it is this transition-point which liberates us from our present human evolution. The spiritual beginning range is still the divided consciousness in a certain sense and yet it is illumined. It is illumined because it is filled with the divine Light that reveals the limits of the Ignorance. Descending from there into the mind, the human mind proper, the intellect and below, there is not that revealing divine Light and the thinker is mind-based. So this is the beginning of the realms of the Spirit. 'The single spirit's bare and infinite ground.' It is an opening into the peace and light which is vast and infinite.

*Out of the sphere of Mind he had arisen,
He had left the reign of Nature's hues and shades;*

This is the distinction.

He dwelt in his self's colourless purity.

Still this is a dividing zone, from where things below emerge, which is the base for things higher above.

*It was a plane of undetermined spirit
That could be a zero or round sum of things,
A state in which all ceased and all began.
All it became that figures the absolute, ...*

So rising from here, in this zone and above, the characteristics of consciousness represent the absolute, although it is not the absolute consciousness. There are a series of images :

*A high vast peak whence Spirit could see the worlds,
Calm's wide epiphany, wisdom's mute home,
A lonely station of Omniscience,
A diving-board of the Eternal's power,
A white floor in the house of All-Delight.*

So we see again the repetition of the idea that this is the beginning of things, the descent, as well as the base of all that is. The Eternal's power emerges from there to take on forms which are in the realm of our conscious manifestation; but it is also the foundation of the spiritual that rises from that state: the '*white floor in the house of All-Delight*'. From that consciousness on, the nature of consciousness is delightful; not yet the full delight of the Sachchidananda, but everything is tinted with delight, increasing as we ascend. The mental functioning is not naturally delightful, and yet as you open in meditation to something above mind the descent of that always carries a deep satisfaction and the beginning of delight. So it is '*A white floor in the house of All-Delight*'. It is also the region from which you open out into the intuitive consciousness, so '*A lonely station of Omniscience,*' '*wisdom's mute home*'; and this is what is now described : the beginning of the intuitive consciousness.

*Here came the thought that passes beyond Thought,
Here the still Voice which our listening cannot hear,
The Knowledge by which the knower is the known,
The Love in which beloved and lover are one.*

This is the intuitive consciousness, and later we will have the description of all the three powers of Intuition, Inspiration and Revelation. All this begins from this zone:

*All stood in an original plenitude,
Hushed and fulfilled before they could create
The glorious dream of their universal acts;
Here was engendered the spiritual birth,
Here closed the finite's crawl to the Infinite.*

We have come to the status of the intuitive consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo defines as the highest station that the finite consciousness can come to; after that is the beginning of the infinite universal consciousness. So '*the finite's crawl to the infinite*' closes here. It opens up something which is the beginning of the spiritual birth. All is here ready in an original plenitude, the original fullness which is fulfilled even before it enters into manifestation, creation, turning downwards in its formation. Even before it forms in the intuitive consciousness, all is held, fulfilled, in that plenitude. This is the consciousness where all is known in identity: you are what you know, the knowledge is the thing itself and so :

*The Knowledge by which the knower is the known,
The Love in which beloved and lover are one.*

The description now opens out into not just the intuitive consciousness as we experience it in flashes in our still limited mind, but the consciousness liberated in the intuitive plane, where it is experienced as a universal intuition.

It is important for us to recognize this: on each plane it is possible to experience universality. We can experience universality in the body, sense physical continuity with the whole material universe, and you can feel your own individual body as a special knot of the infinite universal substance. Also it is possible in the realm of the life-energy and in the mental consciousness, in the higher mind and in the intuitive consciousness. So here what follows is a description of the universality of the intuitive consciousness.

*A thousand roads leaped into Eternity
Or singing ran to meet God's veilless face.
The Known released him from its limiting chain;
He knocked at the doors of the Unknowable.*

Here is a series of flashes or identities of the intuition each of which reveals a face of Eternity, each is a ray coming from the Eternal, so he

says ‘*a thousand roads*’ representing the rich fullness. One hundred represents completion, fullness, but a thousand is the fulfillment of each of the hundreds into all its rich possibilities. So :

*A thousand roads leaped into Eternity
Or singing ran to meet God’s veiless face.*

Each ray from that original one Truth-Consciousness is a flash of intuition, and these are seen to return to their Source, and God’s face is now ‘*veiless*’, not covered as when seen from the mind. The knowing process of mind itself is our limitation. In the Intuition it is not a process of knowing but a direct identity. So, ‘*The Known released him from its limiting chain.*’ And from here it is possible to know the Unknowable because you can identify, experience that which is indescribable to the mind and can be known only by experiencing it when you become it.

*Thence gazing with an immeasurable outlook
One with self’s inlook into its own pure vasts,
He saw the splendour of the spirit’s realms, ...*

In the lower ranges of consciousness the only way to know the world is to look outside oneself, because our consciousness is one piece in that which is an infinite extension around us. We can only turn outside ourselves to know the rest. But in the pure Self all exists inside the self, and the Self knows by looking into itself, not outside, because there is no ‘outside’. This is the point where, this is the plane where, the ‘*immeasurable outlook*’ is one with the self’s inlook – the bridging-point of these two. The consciousness looks out at the whole, but its entire outlook is at the same time a looking within, because in the intuitive consciousness all that is known is felt in oneself in an identity.

*Thence gazing with an immeasurable outlook
One with self’s inlook into its own pure vasts,
He saw the splendour of the spirit’s realms, ...*

It is with this sight that he sees the realms of the spirit. Sri Aurobindo uses the words ‘*immeasurable outlook*’ because it is an infinite view. In our mental consciousness the outlook is always measurable. We have so many degrees of sight, a distance with so much space within our

vision: ten kilometers to the horizon There is always a limitation, and always a finite measurable limit. But here the consciousness is opening out into a universal infinite intuitive plane. The intuitive plane is immeasurable, it takes everything into its sweep. And what does he see?

*The greatness and wonder of its boundless works,
The power and passion leaping from its calm,
The rapture of its movement and its rest,
And its fire-sweet miracle of transcendent life,
The million-pointing undivided grasp
Of its vision of one same stupendous All,
Its inexhaustible acts in a timeless Time,
A space that is its own infinity.*

It is a series of images describing the same experience from different facets – typically what Sri Aurobindo calls an overmental description. In many of these lines you will see a contrast and in much of what follows you will see extremes reconciled, which marks the ascent into the overmental consciousness. So the ‘*boundless works*’, their ‘*greatness and wonder*’, ‘*The power and passion leaping from its calm*’. Because the base is calm, the intensity of the power and passion is therefore that much greater. If the base is absolutely still, then the dynamism of the power and passion is absolutely infinite. To the extent that the base is shakable, the dynamism that can emerge from it is also limited. So from its calm, the power and passion, ‘*The rapture of its movement and its rest*’ – it is a consciousness that is simultaneously in absolute movement and absolute rest and is rapturous, full of intense delight, in both.

*The million-pointing undivided grasp
Of its vision of one same stupendous All,*

This is the nature of its transcendent life and its ‘*fire-sweet miracle*’. This is a description of how that consciousness sees the entire cosmos, and meets the Divine in its seeing. That is the All, the All which is Truth, everything that could be. The Divine is the All. The vision of the Brahman includes all possibilities that could ever be, and all the past and all the present and all the future and all the smallest and the largest, and everything in all their relationships. This All is infinite,

and therefore ‘*stupendous*’. When that All is seen, it is the vision of the stupendous All. But this All is not seen as so many pieces, as the mind sees so many pieces: this and then that and then that. The All is seen in the identity of the single Oneness. Everything is an expression of the same One. When this gaze looks out, it sees the infinite indescribably unlimited variety of things, but each is seen to be the same One, expressing itself as this, as that, as that : ‘*its vision of one same stupendous All*’. But this gaze is not seeing just one stupendous All as Oneness; at the same time it sees all its rich diversity, so it is a *million-pointing* vision. This million-pointing vision is seeing not one thing but everything, and in each of its million-sides it is meeting the one All. But it is not divided. It is ‘*The million-pointing undivided grasp*’. It is a single look that is million-pointing at the same time. For the mind this is impossible. With the mind you can only focus on one thing at a time; you jump across several and hold them in the memory with an impression of continuity and oneness – though if the mind focuses on the memory again it must jump across several. This consciousness is infinitely multiple. This multiplicity already emerges and divides above mind, to the higher mind and illumined mind; but here in the intuitive consciousness in its universal opening it is ‘*The million-pointing undivided grasp*’: it is not a vision seeing something far away because it grasps, it is identified, it becomes the very thing it knows. It is a grasp – you hold it, you are it. So, ‘*The million-pointing undivided grasp / Of its vision of one same stupendous All*’: each thing that it meets is the one same stupendous All, even as it meets all things and experiences the identity of all it meets.

Its inexhaustible acts in a timeless Time,

The acts of the spirit are inexhaustible. There is a sense of unfolding time and yet that goes on for ever, it is timeless, there is no limit to that unfolding time, and ‘*inexhaustible acts*’. Here there is a deep philosophical insight. If you think of it this way – and this is the practical view of Science also – consider all possibilities allowed to unfold one after the other and give it enough time: eventually you will run out of possibilities and eventually something will repeat itself. The One Divine which is the source of everything, the one stupendous All, can go on and on and on and still find new things, unimagined and unimaginable, to be expressed – so its acts are inexhaustible, they can

go on and on without repeating, they will never be exhausted, even if you go on into timeless eternity. All this inexhaustible possibility is seen in a consciousness that sees it all and that experiences the timelessness, past, present and future in a single sweep, but also observes the unfolding in time:

*Its inexhaustible acts in a timeless Time,
A space that is its own infinity.*

Here too there is a deep insight. If you conceive of a space, create a space in your mental consciousness, here in our present state what you are doing is cutting it out from something that already exists. You can never create a space in something that is spaceless. You need something already there for you to be able to conceive of a space within it. But here the space is its own infinity. The consciousness knowing its own infinity is its own space. This is in fact the beginning of the experience of Time and Space, which later become fragmented in the mental consciousness.

*A glorious multiple of one radiant Self,
Answering to joy with joy, to love with love,*

This is the one radiant Self expressing itself in so many multiple forms, each of them glorious, each meeting the others with joy and with love. Everything is seen as an expression of the Self meeting another expression of the Self.

*All there were moving mansions of God-bliss;
Eternal and unique they lived the One.*

It is always the same One that lives and yet each expression of the same one is unique and eternal, it lasts through that entire timelessness. And yet each expression, although unique, is not a flat monotone but a rich diversity in itself: *moving mansions of God-bliss*. ‘Mansions’ because there are rooms within rooms within rooms; there is a rich diversity within itself. And this diversity is not only of its forms and its own relationships with itself, but also of its Bliss and its Bliss meeting itself.

*There forces are great outbursts of God’s truth
And objects are its pure spiritual shapes;
Spirit no more is hid from its own view,*

All emerges direct from the Truth in the intuitive consciousness since everything is known and seen and exists in an identity, a Ray direct from the Truth. It may be a limited expression, yet still it is a direct expression of the Truth. ‘*Pure spiritual shapes*’ are its expressions as objects. Nothing is hidden. All can be known, is known, because things are known by identity. Again here is an idea that we can play with. When I take a big object, and place it in front of another smaller object, my limited vision can see the big object in front; it cannot know that there is a smaller object behind it: this covers that. But the moment I am in identity with this, its relationship with that is revealed and I know that there is something behind, because it is now not behind, it is in front of me. So the moment there is a knowledge in identity, in the identity all is known about the thing; the thing known can no longer conceal another thing because it has a relationship with the other, and that therefore is also known. It is a realm therefore where nothing can be hidden by another. In this world, truth can hide truth. I can speak a truth which covers up something else. You remember that Narad plays with that, ‘*covering truth with truth*’. But in this higher realm you cannot have that experience of anything hidden – all is revealed. ‘*Spirit no more is hid from its own view*’. All is Spirit and nothing is hid. Here in the material world everything is ultimately spirit, but spirit is hidden from itself all through.

All sentience is a sea of happiness

- because Spirit is no more hid. The essence of Spirit is its delight, and any sensation always brings something of the spirit’s truth, which is its happiness.

And all creation is an act of light.

Fully aware, the consciousness unfolding, expressing itself is creation. There is nothing that is not aware, nothing which is hidden behind another’s veil. Here is the consciousness in which King Aswapati is now settled. It is something like a base, after which he will be shifting to a still higher level, but for now this base is described. From here, what does he see?

*Out of the neutral silence of his soul
He passed to its fields of puissance and of calm
And saw the Powers that stand above the world,*

*Traversed the realms of the supreme Idea
And sought the summit of created things
And the almighty source of cosmic change.*

*There Knowledge called him to her mystic peaks
Where thought is held in a vast internal sense
And feeling swims across a sea of peace
And vision climbs beyond the reach of Time.*

*An equal of the first creator seers,
Accompanied by an all-revealing light
He moved through regions of transcendent Truth
Inward, immense, innumerably one.*

Let us skip these lines and move a little further.

There distance was his own huge spirit's extent;

The moment the intuitive consciousness knows this in its seeing, it is this; and if the observer is the observed then it is also the observation and all that is in between. So in this universal opening of the intuitive consciousness it is my own consciousness which is an extension out – that is Space : *distance was his own huge spirit's extent*. The distance is only the relationship of the consciousness choosing to know itself as far or close. There is a kind of a breakdown of our sense of rigidity in space.

*Delivered from the fictions of the mind
Time's triple dividing step baffled no more;*

Past, present, future: it is no longer seen as cut up, but as a continuity. All that could happen in the past, as well as all that has specifically happened, is available to the sight; equally in the future all that can happen, and whether it is more likely to happen or less likely, it is all there. There is a continuity. The present is only a special focus of the consciousness. Our sense of division of the past and present from the future is baffling. It is one of the peculiarities in the mental consciousness that even as you touch the future it is slipping into the past and the present never lasts. You cannot catch it. This sense of division and unreality creates a confusion in the mind's understanding and its relationship with time. When Aswapati is delivered from the fictions of the mind he is no longer baffled.

*Its inevitable and continuous stream,
The long flow of its manifesting course,
Was held in spirit's single wide regard.*

This single vision of past, present and future is completed in the overmental and supramental consciousness, but it is already begun here.

A universal beauty showed its face:

In the mental region we see beauty, but it is not universal. It is individual: we say, 'This is beautiful' – 'That is beautiful'. In between there is nothing. Or that is not beautiful and this is more beautiful and that is less. Here, when all is seen in spirit sight and known as spirit form there is a beauty which is universal. And how does it appear?

*The invisible deep-fraught significances,
Here sheltered behind form's insensible screen,*

'Here' meaning on earth -

*Uncovered to him their deathless harmony
And the key to the wonder-book of common things.*

So it is this universal beauty which is seen here as the significance – something meaningful, something special as glow or quality of consciousness. If we dwell upon the idea of Beauty, even in our experience, what makes things beautiful? There is something glowing out of that appearance which is meaningful to us, which somehow, when we touch, we feel something new, and that newness continues to glow out: newness and meaning. If there is nothing meaningful then it would be not beautiful. That is the quality of our sense of meaning or the vibration of consciousness which in the material world is sheltered behind all insensible things, and what you see in beauty is the dim glowing out of it. But there it is no more sheltered: '*the deep-fraught significances /Uncovered to him their deathless harmony.*' The harmony itself is felt as more real even than the form, for the form is only the device through which it glows out. The harmony is the key, is the secret, the beginning, behind the form. In the commonest things there is something of this.

Seen again from an intellectual point of view, every object is known and is distinct because it has a special meaning ... even

something ordinary like a glass. It has meaning to us. It is something which can hold, which can contain, which can satisfy our thirst. That sense of a meaning is held in the form. If that meaning was somehow withdrawn the form would have no reality and would crumble. It is that meaning which is expressed as the form – and of course there are facets to the meaning, there is a rich multiplicity of meaning of which the intellect catches only the most prominent part; the intuitive consciousness catches the fullness of it. Glass is also transparent and that also carries with it a meaning. Every object is really defined by the meaning of the consciousness that it represents. So this perception is ‘*the key to the wonder-book of common things*’.

*In their uniting law stood up revealed
The multiple measures of the upbuilding force, ...*

The upbuilding force is this power that rises from the Inconscient, building up the whole cosmos by a constant whirl of energies and processes, constructing the universe; and it is multiple, multi-faceted, multi-sided, and yet there is something constant emerging through it all. The vision is like this: there is a vast meaning of the universal beauty that is at the base of this cosmos, which is working through this upbuilding force that is bringing this universe out of the chaos of Inconscience. And that is revealing through all forms a vast universal single beauty, a single meaning that is multiply diverse, expressing through each form.

*In their uniting law stood up revealed
The multiple measures of the upbuilding force,
The lines of the World-Geometer's technique,*

– the secret lines which all of these forms have created in finite relationships out of the substance and consciousness of the Infinite. This is the magic of the play. I have used this example before : even when you look at a finite object like this, if you study it with mind you can recognize that this length, though appearing finite, is infinite in its divisibility. It is in fact made up of an infinity of points; and this edge too is made up of an infinity of points. And you can show a one to one correspondence by drawing lateral lines like this. For each point here there is a unique point here, and for each point here there is a unique point there: this infinity is identical

with this infinity. And yet to our senses, this appears shorter than that. That is the magic of the World-Geometer's technique. This is infinite; here is an identical infinite; and yet the way the relationship is set up one with the other, this one looks finite, and larger than that one, which is also finite and smaller. The whole world is carved by such a magical process. And that magical process, that magic is again the meaning of the consciousness that is revealed in the universal beauty.

The enchantments that uphold the cosmic web

It is a cosmic web because everything depends on something else for its existence in this world. This is shorter because that is longer. If I put a smaller edge here, then this becomes longer and that one is short. In all relationships there is a grid, a network of dependencies. If you take out any one single thing, the whole thing falls apart. To describe one piece, you need to describe an entirety. It is dependent on the whole – and yet all the rest of that entirety depends equally upon this. So it is described as a web – the cosmic web. *The enchantments that uphold the cosmic web*. And this corresponds exactly to a Sanskrit term *indrajala*. The web of Indra is described like this in the Puranas. The web of Indra is full of pearls, each pearl reflecting all the others. And this term is also used colloquially to denote magic. It is the creative magical power by which the infinite measures itself out in forms and creates the appearance of finitenesses. The word in Sanskrit is *maya* – the measuring out, the creative measuring power of the Infinite. So,

*The enchantments that uphold the cosmic web
And the magic underlying simple shapes.*

And when you look through the forms to the thing behind which it expresses like this, something extraordinarily beautiful and meaningful appears, everything is significant. So this is the universal beauty showing its face.

Both these lines evoke two lines from another poem of Sri Aurobindo which goes like this :

*In the pattern and bloom of the flowers He is woven
In the luminous net of the stars He is caught.*

It is as if the One Divine manifesting is held and woven into this pattern and arrangement of forms and is captured by them – or rather, he expresses himself through them.

*On peaks where Silence listens with still heart
To the rhythmic metres of the rolling worlds,
He served the sessions of the triple Fire.*

*On the rim of two continents of slumber and trance
He heard the ever unspoken Reality's voice
Awaken revelation's mystic cry,
The birthplace found of the sudden infallible Word
And lived in the rays of an intuitive Sun.*

I will skip the details, and just touch upon three phrases: 'revelation's mystic cry', 'infallible Word' and 'the rays of an intuitive Sun' – referring to the triple powers of Intuition, Inspiration and Revelation. And he, Aswapati, is not bound to the physical consciousness, he is liberated :

*Absolved from the ligaments of death and sleep
He rode the lightning seas of cosmic Mind
And crossed the ocean of original sound;*

This is the creative vibration, the waves of the world-manifestation, *pranava*, of which OM is the physical representation.

*On the last step to the supernal birth
He trod along extinction's narrow edge
Near the high verges of eternity,
And mounted the gold ridge of the world-dream
Between the slayer and the saviour fires;
The belt he reached of the unchanging Truth,
Met borders of the inexpressible Light
And thrilled with the presence of the Ineffable.*

Here there is an ascent from this plane of consciousness to something still higher.

*He trod along extinction's narrow edge
Near the high verges of eternity,
And mounted the gold ridge of the world-dream
Between the slayer and the saviour fires;*

This is a passage describing a narrow transition. On one side is the slayer fire and on the other the saviour fire. Fire always represents a concentration of *tapas*, a gathering of consciousness into intensity; it is a creative power also, because all manifestation emerges from such a concentration. These two fires, the slayer and the saviour fires, are the divine consciousness in its creation dwelling on two different directions of its power and knowledge. One is the concentration which divides, the second is the concentration that aggregates, which are the two means by which the intellect can know. The intellect can only know when it cuts up first and then joins again. But the power to divide infinitely and the power to aggregate infinitely are really two statuses of the divine concentration. Between these two is a consciousness in which both are seen as special statuses of one consciousness. And that is the transition into a higher consciousness.

Above him he saw the flaming Hierarchies, ...

This is the overmental region – Hierarchies with a capital H – because, while hierarchy can exist in the mental consciousness – you can study any sequence as a hierarchy – the hierarchies of the overmental are natural Truth-expressions of the infinite possibilities of the One: natural large categories in which huge parcels of thoughts or fragments of knowledge are seen in clear arrangements, in clear relationships to each other. All possibility is opening out, but with a clear arrangement and relationships.

*Above him he saw the flaming Hierarchies,
The wings that fold around created Space,
The sun-eyed Guardians and the golden Sphinx
And the tiered planes and the immutable Lords.*

These are the beings of the overmental plane, they are the Lords who preside over the whole manifestation. Each facet of the One, each personality of the One, each allowed his freedom to rule and will his own universe, each presiding over entire universes of possibilities of his particular aspect of the divine consciousness. But because they preside over them they are immutable; and the many tiered planes are the realms of manifestation. ‘*The sun-eyed Guardians, and the golden Sphinx*’: the Sphinx is the one who asks riddles and does not allow you to pass on unless you can answer her questions. In the occult traditions,

at the transition from one plane to another there is always a Guardian of that passage, who demands that you fulfill his conditions before you can move on to another plane or enter one of the worlds of that plane. In the lower planes the conditions can be mentally formulated and in the higher planes it is a state of consciousness that must be fulfilled. The highest of these is the Golden Sphinx who presides over the reconciliation of our contradictions, of our opposites, the Overmental Sphinx in which all opposites come and meet. Each is allowed its freedom of speciality, and yet they must recognize that they are all special facets of the One. Here is the Golden Sphinx who asks riddles which have a double meaning or a contradictory sense. You are probably familiar with the Greek mythology. But the way the question is formulated itself is a paradox in some sense and this is the last meeting of paradoxes.

*A wisdom waiting on Omniscience
Sat voiceless in a vast passivity;
It judged not, measured not, nor strove to know,
But listened for the veiled all-seeing Thought
And the burden of a calm transcendent Voice.*

*He had reached the top of all that can be known:
His sight surpassed creation's head and base;*

As if he could see the entire universe in one sweep.

*Ablaze the triple heavens revealed their suns,
The obscure Abyss exposed its monstrous rule.*

*All but the ultimate Mystery was his field,
Almost the Unknowable disclosed its rim.*

The triple heavens here are not the highest Sachchidananda but the mental – vital – physical in their highest states with the suns, each of them representing a reflection of the One in each, presiding over each.

And then Aswapati undergoes a change: having entered here he himself is transformed into that consciousness. the consciousness here is not only an infinity, not only a rich possibility of infinities, but the reconciliation of all infinities into their origin of Oneness. That change in his own consciousness is described like this:

*His self's infinities began to emerge,
The hidden universes cried to him;
Eternities called to eternities*

The hidden universes are within him. Each one of us as a seed-form of the Divine contains the full possibility of the entire cosmos compressed in so many seed-forms; the full unfolding of our potential is all these seed-forms of the one Seed that we represent unfolding, becoming their fullness of infinity; each seed is like a universe, waiting to burst out. So :

*His self's infinities began to emerge,
The hidden universes cried to him;
Eternities called to eternities*

The eternities within call to the eternities outside, so there is a kind of unfolding or blooming out, an emergence from in to out, until there is full identity with the fullness.

Sending their speechless message still remote.

*Arisen from the marvel of the depths
And burning from the superconscious heights
And sweeping in great horizontal gyres
A million energies joined and were the One.*

Here all that exists is closed back into its Oneness. This description is the most comprehensive so far. On each plane this experience of universality can be found, and there can be an experience of a oneness presiding over that universality, the Purusha poise which can be seen as the Witness or as the Origin of its universality; but here we see all planes merging their universality; from below :

*Arisen from the marvel of the depths
And burning from the superconscious heights*

– from both extremes – what comes? A million energies. And how do they come?

And sweeping in great horizontal gyres

A movement of all flowing and the sense of going round and round until they all merge and are drawn back: joining, they merge in the

One – they become their own Origin, which is the One. This is the character of the Overmental Consciousness. It is not representing the One, it is the One. It is the One bursting out in a million energies, becoming all the regions of the cosmos. Sri Aurobindo, when he speaks of the Cosmic Consciousness says that, yes – you can experience cosmic consciousness on all planes, but the only status in which the true cosmicity can be experienced is the Overmental, because it is from there that all the planes in their individual universalities can be known in a single universality. The universality of the cosmic consciousness in Mind, for example, will know only mental consciousness in its universality; even if it knows a little bit of the Light, it feels distinction. But in the Overmental, in its highest status, you experience the universality of all the planes, and all of them are threads and expressions of its one universality. This is the only complete universality. When we read of many different saints, sages, mystics describing the universal consciousness, you will see distinctions between them, and that is because each has touched it on a certain plane and had a certain limited experience of universality. This is the completeness of universality.

A million energies joined and were the One.

All energies are the one consciousness as Force, folding out.

All flowed immeasurably to one sea:

All living forms became its atom homes.

One consciousness, one Force, but in each form it has one atom home. Again the relationship is important. This is an infinite consciousness. However big this might appear, in the relationship with infinity it is a tiny fragment, it is like an atom, a minuscule particle, an infinitesimal of that infinite. All living forms are atom homes for that one consciousness.

A Panergy ('All-Energy') that harmonised all life

Held now existence in its vast control;

A portion of that majesty he was made.

At will he lived in the unoblivious Ray.

So here he is part of this completeness of the cosmic consciousness, effortlessly in that Light. He is a part of the whole, not separate any

more, and he knows the whole and his relationship with the whole. This is the highest status of Cosmic Consciousness.

A further transition takes place now, and a new paragraph begins :

In that high realm where no untruth can come,

– now we know why: because all is revealed in that Light.

Where all are different and all is one,

So there is the multiplicity – full complete multiplicity, each is unique, nothing ever repeated – and yet the multiplicity knows its identity. This is an important word which Sri Aurobindo uses. When Mind thinks of multiplicity it sees multiple forms; and when we say ‘Oh, but the multiplicity is One’ we see the multiplicity merging back into a homogenous oneness. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that this is not how it is. It is multiplicity in identity. It is not homogeneity. It is the one identity and a rich diversity of multiplicity within that oneness.

In that high realm where no untruth can come,

- because all is an expression of the One –

Where all are different and all is one,

- individualities in the Oneness -

In the Impersonal's ocean without shore

It is equally a reconciliation of individuality and impersonality:

The Person in the World-Spirit anchored rode;

So these are simultaneous. There is an impersonal ocean without limit, and yet within that is the Person, the personality of that ocean, anchored in this World-Spirit.

*It thrilled with the mighty marchings of World-Force,
Its acts were the comrades of God's infinite peace.*

So again the contrast: there is infinite peace which is the base, and the mighty marchings of World-Force, and they are simultaneous.

*An adjunct glory and a symbol self,
The body was delivered to the soul,*

The physical body is no longer experienced as a separate piece. When we are in the mental consciousness the body is separate. When we climb higher we experience mind – life – body, separate. But in this cosmicity, the complete cosmicity, all are part of its oneness. The body becomes an adjunct – an extension, an appendage:

An adjunct glory and a symbol self,

- representing it symbolically –

The body was delivered to the soul,

Given to the soul, no longer separated, it recovers its relationship and connection with the soul. And then, what is it like as an adjunct?

*An immortal point of power, a block of poise
In a cosmicity's wide formless surge,
A conscious edge of the Transcendent's might
Carving perfection from a bright world-stuff,
It figured in it a universe's sense.*

This is a description of the body, and there are several things here which are important. The true relationship with the body in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga is described here in sum: the body is an adjunct, yes, it is an extension; but even the body as an extension is not the primary part of us. As important as the physical body there is also the vital body and the mental body. So even if there is nothing else there are three adjuncts, so to say. The body is an adjunct, an extension, but it is symbolic. In the relationship of the whole cosmic consciousness it is a 'point of power', a condensation of power, immortal, 'a block of poise': a firm base for this whole cosmic consciousness in the 'cosmicity's wide formless surge' – this formless vast movement, of which the body is a special focus.

*A conscious edge of the Transcendent's might
Carving perfection from a bright world-stuff,*

In this world-substance, a special focus has been carved out. It is part of the whole, and yet it has been separated as a special focus; and for the transcendent power, the body is 'a conscious edge', a conscious instrument operating in that realm. And what is carved out is carved out as a perfection from the 'bright world-stuff' which is itself conscious, and 'It figured in it a universe's sense.' The

whole sense of the universe is given forth in this little adjunct. That is why it is '*An adjunct glory and a symbol self*'. This gives the whole perspective of the relationship of the Cosmic Consciousness to the body and the meaning and purpose of it all. One can reflect on it quite a bit, but I shall leave just a few hints of what this can represent. It is said, '*It figured in it a universe's sense*'. In the Veda the completeness of knowledge is described in the shape of the body, with four parts and it is called 'The Body of Knowledge'. So the particular formulation of this shape has a special meaning. You will recall the Mother's experience when she rose to the highest edge on the border of form and the Formless. She saw there the prototype of the supramental body. There was broadly the same form as the present human form. She also says, speaking of other planets and life on other planets, that everywhere there is life in different variations but the general form would tend towards something similar to the human form, because that is the form that has been chosen as most significant.

In this particular form, as you know, in the subtle body we have 7 chakras, and there is a significance in this fact of the 7 chakras, reflecting the gradation of 7 planes or powers of the Divine. Also the nerves : there are 72,000 nerves in the nervous system, that must also have a significance. So everything in the form and relation of the body captures the sense of the whole universe and all its possibilities, not only in the shape or form but in the seeds of consciousness out of which this human being is made up.

*Carving perfection from a bright world-stuff,
It figured in it a universe's sense.*

It takes out of that whole infinity, out of that whole universe of possibilities, a finite piece cut out, perfectly expressed, and the whole infinity pouring into that representative of itself; and each person similarly represents the whole cosmicity in a certain way.

*There consciousness was a close and single weft;
The far and near were one in spirit-space,
The moments there were pregnant with all time.*

Again this relationship of All in a single part. The first line is interesting in its suggestions: '*consciousness was a close and single weft*'. If you

look at the way cloth is made, there are so many threads tied from one end to the other of the loom, and then there is one thread, the weft, which goes in through all these and comes back through all of them, going in and out through the whole cloth. That is what holds the cloth together. If you remove that, the cloth falls apart. That which holds it together is one single thread. And that one single thread travels through every single part of the cloth. Innate to everything is the Oneness that supports and holds together the full diversity. So, ‘*consciousness was a close and single weft*’, closely holding everything in itself. Far and near therefore in the one consciousness are held together; far or near does not matter, everything is one in that spirit-space, all is in the Oneness. And every moment equally has in it the fullness of all time, potentially: ‘*pregnant*’ – capable of expressing it.

*The superconscient’s screen was ripped by thought,
Idea rotated symphonies of sight,
Sight was a flame-throw from identity;
Life was a marvellous journey of the spirit,
Feeling a wave from the universal Bliss.*

So the whole relationship of Bliss and sight in identity, Idea, is put in a sequence, and Aswapati has reached this status, awakening to this consciousness:

*In the kingdom of the Spirit’s power and light,
As if one who arrived out of infinity’s womb
He came new-born, infant and limitless
And grew in the wisdom of the timeless Child;
He was a vast that soon became a Sun.*

This is the passage that Sri Aurobindo made in his early years of sadhana. He established himself in the overmental consciousness and ‘*He was a vast that soon became a Sun*’.

*A great luminous silence whispered to his heart;
His knowledge an inview caught unfathomable,*

- unfathomable by mental knowing, but in the identity of the Oneness all is held.

*An outview by no brief horizons cut:
He thought and felt in all, his gaze had power.*

Because now he is ‘*an equal of the first creator seers*’ and it is in this consciousness that the seeing is the becoming. All that the consciousness sees as a possibility and dwells on in its seeing initiates the whole movement of becoming and manifestation. He is in all things, even as his gaze has the power to form and shape all things.

*He communed with the Incommunicable;
Beings of a wider consciousness were his friends,
Forms of a larger subtler make drew near;
The Gods conversed with him behind Life’s veil.*

These Gods are the deities which are spoken of in the Vedas; and always in the Vedas even when a deity is being invoked on a lower level, his home is here in the Overmind; in the Overmind of course there are gradations, bordering the fullness of the Supermind, but their home is there.

*Neighbour his being grew to Nature’s crests.
The primal Energy took him in its arms;*

This last transition is when the full power of that consciousness draws him into itself and he unites with that. It pours into him, even as he is drawn into it.

*His brain was wrapped in overwhelming light,
An all-embracing knowledge seized his heart:
Thoughts rose in him no earthly mind can hold,*

These thoughts are not fragmented mental thoughts; they are what Sri Aurobindo calls ‘supramental thought’, which is a formulation in the overmental which has the characteristic of a thought but which is not a fragmented seeing but the Oneness in a particular focus, which is the ‘Real-Idea’ as he calls it.

Mights played that never coursed through mortal nerves:

The entire being and not just the physical–vital–mental but also the higher gradations in the subtle body, all the fields, are himself. Just as we are this mind-life-body, he is all those centres of consciousness, all the way up to this highest Overmind, and on each the one power represents itself and manifests.

*He scanned the secrets of the Overmind,
He bore the rapture of the Oversoul.*

The Oversoul here is possibly the Self supporting the universal play.

*A borderer of the empire of the Sun,
Attuned to the supernal harmonies,
He linked creation to the Eternal's sphere.*

The empire of the Sun is the Supermind proper. Here he is on the highest edge of Overmind, seeing below him all the secrets of the Overmind, and all the rest. At this highest point he is bordering the empire of the Sun, and because he is attuned to the highest harmonies he becomes a link, connecting the creation below to the Eternal's sphere.

*His finite parts approached their absolutes,
His actions framed the movements of the Gods,
His will took up the reins of cosmic Force.*

All of these three are important, but the first of these lines expresses the relationship that the Supramental consciousness has with the whole journey of the Yoga. When we observe carefully the pattern of changes and stages of transformation in this Yoga we will find that Sri Aurobindo shows repeatedly how a particular line of development can be taken to a certain highest fulfillment, but after that its perfection requires the supramental consciousness. This is because the finite can only reach up to a certain point, and even opening to the infinite it can only reach up to a certain point, as long as it is still part of a divided consciousness. And as long as there is a division in the consciousness, despite knowing the Oneness, the different parts of the division can still experience a conflict or a friction – as happens with the Overmental Gods: each of the overmental powers is given its free play, but each behaves as if he possesses the whole universe as his own domain, and so there can be conflict between them. It is only when we bring in the Supramental consciousness in which they all merge back into their original Oneness that the finitenesses of all our being can reach their absolute perfection. One can reach a practical perfection, as high as one can, but an absolute perfection only comes with the supramental.

That is the significance of this line: *His finite parts approached their absolutes*, as he borders the Supermind.

His actions framed the movements of the Gods,

Everything that he expresses there has the same power and the same framework as the actions of the Gods. And his will, one with that consciousness, holds the cosmic Force by the reins, like horses – he is able to restrain, guide and direct the full play of the cosmic forces .

His will took up the reins of cosmic Force.

This completes the canto. As you can see, it describes through stages Aswapati's ascent: first, into the realm of the intuitive consciousness as a universal intuition opening up to the higher Overmental, playing out the action of the Overmind in the intuitive plane – that means, the highest that the intuition can rise to. From there he makes an ascent into the Overmental consciousness, where he experiences the playing out of the Supermind within the realm of the Overmental, and rises to its highest, bordering on the Supramental proper. The distinction between the Supramental and the highest level of the Overmind is a very fine distinction which Sri Aurobindo himself spoke of later. He said that the two are so close that in this highest part of the Overmind, one can experience pretty much all that the Supramental views and enacts, and yet there is a difference. The difference is this: the Overmental allows the division, whereas the Supramental proper does not allow any division. But if the Supramental were to turn around towards the manifestation, it has to allow the poise of division. The shift from the Supramental to that poise of allowing division and yet holding all that the Supramental has, is the highest of the Overmind. It is a very fine gap between the two. And this highest of the Overmental is described in the Isha Upanishad as the golden lid that covers the face of Truth. It is an exact replica of the face of Truth, and yet it covers it. And it is from there that the whole division of consciousness and eventually the Ignorance forms. The Supramental is untainted by division and ignorance; and that is why this final entry is necessary to overcome Ignorance and fragmentation. This is the framework in which we have journeyed up to this point.

The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life

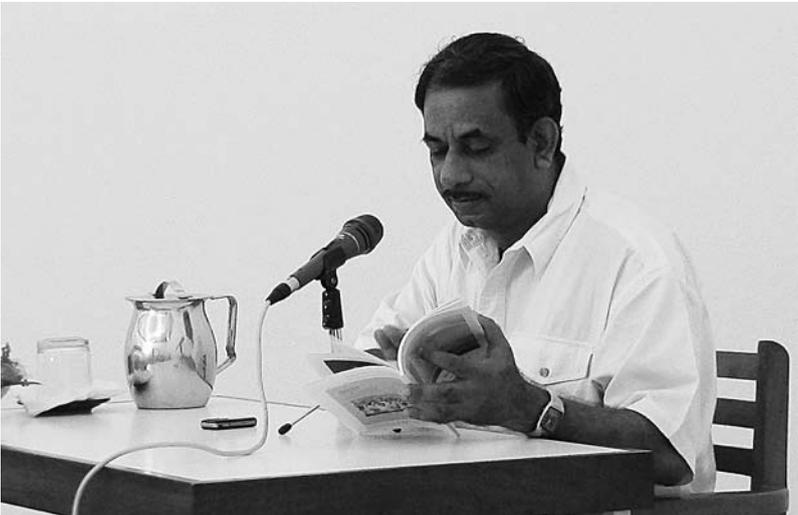
Talk by Dr. Alok Pandey, August 22, 2009

*(Concluding session of the Savitri study camp held at the
Sri Aurobindo Society Beach office in Pondicherry)*

The Mother has spoken of *Savitri* as a supreme revelation; as such it belongs to the class of poems known as 'revelatory' and by its very nature it is a poem which cannot exactly be understood by the intellectual mind which has neither the data nor the capacity. But revelations themselves mount from hill to hill, as the ancient seers saw. There is a plane of Revelation in which things are revealed as symbols, and as one climbs higher one sees the inner lines of forces which lie behind the symbols. Still further, the symbol is illumined by an inner meaning and sense, and then one can discover the Idea-Force or the Real Idea that has built the world. Sri Aurobindo goes beyond these and brings us a little taste of all that is closed and sealed to our outward gaze. It is not just a revelation poured in the body of words and sound-symbols: it has a creative power in it and by the mere fact of reading, Sri Aurobindo gives us some kind of a contact with whatever he is describing. We see this in many of his works. One example is when we read *The Synthesis of Yoga*: when we read *The Yoga of Divine Works*, it is as if a flame of sacrifice burns through the chapters, inducing one to lead a life of consecration. When we read through *The Yoga of Knowledge*, we feel as if we are climbing a steep mountain, and Sri Aurobindo holds our hand and carries us from one plateau to another. Again when we read *The Yoga of Divine Love*, throughout the chapters a strange sweetness, an unearthly ethereal sweetness and joy seems to fill our being, as if the Divine Companion were walking by our side. All this, and much more, is poured into *Savitri*.

In the series of revelations we are presently with the subtle worlds. Sri Aurobindo is taking us hand in hand, sometimes carrying us,

through these worlds which have been known in both the Indian and the European mysticism. In the Vedas there is a description of these worlds, and so also in European mysticism, often under the name of occultism. The modern mind, the rational mind and the scientific mind often rejects them, partly because it lacks the data to verify their existence. Our corporeal senses are unable to put us in contact with them, because they can only tell us about gross-physical things. Sri Aurobindo raises this question: ‘Why don’t we know about these hidden worlds?’ and he gives a very beautiful answer, one that appeals to both common-sense and logic. He says that we do not know about these worlds, just as we do not know what is going on in our neighbour’s mind – but that does not mean that in the neighbour’s mind nothing is going on. There are things going on in his mind, thoughts and feelings arise, but we are unaware of them. Of course, Sri Aurobindo is very generous: frankly, we are not even aware of what is going on in our own minds, what to speak of hidden worlds based on the crude sense-data? The only way that one can understand is to start by taking them on faith and then move on – not staying with faith: religion has stayed with faith; religion both in the east and the west speaks of these hidden worlds, but one has to just accept their existence by faith; but in yoga one moves on, starts with faith, but moves from experience to experience; and as the inner senses are



liberated, as the inner consciousness is liberated through the action of Grace, these worlds and their contacts begin to become not only possible but real, palpable, concrete – as a mystic would say, more concrete than this earthly reality. That is why the yogis speak of us having not just one body but many bodies. In what we have been reading recently, Sri Aurobindo is taking us on a tour of one of these bodies, the vital body, through the vital world which corresponds to the vital body of the Cosmos. In this process he is taking us from level to level. Sri Aurobindo has described the heights and the depths of these worlds, their forces, their energies and how they have influenced the earth scene, what has been their characteristic role, their action, the principle that works in them, even their beings; but, as he has himself written, we should not believe, when Sri Aurobindo speaks of The Little Life and The Greater Life and The Paradise of the Life-Gods and The Descent into Night, that these are the only Life-worlds. Each of these worlds divides into several sub-worlds, in fact it is quite possible that if one entered the Life-world one would end up discovering thousands of worlds of Life alone. That is why mystic literature has often spoken of not just one, two, three, but of many, many worlds. But they are built upon a certain plan. That plan, Sri Aurobindo reveals to us, consists of three lower worlds of Matter, Life and Mind, and three higher worlds: the Sat-lok, the Tapo-lok, the Ananda-lok, and these are linked through the Supramental. While Sri Aurobindo describes this, he also reveals to us the mystery of these three lower ‘fallen’ worlds. These worlds have originated from the One and therefore each world picks up one aspect of the One Infinite, and that becomes its predominant principle and everything else is subordinated to that. Therefore these are typical worlds. There are only two planes where one can discover the complete Truth: one revealed completely above in the Supreme; the other below, concealed in the depths of Matter. All energies, all powers, all forces find their entry into this Earth, and through the evolutionary process they are being revealed step by step. All other worlds are typical worlds. In the world of Life, the dominant principle is Desire, and forms there are subservient to Desire – meaning thereby that what one desires assumes a form; that is almost like an instant action of the energy of this world – unlike the world of Matter. One might think, ‘Oh, it is so nice: whatever one desires, that immediately creates a form.’ But as Sri

Aurobindo would reveal to us, this is not what we are really seeking. And yet, this world has its own place in this great and perilous and beautiful and dangerous and charming journey. In traditional yoga as we have known it over the last thousand years, one does not speak of these worlds. The reason is that if Moksha, Nirvana, or simply Self-Realisation of the adwaitin kind is the goal, then there is no need to speak about them. All that one does is to dismiss the whole affair as the complex Lila of the world which none can understand. In a sense it is true, and if the goal is simply to escape from the lines of Nature, then one should just find the shortest route, through any door, it does not matter – any door or any window will do. One need not understand the whole affair. But as Sri Aurobindo says, we are not out to escape from the world, we are here for a divine Conquest of this world; and therefore it is important to understand these worlds not only in their action upon us, but also in their own cosmic movement. Why only Yoga, it is important also in ordinary life, because so much happens within us which is the result of a subtle transaction, as Sri Aurobindo says ‘an inner commerce’; and because we are unaware of that, it brings in ‘*the incoherencies of Fate*’ – as we read in a beautiful line the other day (p.162). We don’t understand because we don’t see what is really happening inside us. So therefore to understand about these worlds is important both from a pragmatic standpoint, from the point of view of our earthly life and also from the viewpoint of the ancient yogis and mystics who were very much concerned with an integral knowledge. They sought this knowledge, they revealed it in the language and the symbols which were pertinent to that time, many things they hid, because they thought that this knowledge can have its other side, it can be subject to misuse. But we are fortunate and privileged that Sri Aurobindo is revealing this knowledge to us in a language that we can receive.

So we will continue from where we left off in ‘The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life’. In the Life-world the reigning principle is Desire, and the objects sought are Joy and Power and intensity of movement. It tries to capture the experience of the extremes. This is the joy of life: it tries to capture the many moods of the Infinite. That is why we see that even on earth, before life emerged there was a purely material existence which we can more or

less categorise in a few elements at the most. The scientists say that there seem to be about 108 elements. Probably from the gross point of view we can say we have rivers and mountains and seas – only a few things. But the moment Life enters into Matter we see that the whole world is filled with infinity. That is the beauty of Life: it tries to recapture the many moods of infinity. As Sri Aurobindo has said, it is a child who has strayed away from its heavenly home but it remembers what it was like when it was a little baby and therefore it tries to re-create and capture that mood of infinity. In its own native world it can do that with much greater freedom, but even here Life tries to do it. That is the principle of that world, unlike our world where the principle is rigidity of form and inertia. In that world there is a much greater plasticity and freedom of movement. That world, because it is untouched by the mental world, does not care about what we call virtue and vice. It seeks the hazard of extremes, intensity of movement and the rapture of that movement for its own sake.

Let us go to page 184, and read a couple of lines from what we studied yesterday, starting at line 404.

*This was transition-line and starting-point,
A first immigration into heavenliness,
For all who cross into that brilliant sphere:
These are the kinsmen of our earthly race;
This region borders on our mortal state.*

p.184

As we enter into this zone of greater life, the drab pull of the earth, the sense of mortality begins to fade behind, and we begin to breathe a freer and a vaster air. This is the first immigration line, not the last: there will be many borderlines and many checkpoints that Sri Aurobindo will reveal to us, but this is the first immigration, where we begin to feel an unearthly sense and force moving us.

Then on the next page we read these lines about how these worlds are concerned essentially with Power and Joy and the expansion and the intensity. This Power and Joy, this sense of expansion and intensity can be used either by the forces of evil on the lower side, or the forces of good. Sri Aurobindo says that in this yoga this world too must be conquered and placed at the feet of the Divine for His use. So here we have line 436 on page 185 :

*Whether for Heaven or Hell they must wage war:
Warriors of Good, they serve a shining cause
Or are Evil's soldiers in the pay of Sin.
For evil and good an equal tenure keep
Wherever Knowledge is Ignorance's twin.
All powers of Life towards their godhead tend ...*

So in these worlds Knowledge walks hand in hand with Ignorance. That is why these worlds are called 'fallen worlds'. The worlds of Mind try to re-create the total knowledge, but they do it by piecing things together. The worlds of Life try to recreate the original consciousness, its power, its joy, but again they do it by capturing the many moods – but each mood is unique in its own right; it is not harmonised and unified with all the others, as in the One Divine. In the One Divine all these moods are harmonised and unified: sweetness is one with strength; but here sweetness touches its own absolute, strength its own absolute. These are worlds where each Power and potentiality tries to touch its own absolute, but isolated from the rest.

Then lower down on the same page, line 449:

*Her worshippers proclaim her sacred right.
A red-tiaraed Falsehood they revere,
Worship the shadow of a crooked God,
Admit the black Idea that twists the brain
Or lie with the harlot Power that slays the soul.
A mastering virtue statuesques the pose,
Or a Titan passion goads to a proud unrest:
At Wisdom's altar they are kings and priests
Or their life a sacrifice to an idol of Power.*

p.185

Many myths and legends, especially the epics, are built around this world. The whole Heroic Age of mankind is about these worlds, where each character or a tendency or a quality tries to reach his own peak. We have so many stories which have tried to symbolically express this world. One which comes to mind is about King Shibi, who in generosity goes to a point where he says, 'Take my entire flesh, but I want to save this little dove because he has taken refuge with me.' So when it comes to nobility and sacrifice they can go to any extent,

when it comes to war, and even laying down one's life for the sake of something one is convinced about it, can go to any extent. So this is the Greater Life – not a life of daily cares and worries, our little wants and little hopes, our little anxieties and fears, but a life where there is a larger movement.

On the next page, page 186, we find at the top :

*A charm and greatness locked in every hour
Awakes the joy which sleeps in all things made.
A mighty victory or a mighty fall, ...*

When Sri Aurobindo speaks in the *Essays on the Gita*, he says that when Arjuna asks 'What should I do? Should I fight or not fight?' immediately the very first answer of Sri Krishna uplifts him beyond his little thinking, his limited way of looking at little things. Immediately he is reminded of a greater plane from which he is born. Sri Aurobindo puts it very beautifully, he says that Sri Krishna gives the answer of a hero to a hero: 'Either conquer mightily, or fall nobly. Either way the gates of heaven are open to you. Either conquer and enjoy this kingdom, or die fighting a great battle. Both are worthwhile.' In this kingdom of greater life we have this kind of approach.

*A mighty victory or a mighty fall,
A throne in heaven or a pit in hell,*

It is not afraid of going down, even into the pit of hell if that be necessary.

*The dual Energy they have justified
And marked their souls with her tremendous seal:
Whatever Fate may do to them they have earned;*

Sri Aurobindo brings us into touch with these worlds, he gives us a little taste of this world, he inspires us to climb to this greater life.

Whatever Fate may do to them they have earned;

Not like little weaklings who are always afraid of what Fate may bring.

*Something they have done, something they have been, they live.
There Matter is soul's result and not its cause.
In a contrary balance to earth's truth of things*

*The gross weighs less, the subtle counts for more;
On inner values hangs the outer plan.*

p.186

Our life hangs on outer values. If somebody meets with a tragic fate, one says ‘Oh, it was very unfortunate.’ In that world, that is not the value. One may live a hundred years, two hundred years, but a worthless life: from the point of view of the greater life, it is meaningless; but an Abhimanyu, dying at the age of 16 fighting a valiant battle – falling nobly is what counts. Beings of this world feel and think like that, because that is the characteristic energy of that world. This will explain many things that appear contradictory to our eye. For example, that of all the people during the Second World War Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, looking for a great instrument, pick up Winston Churchill. If one looks at things from the pure outer point of view, he is neither a very devoutly religious man, so far as we know; he has certain habits and tendencies which many people would not regard as very virtuous, and yet he has a tremendous life-energy – and it is this ... in fact in one place Sri Aurobindo says, it is this abundant life-energy which often flows in wrong channels and people call it vice. So there are two kinds of vice – one is, there are beings born from this greater-life plane, and we spoke of the story of Hanuman who has tremendous life-energy; as a child he is always plucking people’s beard and troubling everyone, disturbing the class so that often the teachers have to tell him ‘You stay outside because others cannot study in your presence’ – because he is born with that, he is moved by the sense of largeness; he cannot be confined to a small classroom. And that would explain also many things which we don’t understand about today’s children, who are born with a larger Prana, because the touch of the Supermind is releasing a greater life inside them. Therefore, unlike their parents, our generation, which was more concerned about what job they will get and whatnot, they just live life as if they are living with the sense of the carefree laughter of the gods. They are born with this, and only after reading Sri Aurobindo we begin to understand the touch of these worlds. This is the passage that humanity is going through.

In this world and in the beings of these worlds simultaneously the walls and the boundaries are not so rigid as in our material world. When we are totally entranced in gross matter then we understand

nothing about what is happening in another person's heart and mind. In fact, we are so deeply into ignorance that even if somebody says one sentence, we understand it in a completely different way, because ego gives its own twist and meaning – a cause of much misunderstanding in the world. But let us see how the beings of this world interact with each other. We have these lines on the same page, line 489 :

*In the communion of two meeting minds
Thought looked at thought and had no need of speech;*

One understands in this world, because there is an interpenetration of substance. This is a world that is much more free, fluid; the forms of this plane are much more fluid. That is why this image of fixed forms, fixed gods, came much later. In these worlds the same gods and goddesses, or the same Titan kings, can appear in different forms, because the form here is plastic to the touch of the energy of this world.

Emotion clasped emotion in two hearts,

And that is why, when human beings are moved by some touch of these worlds, spontaneously one begins to feel, 'Yes, yes, I feel exactly as you feel.' Of course this world is also a world of Ignorance, we must understand it; but at that point of time the touch of this world generates this experience.

*They felt each other's thrill in the flesh and nerves
Or melted each in each and grew immense
As when two houses burn and fire joins fire:
Hate grappled hate and love broke in on love,
Will wrestled with will on mind's invisible ground;
Others' sensations passing through like waves
Left quivering the subtle body's frame,
Their anger rushed galloping in brute attack,
A charge of trampling hooves on shaken soil;
One felt another's grief invade the breast,
Another's joy exulting ran through the blood:
Hearts could draw close through distance, voices near
That spoke upon the shore of alien seas.*

p.186

That is why in yoga, it is bound to happen that after some time, all the energies that are locked in Matter begin to get liberated, and one passes through this zone and that is a point where one becomes acutely sensitive to everything that is happening in the environment. And often if such a person were to mingle in a crowd and feel uneasy, people might wonder and think that yoga is supposed to make you more stable, but it is making you more unstable. The reason is this, that one enters into a zone – this is a passage of course, again and again Sri Aurobindo will tell us that this is not the resting ground and one should not rest in that state. That is why it is very important to have a spiritual realism and a solid grounding even in Matter, otherwise normally we are shut in Matter's wall and it is very safe. That is why two kinds of people are not affected : those who are like sages, who have reached the transcendent heights; and those who are like stone – totally like matter, so they are not affected. But there is an intermediate range where one becomes more and more subtle, the consciousness becomes more and more refined, and as the Mother puts it, this sensitivity which develops at a stage of yoga is actually the sign of an evolution of consciousness; but then one has to pass beyond. But right now Sri Aurobindo is describing that point where

*One felt another's grief invade the breast,
Another's joy exulting ran through the blood:
Hearts could draw close through distance, voices near
That spoke upon the shore of alien seas.
There beat a throb of living interchange:
Being felt being even when afar
And consciousness replied to consciousness.*

p.187

So we expect that when this world comes ... of course this is not the New World, but this passage when much of humanity has evolved to this point ... we won't need telecommunication and mobiles; and probably this was the kind of development at one stage that was actually happening, because one could directly make a reply of consciousness to consciousness. One doesn't need to speak for half an hour to communicate something. Often speaking half an hour leads to more and more confusion – that is why in our intense state, when we speak the more we confuse, the more we misunderstand. Sri Aurobindo is

giving us a key, a master-key: if we try to understand, to feel things from this greater life-plane, things could be a little simpler.

*And consciousness replied to consciousness.
And yet ...*

There is a 'yet' –

And yet the ultimate oneness was not there.

This is still a world of Ignorance, a world of division.

*There was a separateness of soul from soul:
An inner wall of silence could be built,
An armour of conscious might protect and shield;*

So Sri Aurobindo is even telling us now the secret of how to really work out, when we are in this phase of extreme sensitivity which sometimes comes as our consciousness becomes refined, subtle, and begins to enter and receive some touch of these worlds: he says we can build an armour of silence and safety.

*An inner wall of silence could be built,
An armour of conscious might protect and shield;
The being could be closed in and solitary;
One could remain apart in self, alone.*

p.187

Now we can skip a few pages. Aswapati goes through these worlds and sees their many moods, myriad energies, countless facades ... many many forms appeared to his eyes, each claiming its admittance and entry. So he passes through. We come to page 191. line 654 :

A witness overmastered by his scene, ...

This world is captivating, and many souls can get trapped in this world. In Yoga these are known as the mid-worlds. They are dangerous worlds because their charm can be so alluring, they can manufacture almost anything. One desires to see Krishna, and Krishna is there in front of your eyes. It is so difficult – unless one has the right inner discrimination or a conscious surrender to the Divine one can easily get misled. There is a little story I heard, about someone who wanted to give talks on *The Life Divine* – it is another dangerous profession, to give talks! He asked the Mother for permission and the Mother would not reply. He waited for some

time and then suddenly he had a revelation: he saw Krishna before him and Krishna said ‘Yes, yes, of course you can!’ – or something to that effect: ‘You can go ahead and give talks.’ So he wrote to Mother, ‘I have already received Sri Krishna’s *adesh*, so I am going to give the talks.’ So the Mother wired to him: ‘It is not Krishna you have seen, but a hostile force assuming the form of Krishna.’ Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could know all this, sitting there in Pondicherry. But the person did not understand, did not get the message, and went on to give one talk, another talk, a few talks, till finally he had to keep quiet and learn all that he was speaking about. This is the kind of risk in these worlds and we have all, I am sure, encountered people, certainly I have seen quite a few, who keep having visions by the dozen from morning to evening: every possible god they have seen, and yet it does not seem to make any change at all in their life, except sometimes to puff up the vanity, because these are the worlds where Desire rules. That is why it is so necessary to purify. It is very good if for a long time one does not see the Divine because that means that the Divine has taken our consecration seriously. Otherwise one may get caught in these vital worlds without any purification and one starts seeing things and one can easily get lost. Therefore he allows this Desire; as we shall see later, it changes into an anguish and at its height it becomes a sob of suffering and yearning, as we find in the instance of some mystics like Mira. Those are the peaks of these Kingdoms of the Greater Life. And then he says, ‘Now, child-soul, you are ready to graduate into adulthood.’ But as we enter into Yoga and from the third day, the fourth day we start seeing things, we must be doubly careful, triply careful. So here Sri Aurobindo describes

*A witness overmastered by his scene,
He admired her splendid front of pomp and play
And the marvels of her rich and delicate craft, ...*

If they create a Krishna in front of you, you can’t disbelieve that it is the real Krishna because every detail is there, even the fluting can be heard, so ... These worlds can create that kind of thing.

*And thrilled to the insistence of her cry;
Impassioned he bore the sorceries of her might, ...*

One of the precautions that Sri Aurobindo recommends is ‘Do not take the *bhoga*, the enjoyment, of the experience.’ Do not start enjoying: ‘Ah, I saw this, I heard that ...’ and worst of all, start narrating to everyone. One learns it with much pain sometimes, that these are not things to be spoken of. Just wait. The rishis knew how to wait and let revelation mount upon revelation. And that is why this one word, this beautiful word, pregnant with so many meanings, comes in the Upanishads: Who sees the Atman? ‘*tam atmastham yenu pasyanti dhira*’ – ‘*dhira*’: one who knows how to wait, who is patient, persevering – who is stable – all those shades of meaning are captured in this one word; not one who is impatient and over-eager, because these worlds give that feeling. They make us want to achieve the Divine in haste, and therefore we get caught in them.

*Impassioned he bore the sorceries of her might,
Felt laid on him her abrupt mysterious will,
Her hands that knead fate in their violent grasp,
Her touch that moves, her powers that seize and drive.*

But Aswapati is not just any ordinary aspirant, so he casts his glance deep, to see what is lying at the heart of this world, and he discovers something interesting:

But this too he saw, her soul that wept within, ...

Because it tried and tried and tried, but could not recapture the Infinite: it could only create forms after forms.

*But this too he saw, her soul that wept within,
Her seekings vain that clutch at fleeing truth,
Her hopes whose sombre gaze mates with despair,
The passion that possessed her longing limbs,
The trouble and rapture of her yearning breasts,
Her mind that toils unsatisfied with its fruits,
Her heart that captures not the one Beloved.*

All else is there. We shall see that also in the Kingdoms of the Greater Mind : everything is there – all thoughts, formulas, theorems ... yet the One is missing. That is why there is so much emphasis that until one has found the One who is infinite, one should not rest. The ancient yogis always almost used it as a dictum, and a great mystic has said

that knowing Him all else can be known. The Upanishads also speak of it, and another mystic, *ekai jane sab jane, sab janat ek na hoi*: 'It is by the One that one can know the rest, the many.' In Sri Aurobindo's yoga also, in Aswapati also we see that first he has discovered the One, he has already completed that vedantic yoga, and then he is discovering all the planes of the cosmic consciousness in this book, *The Traveller of the Worlds*. These worlds have not to be explored as one ordinarily enters into the new age techniques and all kinds of prana stuff where one picks up some vital energy and plays with it. These are very dangerous things, especially for one who is going into yoga, for sometimes they can end up aggrandising the ego and instead of a demi-god one can become an instrument of the titanic will.

*Always he met a veiled and seeking Force,
An exiled goddess building mimic heavens,*

As he moved upward, each plane said 'Here is heaven' but as he went, something was always still missing. These are the kinds of heavens which Viswamitra once built for Trishanku when he could not get into the real heaven. Viswamitra had tremendous power; he said 'Don't worry, I'll build a heaven for you.' With the power of his tapasya he could build such a heaven. There are many such heavens which are annexes of the real worlds, some of them created by our own thoughts and feelings; and it is so easy to get locked there. It is only the sincerity of aspiration that can save us from all this. That is why Mother says that Sincerity is the key to the divine doors. If this is missing, if one is doing yoga only for power and joy and some kind of gifts, like becoming a yogi or a great man, then one gets into these worlds and one is very happy. One can travel all around the world, earn millions of dollars, and his name appears on big posters, but at the end of it one misses the One Beloved. Sri Aurobindo is warning us that this can be a resting place but it is not the ultimate goal.

A Sphinx whose eyes look up to a hidden Sun.

This is the catch. So if one want to expose these worlds there is one single test : one can ask, 'Have you really found the One who hides himself behind these million forms and names?' If not, the journey is not complete. This is the story of the Sphinx. Ultimately the question of the Sphinx is, 'Have you found the One? Have you found the

one Self who changes appearances? He is one thing in the morning, another in the noon, another at night. If you have found Him, fine, you can pass through my gates to the consciousness of Immortality.’ This zone one must cross, because the Sphinx guards it. If not, then the Sphinx ultimately devours and finishes you. So it is a Sphinx who looks up to eternity.

We find the same truth on page 193, line 750, where Sri Aurobindo reveals :

In her mazes of approach and of retreat

The more one enters into it, like some of those auto and taxi drivers – of course now, thankfully, things are better but sometimes it was amazing that if somebody by chance got down at the Auroville Information Centre and said, ‘I want to go to Matrimandir’ – it is walking distance; and those old-time autorikshaw fellows, if one got in he would say ‘Yes, I will take you’ and if you did not know the way he would take you all around Auroville, all around Pondicherry ... ‘It is just coming sir, it is just coming, next turn.’ Then you realise ultimately, he brings you after one hour ... of course he at least brings you, but in these worlds the goal keeps retreating, keeps retreating.

*In her mazes of approach and of retreat
To every side she draws him and repels,
But drawn too near escapes from his embrace;*

That is why Sri Aurobindo says that in this yoga the first step is to bring out the psychic: it alone has the soul-discrimination. All other parts ... if this yoga is done by the power of the mind or the vital, this is what happens. He says in one of his letters that one can luxuriate in experiences, one can have illuminations in the mind, one can luxuriate in siddhis of the vital and even have astounding remarkable siddhis in the physical, and yet if the secret soul, the inmost soul, the psychic being does not come forward, nothing genuine has been done. So that is the safety – because otherwise if one is caught in this world ...

*All ways she leads him but no way is sure.
Allured by the many-toned marvel of her chant,
Attracted by the witchcraft of her moods*

In Odysseus' travels this world is depicted through the song of the Sirens – it is so attractive, so alluring. If you hear it, you are captivated, you are helplessly drawn to it. Odysseus is very smart. He tells his sailors, 'You guys put molten wax in your ears and keep rowing. I'll keep my ears open – but you must tie me to the mast. Even if I beg and cry, give orders – don't untie me.' Sure enough as they pass the isle, he hears the song of the Sirens and he wants to go – they are so attractive and charming. He shouts and begs and cries and accuses them that they are not obeying his orders. Some feel pity and melt, but this is the place where sometimes it is good to be firm. And here we have a description:

*Allured by the many-toned marvel of her chant,
Attracted by the witchcraft of her moods
And moved by her casual touch to joy and grief,
He loses himself in her but wins her not.
A fugitive paradise smiles at him from her eyes:*

A paradise that comes and disappears, comes and disappears, because it is not held by the One.

*He dreams of her beauty made for ever his,
He dreams of his mastery her limbs shall bear,
He dreams of the magic of her breasts of bliss.
In her illumined script, her fanciful
Translation of God's pure original text, ...*

Here comes Sri Aurobindo's subtle sense of humour. It tells you, 'You want to understand God's script? I'll tell you.' It mimics even intuition. We see in the yoga of Savitri that this world can even mimic the stress of intuition.

*He thinks to read the Scripture wonderful,
Hieratic key to unknown beatitudes.
But the Word of Life is hidden in its script,
The chant of Life has lost its divine note.
Unseen, a captive in a house of sound,
The spirit lost in the splendour of a dream
Listens to a thousand-voiced illusion's ode.*

This world captures the soul! Each world is given its own way of dealing with the soul. In each world, there is nature dealing with the soul. In Matter, the soul is held captive in its obscurity, its rigidity and inertia: the soul in Matter is completely asleep. In this world, the soul is held captive to its many moods, and it is forever listening to that *thousand-voiced illusion's ode* and it must wake up. In the worlds of Mind, the soul is held captive by the many many ideas. But here Sri Aurobindo is describing for us the relation between soul and nature in this world. It is only in the highest worlds that the soul is free and Nature obeys it.

*A delicate weft of sorcery steals the heart
Or a fiery magic tints her tones and hues,
Yet they but wake a thrill of transient grace;
A vagrant march struck by the wanderer Time,
They call to a brief unsatisfied delight
Or wallow in ravishments of mind and sense,
But miss the luminous answer of the soul.*

p.193

So when one takes to Sri Aurobindo's yoga expecting marvellous miraculous experiences, but year after year one is made to do hard labour, to dig into mud so that the base can be strong – if at that time someone comes and says, 'What are you doing here? Fifteen years, what have you experienced?' you may reply 'I don't know. Somehow I just have faith in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother' ... 'Oh, come, come: next door there is a very nice path – in a few days you will get all this new creation stuff.' 'Is it so?' 'Yes, transformation is very easy' – and we are led into that and sure enough within a week we start experiencing all kinds of things, and if we pay a little more money, the greater the experience and its value. For Samadhi we just go so casually, nobody asks us to pay or anything ... of course there are gate passes and timings, but no dress-code, no nothing, you can keep your chappals just a few feet away from the Samadhi, so unassuming ... so one doesn't value it. If one has to pay a hundred dollars just to visit the Samadhi, then see how many people would really get such experiences! Sri Aurobindo is warning us, that even this kingdom of the Greater Life, charming, alluring, everything, it may come in the course of our inner journey but we should not be caught in its sorceries,

because one misses here ‘*the luminous answer of the soul.*’ And what happens, towards the end :

*A blind heart-throb that reaches joy through tears,
A yearning towards peaks for ever unreachd,
An ecstasy of unfulfilled desire
Track the last heavenward climbings of her voice.*

There are mystics who have risen through the Vital, and they are sincere, so when they go towards these heights they begin to yearn with a deep passion and sorrow. There is a true story from the life of Mira, who of course used to feel Krishna and see him as intimately as anyone, in his many moods. Once when she has been cast out, the family has disowned her and the city has disowned her ... she leaves with a little idol of Krishna. One night, as the story goes, that idol is stolen – perhaps on the very first night she slept. She laments and cries, ‘This was the only thing that I held on to and you have taken even this away?’ So Krishna says, ‘Oh, this was the only thing? Do you know me?’ She says, ‘Of course I know you.’ ‘Really?’ and then Krishna reveals to her what he is in truth. Till then she believed that she knew Krishna, and you can see in her that pathos of the vital sometimes: yearning – that is the height towards which this can climb. It is a very high seeking, but in this yoga the seeking has to come through the psychic and not through the vital. But this too is a passage. Some mystics have sought, and here we find :

*Transmuted are past suffering’s memories
Into an old sadness’s sweet escaping trail:
Turned are her tears to gems of diamond pain,
Her sorrow into a magic crown of song.* p.193-94

This is the height of this world, because after going through it, at the end one finds one has really not found the One Face hidden behind her thousand million forms, so there is a deep pathos.

*Brief are her snatches of felicity
That touch the surface, then escape or die:
A lost remembrance echoes in her depths,
A deathless longing is hers, a veiled self’s call;
A prisoner in the mortal’s limiting world, ...*

Those who are born from this world into ours always feel a sense of strangeness, a sense of alien-ness, a sense of limitation; and the more one begins to live in it one feels more and more limited and tries to seek something greater.

*A spirit wounded by life sobs in her breast;
A cherished suffering is her deepest cry.
A wanderer on forlorn despairing routes,
Along the roads of sound a frustrate voice
Forsaken cries to a forgotten bliss.*

p.194

This is its height and culminating point. And yet Sri Aurobindo tells us the significance of this world: this world has stood behind everything, because its joy sustains even the suffering, because there is ultimately even a joy in that. In this world even suffering carries within itself an undercurrent of joy, and this makes us understand many things about life. This world is not to be belittled. We have a few marvellous lines below, starting at line 770 :

*Yet is it joy to live and to create
And joy to love and labour though all fails,
And joy to seek though all we find deceives
And all on which we lean betrays our trust;*

In this world there is only a seeking, but not the finding – and yet there is a joy in the seeking itself.

*Yet something in its depths was worth the pain,
A passionate memory haunts with ecstasy's fire.
Even grief has joy hidden beneath its roots:
For nothing is truly vain the One has made:
In our defeated hearts God's strength survives
And victory's star still lights our desperate road;
Our death is made a passage to new worlds.
This to Life's music gives its anthem swell.
To all she lends the glory of her voice;
Heaven's raptures whisper to her heart and pass,
Earth's transient yearnings cry from her lips and fade.
Alone the God-given hymn escapes her art
That came with her from her spiritual home ...*

p.194

So this is what yearns in the depths of this world, and this is the safety. Ultimately, when we have passed through this world and seen its many moods, this is the hope: that there is within it something that survives. Look how in the lower worlds, when Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Little Life, at the end he gives us hope; again here, as he comes to the close of the Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life, a world which can be terribly misleading and deceiving, yet at the end of it he gives the hope – because even here God inhabits – nothing is devoid of Him.

So lower down on page 195 the new movement starts :

Here is the gap, here stops or sinks life's force;

This starts with many many moods, intensity, rapture, joy, power – after all its play, at the end it leaves a yearning and a suffering and a sob of missing the One. This is the essence of this world.

This deficit paupers the magician's skill:

It cannot take us beyond it.

This want makes all the rest seem thin and bare.

A half-sight draws the horizon of her acts:

Her depths remember what she came to do,

But the mind has forgotten or the heart mistakes:

In Nature's endless lines is lost the God.

p. 195

It can give all powers and everything, yet something is missed out; and therefore, on page 197, Aswapati has seen its truth :

Out of her daedal lines he sought escape;

He has seen the maze, this complex world full of its charm and beauty and danger –

But neither gate of horn nor ivory

He found nor postern of spiritual sight,

That is why beings who are caught in this world, never understand. Any amount of telling doesn't work. This world is so misleading, as Sri Aurobindo would tell us in the yoga of Savitri, that it is only through Death that can one escape from this world ... unless of course one has the psychic discrimination, and above all trusts the Grace and

the Grace walks by one's side. But if we try to do yoga by our own effort this can be one of the issues, very often.

There was no issue from that dreamlike space.

This is for those who want to do yoga by their own effort and do not believe in either Grace or Guru or Master, who believe 'Of course we can do everything, what is there? This is material and that is spiritual and we know it all. We now have a book and we can do it.' Well, books will lead us, but here we are misled in ways that books cannot help: it can mimic everything.

*Our being must move eternally through Time;
Death helps us not, vain is the hope to cease;
A secret Will compels us to endure.
Our life's repose is in the Infinite;
It cannot end, its end is Life supreme.
Death is a passage, not the goal of our walk:*

p.197

And we shall end with some lines on page 199 where all this entire movement is summarised very beautifully. The whole seeking of Life is for the One, but so long as life labours in ignorance, so long as it has not received the redeeming touch of Grace, its seeking cannot reach, and all the joys at the end cannot sum up and capture that Delight. In fact the more it tries to capture ... elsewhere there are lines in this very canto ... the more it held, the more it escaped. It tries to possess that One Delight, but it cannot, because the only way one can really possess It is by allowing it to possess Itself. In this world, one has seeking but not the finding, many joys but not the One Delight, many charms but not the one Face one loves – and therefore at the end there is a sob, a yearning, and in the depths of the yearning a hope that He is there and one day He will redeem us. The beings and denizens of this world cry like a chained divinity, hoping for their release.

So on page 199, we have these lines, starting from line 956 :

*As yearns an obscure moth to blazing Light.
Our life is a march to a victory never won.*

Even in this Greater Life one doesn't find, even with its greater powers and force, its energies; they can give all the siddhis that we seek, make the big small, the small big, lighter heavy and heavy light, or in inner

value ‘*the subtle counts for more.*’ And yet, ‘*Our life is a march to a victory never won.*’

*This wave of being longing for delight,
This eager turmoil of unsatisfied strengths,
These long far files of forward-striving hopes
Lift worshipping eyes to the blue Void called heaven ...*

For this world ultimately ends in a blue Void : all the forms it has created, are not the form of the *paramdrishtva*: they are still only forms that come and flee before our eyes.

Looking for the golden Hand that never came,

This is the deep pathos of life; in fact all our suffering, in its depth, is an anguish for this. And even a greater life cannot fulfil this need. We often think in this little life, that this anguish will cease if a greater life comes down, and that there are always those who will give it to us; but even this cannot fulfil.

*Looking for the golden Hand that never came,
The advent for which all creation waits,
The beautiful visage of Eternity
That shall appear upon the roads of Time.
Yet still to ourselves we say rekindling faith, ...*

If yoga is done under the stress of the higher vital, this greater life-world, we end up in this situation, sometimes in utter despair. That is why when somebody asked the Mother ‘Would you tell us something about yoga?’ she replies, ‘What do you want the yoga for?’ It is so small, yet so deep: to gain power, to help humanity? She says that none of these motives is sufficient to make you ready for the path. So what is the readiness? Do you want yoga for the sake of the Divine? – the Divine for the sake of the Divine, not for any of these kick-backs. When the kick-backs become the main issue then there is a problem. ‘Oh, if I get the Divine then I’ll become a great yogi, I shall become a superman, I shall do extraordinary things.’ Then we land in a trap of this world. Spiritual ambition is worse than ordinary ambition. Ordinary ambition will at the utmost gives us a crash feeling after we retire, and we can reconcile ourselves by going to a retired life ashrama, where we can live our life in peace,

seeking something else which we didn't find in this life. Spiritual ambition lands up in this, and there we end up in a terrible mess. And yet something in us, the strength of God, survives as faith, and what does it say:

*“Oh, surely one day he shall come to our cry,
One day he shall create our life anew
And utter the magic formula of peace
And bring perfection to the scheme of things ...*

This is the throb and anguish of that world, to call for that, and this is what we must ultimately receive from this world, and pass on – this faith that He is there and that He will bring perfection to the scheme of things.

*One day he shall descend to life and earth,
Leaving the secrecy of the eternal doors,
Into a world that cries to him for help,
And bring the truth that sets the spirit free,
The joy that is the baptism of the soul, ...*

Not the joy dependent on any external charm, any external form, any experience outside, but a joy that is natural, *shantim sukham*, a joy one finds by living in the Self, *atmarati*, the joy which is the very nature of the Self, ‘*the joy that is the baptism of the soul*,’ – it doesn't have to seek it in this or that experience.

The strength that is the outstretched arm of Love.

Not love that is weak, incapable, not love that is only sweetness, but love that is strong to rescue us out of the bonds of ignorance – that Love one does not find in this world, that Love can only come from the heights. The problem is that we don't recognise that Love, because when it pulls us out of all this maze, we cry ‘How cruel you are! What a torturing hand is this, which is taking away from me all that I cherish and desire.’ This world of Greater Life, on the contrary, whatever we cherish and desire it presents to us, and we like this kind of God. We like a God who is more like a being of the Greater Life-world, who fulfils our desire, and everything that we desire he presents to us. And if he can present to us quickly, from house to wealth to health, we like that God; but not so much

that ‘*outstretched arm of Love*’ that is strong and pulls us out of Ignorance, sometimes with firmness taking away all that we cherish and hope for and desire – we don’t like that God. Yet something in us cries for that:

One day he shall lift his beauty’s dreadful veil,

He has deliberately worn this dreadful veil, this little life, this darkness, this obscurity, or even sometimes a beautiful veil; but all this is because of a great purpose that it serves. One day he will lift it.

*One day he shall lift his beauty’s dreadful veil,
Impose delight on the world’s beating heart
And bare his secret body of light and bliss.”
But now we strain to reach an unknown goal:
There is no end of seeking and of birth,
There is no end of dying and return;
The life that wins its aim asks greater aims,
The life that fails and dies must live again;*

It is there in life, because there is a joy in everything and this cannot cease until it has found the One. At the end of all these worlds, Sri Aurobindo will reveal to us the hope, he rekindles faith and hope and shows us the meaning and purpose of the journey.

*Till it has found itself it cannot cease.
All must be done for which life and death were made.*

p. 200

We will stop here and in February we will continue; with Mother holding us in Her arms of Love and Strength we will descend into the Night.

The English of Savitri

by *Shraddhavan*

Introduction

For several years, a group of 20-25 people have been gathering regularly every week at Savitri Bhavan to study ‘The English of *Savitri*’. In May 2009 we had the joy of completing the course, as we reached the end of the poem. After a break, we made a new start, from the beginning, on Thursday August 6. Now we propose to serialise the content of these classes in *Invocation*, since it is felt that they may be of interest to many of our readers.

The aim of this course has been to help people whose mother-tongue is not English, but who have an aspiration to read *Savitri* with more understanding, and to enter more deeply into its atmosphere. As a side-effect, there is the hope of improving their knowledge of the English language. The Mother has mentioned :

*For the opening of the psychic, for the growth of
consciousness and even for the improvement of English it
is good to read one or two pages of Savitri each day.*

(in conversation with Norman Dowsett)

So those who attend this course are encouraged to do homework: to read a little from *Savitri* every day, to revise what we have read and discovered in the class – the meanings of individual words and new phrases – and to aspire for the mantric power of *Savitri* to open the deep heart centre and widen the consciousness.

Before embarking on the first passage of the poem, let us pause a moment to think about its title : The full title of Sri Aurobindo’s poem is : *Savitri – a legend and a symbol*.

A legend means a traditional tale, a story handed down over generations; it may relate to something that really happened, but over the course of time it has become a well-known story. Sri Aurobindo took the legend of Satyavan and Savitri the way it is told in the

Mahabharata by Vyasa in about 300 verses. In the Mahabharata, this story is told to the Pandavas when they are in exile in the forest. During their wanderings they meet a Rishi called Markandeya. Yudhisthira, the eldest of the five Pandava brothers, asks him, “Has there ever been any woman who has had to face such difficulties as our Draupadi?” In answer, Markandeya tells the story of Savitri and says that just as her husband Satyavan was saved from Death through the virtue of Savitri, in the same way the virtue and strength of Draupadi is going to carry the five brothers through all their difficulties.

Once we had a talk here from the famous scholar and author, Professor Manoj Das – he gave the title ‘The Mythological Background of Savitri’ – in which he mentioned that this Rishi Markandeya himself is one of the few people mentioned in Indian tradition as having conquered death, so it is interesting that he is the one who tells this story in the Mahabharata. In the legend this conquest is not a general conquest of death for everybody for all time. It is a special case of a young man being saved from a premature death by the courage and steadfastness and virtue of his wife.

The legend of Savitri and Satyavan is familiar to most people in India, either in the form it is told in the Mahabharata by Vyasa, or in traditional versions based on that account. Sri Aurobindo has seen in this well-known tale a significant symbol. A symbol is a simple representation of something very much more complex. For example we may say that fire, even in the form of a candle flame or the glowing point on the end of an incense stick, can be a symbol of Aspiration – of our will for a higher and purer state. That is why our Auroville bonfires are so important to us, as a symbol of our collective aim and intention. When we see our Auroville symbol, or Mother’s symbol, or Sri Aurobindo’s symbol, these simple forms remind us of or evoke for us all that lies behind them. In the legend of Satyavan and Savitri Sri Aurobindo recognised a deep symbolic meaning, related to the psychological symbolism which he discovered in the Vedas. He chose to take this traditional tale as the vehicle of his poetic masterwork, which became what the Mother has called “The supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision”. That is why Savitri Bhavan exists – not so much because of the tale told in the Mahabharata, but because of what the Mother has told us about the tremendous importance of Sri Aurobindo’s treatment of

it as a symbolic myth. But, as he makes clear in the title itself, in the poem both the elements are there: the legend aspect, and the symbol aspect. Let us remind ourselves of what Sri Aurobindo has said about this in his **Author's Note** to the poem :

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death.

‘Conjugal love’ means the love between husband and wife.

But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle.

Now Sri Aurobindo will explain to us some of those ‘features of the human tale’ and their symbolic meanings. First, Satyavan : his name means ‘The one who possesses or carries the Truth – *satya*’.

Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance;

What is that part in us which carries the Truth? It is our soul. Within each of us is a divine part that is in touch with the Truth and is always trying to guide us towards it. But when that soul comes down into the material world it cannot help coming into the grip of death – whatever is born must die – and ignorance : it is not just that the baby must learn everything as he grows up. In India, ‘Ignorance’ has always meant essentially not knowing who and what we really are – the forgetfulness of the divine Truth which is the consequence of living in a world that has emerged from Inconscience, from the unconsciousness of Matter. Satyavan has to die, although the soul is really immortal, because here in the material world it is in the grip of death and ignorance.

Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save;

What are the associations of this name ‘Savitri’? There are two: one is with the wife of Brahma – the Puranic god who embodies the creative aspect of the Divine. The wife of a god is always his Shakti, the dynamic aspect of his power. Brahma has two wives, or perhaps they are two names for the same power, Their names are Gayatri and Savitri. Sri Aurobindo says that Savitri is the Divine Word – the Divine Creative Word of command that brings the manifestation into existence. The other association of her name is with one of the names of the Sun. The Sun is the source of everything on earth, all energies come to us from the Sun. So it is an appropriate symbol for the fullness of the Divine Truth, the Divine Consciousness and Power and Energy, the Divine Presence. In India, there are many different names for different aspects of the Sun – the brilliant one, the fosterer, etc., and for the Sun at different times of the day. Savitri’s name refers to the Sun before it has risen above the horizon in the morning. Savitri as the daughter of the Sun is the bringer of new light, new illumination, new possibilities of consciousness and power, a new creation. She is the goddess of the supreme Truth, who takes birth in the world in a human form in order to save – to save the soul of the world called Satyavan.

Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father,
is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of
spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the
mortal to the immortal planes;

In the legend, the father of Savitri is a king called Aswapati : it means the Lord (*pati*), of the Horse (*aswa*). In the symbolism of the Vedas, the Horse always represents Energy, especially our life-energies. All of us have horses, more or less powerful horses; but we are not always in control of them, often our horses run away with us. But this king is in full control of all his energies, he concentrates them, holds them together and makes them carry him on a journey of spiritual endeavour, up from the normal human level to the planes of higher consciousness and power, the immortal planes. We see in the poem how he is able to rise from one plane to another until at last he reaches the Supreme Divine Mother and begs her to incarnate on earth, in order to make things progress

more quickly and truly here – and she accepts to take birth as his daughter, Savitri.

Then Sri Aurobindo speaks about the father of Satyavan, Dyumatsena. ‘Dyuman’ means ‘The Shining One; ‘*sena*’ means an army; a ‘host’ is an army. Satyavan’s father is also a king – but he has been driven out of his kingdom because he has lost his sight, he has become blind. He is living in the forest with his wife and his son Satyavan. That is where Savitri meets Satyavan, in the forest.

Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory.

Our mind, as it should be, in its divine form, is a Shining Lord commanding many powerful warriors of Light. But as the soul in the material world is in the grip of Ignorance and Death, so the mind here is dependent on a physical brain, the physical senses, and it has become blind, it has lost its power of direct vision of the truth, of things as they really are; and because it has lost its vision, it has lost its power to rule. As a result of Savitri’s work, Dyumatsena regains his sight, and his kingdom. At the end of the poem we see them all leaving the forest to return to rule a great kingdom and start a new rule of Truth in the human world. This is the key to the main symbolism behind the legend. Then Sri Aurobindo says :

Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life.

Here Sri Aurobindo takes care to point out that *Savitri* is not just an allegory. An allegory is a kind of poem where qualities, such as Love or Courage, Greed or Anger, are personified, and represented as

characters in a story. One has to be a very fine poet to be able make a story like that really interesting. There are some famous poems like that, but the really good ones are very few and far between. Allegories are often somehow unsatisfactory. Sri Aurobindo says that the people in his poem are not allegorical figures, these are real beings, representing living and conscious Forces. And this means that we can enter into concrete contact with them. We are even carrying them in ourselves: within each of us is a soul, a Satyavan, carrying the truth of being within itself, but here fallen into the grip of Ignorance and Death. All of us can call for help to Savitri, and she comes to save us. Within each of us is the possibility of controlling our life energies and turning them towards a spiritual effort that prepares the way for her to come and act in us and in the world. In all of us there is a power of Mind that has fallen blind and lost its power of right action – but through the compassion and grace of Savitri, we can regain that power of vision and mastery over the conditions of life. And these Powers, as he says, take human forms. In the story of *Savitri* we see Sri Aurobindo as King Aswapati, and we see our beloved Mother in Savitri. So :

... they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life.

We are mortal – it means, we have to die. That is a sign of our limitation and imperfection. These powers show us the way to move from our present mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life – and ultimately to a divine life on earth. The Vedic Rishis spoke of ‘The Human Journey’’: as they saw it, we are all meant to progress as far as we can in each life, on that journey towards a divine consciousness and an immortal life. They did not think of an everlasting life in a single material body. They meant that we can reach the consciousness of our innate immortality, and carry that awareness from birth to birth. But Sri Aurobindo has told us, and he makes it very clear in *Savitri* , that the ultimate goal is a divine life on earth – the possibility of a divine consciousness, a divine individuality, living in a material body in the material world, but free of all the limitations and imperfections that cause us so much anguish and suffering at present.

We can see that understanding something of this symbolism has given a very deep meaning to this legend, this simple traditional story that is almost a fairytale, about a Prince and a Princess meeting and falling in love, and how the Princess is able to save her husband from a premature death. Now we begin to understand why Sri Aurobindo chose this particular legend as the framework, the vehicle for what the Mother says is ‘the supreme revelation of his vision.’ He has written all his other books to help us understand different aspects of the wonderful knowledge he wanted to share with us, but Mother has said that all those other writings of his are the preparation – *Savitri* is the message. That statement of hers gives this book a very special significance and value for us, and that is why we love to read it even though we find it difficult to understand. And we consider that it is ‘Mantra’. The Mother has said that the lines of *Savitri* are mantras. They have the power to communicate the consciousness from which they have come.

We have been told that in the old tradition, if you wanted to study a mantra, there were four stages : the first stage was to get the sound right, because in mantra the sound-vibration carries the higher consciousness and forms a sound-body of the truth that is being expressed. So the correct way to pronounce the Vedic mantras has been handed down unchanged for thousands and thousands of years because it was felt so important to preserve the right rhythm, the correct pronunciation, the right sound-vibrations of each one.

Then the second step was to understand as clearly as possible what each of the words mean, and the relationships between them, so as to get the best possible mental understanding of the meaning of each verse.

The third step is to concentrate the mind on the words and their meaning, until you get some kind of explosion of mental understanding – you feel that you know what these words mean.

The fourth step is to continue to concentrate on the words and sounds and their meaning, until your mind becomes silent. Then the silent concentrated mind may be blessed to receive a revelation of the origin of the mantra, which is beyond words and thoughts and comes as a living experience.

Here in Savitri Bhavan when we study together, we are focussing on the first two of these four steps. First, we try to get the sound as correct as we can. Unfortunately no recording of Sri Aurobindo's voice exists, we don't know exactly how he pronounced certain words; but he has written quite a lot about how his poetry works. He based it on the natural rhythms of English speech. If we stick close to those, we shall be somewhere near the way this poetry is meant to be read. And we try to follow the Mother's advice to Champaklal, to Nirodbaran and to Huta – to read slowly and clearly, with as much consciousness as possible.

Then we try to understand the meaning of the words: what Sri Aurobindo is saying here; how the words in the sentence are linked together, and how the sentences are linked together, what is the meaning of any difficult words, what are the images he is using. We have noticed that when we go over the lines with attention again and again, we gain more understanding of the most literal meaning of the lines, because the surface meaning of the lines and passages is linked to their context, their place in the movement of the whole poem. (At present, in our Sunday *Savitri* Study Circle we are now in our sixth reading of the whole poem, and we are amazed how much more we understand now than we did when we first started, from 1994 onwards.) In this class our aim is to try and read as correctly as we can, and to try to gain at least a surface understanding of what the words mean, and the structure of each sentence. Then everyone can do their own homework, read and re-read until some deeper understanding of the passage comes. But we know that even without much understanding, the mantric vibration of the words and lines can touch us deeply, and sometimes wake up an inner knowledge or experience in a quite unexpected way – this is the action of *Savitri's* atmosphere, *Savitri's* grace.

After this introduction, and with the key given to us by Sri Aurobindo held in our minds, we can move to the first book of the poem, **The Book of Beginnings**. There are twelve books making up the entire poem, and the first two cantos of the first book form, I always feel, a kind of overture to all the rest of the great symphony that is *Savitri*.

The first canto is entitled **The Symbol Dawn**. This canto covers 10 pages and has two sections. The first section describes the Dawn – the beginning of a day; but as we shall see, it is not a simple narrative account of a sunrise: rather, the approach of the new light is shown as the symbol of a psychological process. The second section introduces us to the heroine of the poem, Savitri, as she wakes up on this very special day – the day when, as she alone knows, and as we are told in the last line of the canto, her husband Satyavan must die.

People who have studied the chronology of Sri Aurobindo's composition of his poem tell us that the first section of Book One, Canto One is the one part that he revised more than any other. I think that over 50 manuscript versions of this passage are kept by the Sri Aurobindo Archives in the Ashram. And many people find it amongst the most mysterious and difficult sections of the poem to understand. Nowhere in *Savitri* is Sri Aurobindo's use of language more powerful, complex and original than in the first part of the first Canto of Book One. In this overture to the mighty symphony of his epic, he fuses multiple layers of meaning – literal, psychological, occult and spiritual – in a single flow of incomparable music.

Today in our first study session we shall try to look at just the first page, from line 1 to line 34. When we have reached the end of the first section, we shall be in a better position, I hope, to understand why Sri Aurobindo calls this first canto **The Symbol Dawn**.

The poem begins :

It was the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge.
Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abysm of the unbodied Infinite;
A fathomless zero occupied the world.

There are some difficult words in the second and third sentences. We shall look at them in a moment. First let us have a look at that first sentence – just one line :

It was the hour before the Gods awake.

A line with such a powerful rhythm – almost like a bell tolling, a clock or a gong striking resonantly – what a wonderful opening to this wonderful poem! Here there are no difficult words – all of them must be familiar to us. But still the line is so mysterious – what does it mean? Amal Kiran – Sri Aurobindo’s poet disciple who was for 13 years in the 1930s and early 40s the only person to whom Sri Aurobindo was revealing parts of his poem and allowing him to answer questions, giving him wonderful clarifications which now help us so much in understanding *Savitri* – has written about this line in a letter. We have published his remarks in our journal *Invocation*, in issue no. 6, on page 24 :

It was the hour before the Gods awake

Why does Sri Aurobindo not write “awoke”? The reason is that he is pointing not to an event which happened once but to one that constantly and repeatedly happens. ... What Sri Aurobindo posits in this line is a religio-mythic concept that has been part of India’s temple-life for millennia: the daily awakening of the Gods.

The Gods are the Powers that carry on the harmonious functions by which the universe moves on its progressive path. According to an old belief, based on a subtle knowledge of the antagonism between the Lords of Falsehood and the Lords of Truth, the period of the night interrupts the work of the Truth-Lords by its obscuration of sight and by its pulling down of the consciousness into sleep. Each day with the onset of darkness the Gods are stopped in their functions by the Demons: the Gods pass into an oblivious slumber. Each day with the advent of light they emerge into activity and continue their progress-creating career. Traditionally the moment of their awaking, termed “Brahma-muhurta”, is 4 am. Every temple in India rings its bells and clangs its

cymbals at 4 am to stir the deities no less than the devotees into action. The “hour” therefore which Savitri depicts at its start may be taken, if we are to be literal, as 3 – 4 am. The termination of this hour [the awakening of the Gods], is “the divine Event” mentioned in the second line....

There is each night a small temporary Inconscience, a passing snatch of the Great Darkness that is the divinely ordained womb of our cosmos. In this snatch we can glimpse the movement by which the Darkness grew less and less impenetrable and passed into what we may call Dimness awaiting Illumination: the phenomenon which Sri Aurobindo tersely catches in the phrase about the Inconscient being teased to wake Ignorance. The symbolisation consists in each night being the primeval Night itself in local transient miniature.

(The Sun and the Rainbow, Hyderabad, 1981 p. 147-151)

The difference in the tenses between the two halves of the line, ‘It was the hour’ and ‘before the Gods awake’, indicates that the poet is telling us about a particular moment in a cyclic process that is repeated over and over again. In a sense, the powers of light awake every day; and Sri Aurobindo starts his poem in that darkest hour that comes just before the dawn, as an English proverb reminds us.

What comes next?

Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence’ marge.

Something or someone is lying ‘Across the path of the divine Event. Amal Kiran explained to us that this divine Event, this momentous happening, is the awakening of the Gods – the cosmic powers of light and progress. What or who is lying there? ‘The huge foreboding mind of Night’ ‘Foreboding’ means a sense that something bad is going to happen. ‘Fore’ is familiar to us in the word ‘before’. Someone who is ‘to the fore’ is way up in front, far ahead, a leader. ‘Foresight’ is the capacity to see ahead and plan wisely for the future. The second part of the word occurs in the phrase ‘this bodes no good’, meaning

that there are signs or omens that things may go wrong or become difficult.

I have often mentioned that one of the wonderful features of the English language, which makes it very flexible for poets to use, is that in poetry, any word can be used as any 'part of speech', in any function. An outstanding example of this flexibility is a line of Shakespeare from his play *Richard III*, in which one of the characters says "But uncle ...", and his uncle (the King) responds "But me no buts and uncle me no uncles". If we think in terms of 'Parts of Speech' – the functions of words – the word 'but' is classified as a conjunction – a linking word which can be used to connect two parts of a sentence : 'We wanted to go on a picnic, but it rained – we couldn't go.' But here, in this wonderful line, the humble conjunction is used once as a verb, in the imperative, and then as a noun, in the plural; similarly the noun 'uncle' is used first as a verb, and then as a plural noun. Very vividly the speaker conveys 'Don't come saying 'But uncle' to me – I am the king and I don't want to hear those two words from anyone'. In *Savitri* we shall find many instances where Sri Aurobindo makes full use of this freedom allowed to the poet by the English language. Here 'foreboding', which is often a noun, is used as an adjective describing the mind of Night – the subject of this sentence. Night is in her temple, lying stretched out, unmoving, 'upon Silence marge' – 'marge' is a form of 'margin' – an edge or border. But Night is not asleep; she is conscious, and she is foreboding ... she is feeling that something bad – bad for her – is approaching: the divine Event, the coming of the Dawn and the Day, with all its Light and movement, which will mean the end of her reign. And just as the Dawn which is approaching is a Symbol Dawn, so too this is no ordinary night, caused by the turning of the Earth away from the Sun – this is a Symbol Night :

Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abyss of the unbodied Infinite;
A fathomless zero occupied the world.

'Her eyeless muse' – 'muse' can be a verb: 'to muse' means to think deeply, to meditate; here it is a noun, meaning a state of dreamy contemplation. This power of Night has a mind, but it is not using

any power of vision, it is eyeless – yet it has a foreboding that some dreadful change is approaching. This state is opaque, impenetrable: opaque means that we cannot see through it, it is not transparent, light cannot pass through it because it is impenetrable, nothing can penetrate into it; impenetrable also means that we cannot understand it. That eyeless muse of the mind of Night is a dark, sombre symbol, which makes us almost feel ‘The abyss of the unbodied Infinite’ – the infinite unmanifest, like a deep dark limitless ocean. ‘Abyss’ – like ‘abyss’ this word means a very deep place, so deep that it cannot be measured, and is sometimes used for the deepest part of the ocean. In this hour before the dawn, it feels as if the whole world has been invaded, occupied by ‘a fathomless zero’. In a physical sense a fathom is the unit used to measure how deep the sea is. Shakespeare has a song ‘Full fathom five my father lies’ – the prince believes his father has been drowned and is lying at the bottom of the sea. When we try to fathom something – as we are doing now – we try to measure its depths, get to the bottom of it, understand it. But if it is unfathomable or fathomless, we cannot measure it, it is beyond our grasp. Such a deep mysterious nothingness, emptiness, occupied the whole world at that dark hour.

In her sketch for the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings, the Mother has imaged this moment as an eye – the consciousness of Night, not entirely closed, not asleep, but absorbed in its foreboding muse, dreading and resisting the coming of the light and the awakening of the gods.

In the following lines, Sri Aurobindo tells us more about this resisting dark consciousness :

A power of fallen boundless self awake
Between the first and the last Nothingness,
Recalling the tenebrous womb from which it came,
Turned from the insoluble mystery of birth
And the tardy process of mortality
And longed to reach its end in vacant Nought.

The Mother has explained these lines like this :

Even in the darkest Unconsciousness, there was something like the remembrance of the Divine Origin, and it had an urge to wake up to existence. But all the habit of the

Inconscient was so strong that it had a natural tendency to go back to Nothingness. ... This is like the first attempt of waking up in the Nothingness by something that was a faint expression of consciousness – but “Recalling”, as Sri Autobindo says, “the tenebrous womb from which it came” this had a tendency of going back to Unconsciousness. It is like the origin of Death.

(About Savitri Part One)

This ‘power of fallen boundless self’ is the Mind of Night – a divine power, but cut off from its origin by a fall into unconsciousness. It has emerged from the total Inconscient, ‘the tenebrous womb from which it came’. Tenebrous means dark, full of shadows. The power remembers that darkness of unconsciousness from which it has come, and like many of us when first waking up in the morning, it wants to go back into that state, to go back to sleep. Life and the ongoing slow cycle of emerging into consciousness through birth and death and rebirth, is too difficult for it – an insoluble mystery. It longs to come to an end, to fall asleep again forever in total unconsciousness, Asat, Non-Being, ‘vacant Nought’.

We could say that the struggle between these two powers ... the dark foreboding mind of Night which longs for everything to dissolve again into nothingness and emptiness, and the power of the Dawn, Savitri, the bringer of new Light, and the eventual triumph of the higher light that can transform even that mind of Night ... is the deep underlying theme of the whole of this marvelous poem, which begins with the huge foreboding mind of Night resisting the coming of the divine Event, the adventure of Consciousness and Joy, and which ends with Night transformed, as we read in the last lines of the poem :

Lost in the halo of her musing brows
Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign.
She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn.

p. 724

Let us see how the opening passage continues :

As in a dark beginning of all things,
A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown
Repeating for ever the unconscious act,
Prolonging for ever the unseeing will,
Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.

Sri Aurobindo says that the darkness before the dawn which he is describing is something like the darkness of the very beginning of our material universe, when the vast inconscient emptiness was a 'mute featureless semblance of the Unknown'. 'Mute' means silent, dumb, with no voice or means of expression. It is also 'featureless' – it has no features or signs to express what it is or what it means; it is a semblance, an appearance or likeness of the Unknown, even the Unknowable. That mute featureless semblance of the Unknown reminds us of a passage from *The Life Divine* :

The Inconscience is an inverse reproduction of the supreme superconscience: it has the same absoluteness of being and automatic action, but in a vast involved trance; it is Being lost in itself, plunged in its own abyss of infinity. Instead of a luminous absorption in self-existence there is a tenebrous involution in it, the darkness veiled within darkness of the Rig Veda, *tamasit tamasa gudham*, which makes it look like Non-Existence; instead of a luminous inherent self-awareness there is a consciousness plunged into an abyss of self-oblivion, inherent in being but not awake in being. Yet is this involved consciousness still a concealed knowledge by identity; it carries in it the awareness of all the truths of existence hidden in its dark infinite and, when it acts and creates,— but it acts first as Energy and not as Consciousness,— everything is arranged with the precision and perfection of an intrinsic knowledge. In all material things reside a mute and involved Real-Idea, a substantial and self-effective intuition, an eyeless exact perception, an automatic intelligence working out its unexpressed and unthought conceptions, a blindly seeing sureness of sight, a dumb infallible sureness of suppressed feeling coated in

insensibility, which effectuate all that has to be effected. All this state and action of the Inconscient corresponds very evidently with the same state and action of the pure Superconscience, but translated into terms of self-darkness in place of the original self-light.

The Life Divine, SABCL Volume 18-19 p. 550

What is the Inconscience? Sri Aurobindo tells us that it is a projection of the supreme superconscience: all the qualities that are in the superconscience – infinite and absolute Being, Conscious-Force and Bliss – are there in the Inconscience, but in darkness, not in light. Our universe starts from that ‘darkness veiled within darkness’.

Within this dark beginning there is a repetitive action, an unconscious act, a cyclic action; that semblance of the Unknown is prolonging, keeping going a will: an involved, unseeing, unconscious will. That dark semblance of the Unknown is cradling, holding in itself, the way a Mother holds a child in her arms and rocks it, ‘the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force’: the Force of Nature that gives rise to the material universe is as if asleep, drowsing, cradled in the arms of that mute featureless semblance of the Unknown which has unconsciously willed the manifestation. But even the sleep, the slumber, of material Nature is creative: it has set all the myriad suns alight, and in its ever-circling movement we ourselves are carried along, our lives, on our little globe in a tiny corner of that vast movement. It is a whirl – a circular movement – and Sri Aurobindo uses the word ‘sommambulist’. A somnambulist is a person who walks in their sleep. It is a strange thing – when a person is in that state, their waking mind is asleep, but there is some consciousness within them that tells them exactly where to go. We are told that it is very dangerous to wake up someone who is sleep-walking – if we bring them back to their waking mind and cut the contact with the consciousness that is guiding them, they may fall and hurt themselves. In that unconscious somnambulist whirl of the material universe, there is involved a total knowledge that keeps everything in its place, a much deeper wiser consciousness than our limited mental awareness. Sri Aurobindo says that it acts at first as Energy, not as Consciousness. And that tremendous Force of Nature is cradled in the arms of a vast dark Mother, that mute featureless semblance of the Unknown who is holding it, protecting it, nourishing it.

Athwart the vain enormous trance of Space,
Its formless stupor without mind or life,
A shadow spinning through a soulless Void,
Thrown back once more into unthinking dreams,
Earth wheeled abandoned in the hollow gulfs
Forgetful of her spirit and her fate.

This first word ‘Athwart’ is a bit unusual – it is used by sailors: it means ‘sidewise’, or ‘across’; but it also has the suggestion of ‘awkwardly’, ‘at the wrong angle’, ‘not as it should be’. The earth is spinning like a shadow through Space, which is as if an enormous trance, something that is useless, without purpose, in a stupor, a stunned sleepy state without any form or life or mind, a soulless emptiness. Through these hollow gulfs, these empty spaces, Earth wheels round and round, she is in a state of ‘unthinking dreams’, ‘forgetful of her spirit and her fate’ in a state of unconsciousness. Sri Aurobindo says that the Earth is ‘thrown back once more’ into this state, and it is as if she has been abandoned. This reminds us that the process is cyclic – this state happens when the gods are sleeping, when there are no conscious powers of light to take care of the Earth in her course. There is no sense of any higher power taking care of her, it is as if she has been abandoned, forsaken :

The impassive skies were neutral, empty, still.

‘Impassive’ means ‘unresponsive’, ‘showing no reaction’. The skies are empty, they are still, unmoving, because the gods are sleeping.

About this whole passage, Sri Aurobindo says in one of his letters to Amal Kiran :

I am selecting certain ideas and impressions to form a symbol of a partial and temporary darkness of the soul and Nature, which seems to a temporary feeling of that which is caught in the Night as if it were universal and eternal. One who is lost in that Night does not think of the other half of the earth as full of light; to him all is Night and the earth a forsaken wanderer in an enduring darkness.

Sri Aurobindo is describing the darkness before dawn on a particular day – the day when Satyavan must die. But at the same time he is describing that darkness as a symbol and an evocation of all the other forms of darkness that we can experience – in mind, heart, soul, spirit; and also of the darkness that can overtake whole periods of history or the collective life of humanity. If we were making a film of *Savitri* – sometimes we can see the succession of Sri Aurobindo's images as a kind of film before our inner eye – it would have to start in total darkness. We have still almost a page to read before the first faint pre-dawn light appears. But the divine Event, the coming of the Dawn, is on its way in the slow unfolding of Time. That is heralded in the next line :

Then something in the inscrutable darkness stirred;

In that inscrutable, unreadable, impenetrable darkness a change comes, something moves. It is just a movement, a small movement, a stir. I believe that this does often happen physically as we move towards the dawn. Before any light comes, there is often a small stir in the air, a breath, a breeze, that heralds the first light. Again Sri Aurobindo immediately gives a psychological dimension to this movement.

A nameless movement, an unthought Idea
Insistent, dissatisfied, without an aim,
Something that wished but knew not how to be,
Teased the Inconscient to wake Ignorance.

Of this passage, the Mother says :

This is the description – a very wonderful description – of the beginning of Aspiration: how in the Nothingness, in the Inconscient, stirred the first movement of Aspiration. There was no mind, so it did not think. Even the vital was not organised, so it did not know how to be. But it stirred slowly to wake up the Inconscient towards something – without knowing what it was.

This is the first vibration which preceded even form, the first beginning of Aspiration towards the possibility of knowing.

About Savitri, Part One

There is no form yet, only a movement in the darkness, small movement to which no name can be given; it seems to express an Idea – but there is no mind to think that Idea; but the Idea is there, and it is insistent : like a child who want something from its mother but cannot express what it wants, but it goes on tugging at her, insisting, it will not give up – it is dissatisfied. It wants something, it wants to be, to become, but it does not know how. This is a movement in the void, in the blackness of the Inconscient. That unthought Idea is teasing the Inconscient. To tease – children tease each other, they go on doing or saying something just to trouble the others; and sometimes we tease children : we offer them something and then take it back, perhaps; or we tickle them – we play with them to get some reaction, we want them to respond to us. This small movement is irritating, troubling, tickling the Inconscient to get some reaction – to wake up Ignorance. Ignorance happens when we are conscious, we are aware that there is something we do not know, that we should know. In the total Inconscience there is nothing like that – it is in a stupor. But now this little movement is waking something up – as Mother says, the first beginning of Aspiration. We shall stop here for today.



The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo : Mantra, Metrics and Meaning

By Rod Hemsell

References to Savitri

(continued from issue no. 31)

From September to December 2008, our Aurovilian 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.

The Music of Sacrifice: Yoga Mantra

What we find as we read *Savitri* again and again is that there are a few major themes, experiences, movements of consciousness that Sri Aurobindo dwells upon.

The last time we read a Canto in Book Seven that dwells upon three forces of the soul of Savitri. The part we read was about the Madonna of Love and Pity, and in that Canto there are two others, the Madonna of Power, and the Madonna of Knowledge. The Madonna of Power has different dimensions: creation and destruction and work, from the vast to the narrow. In that Canto she is the goddess of work, and human achievement. Then the Madonna of Knowledge is also the Madonna of joy, peace, light, and the life of the mind. If we step back from that trilogy, we can see the three principles of the Integral Yoga: Love and Devotion, *bhakti yoga*, Work and Sacrifice and the power of *tapasaya*, *karma yoga*, and Knowledge, Wisdom, Truth, *jnana yoga*. In that Canto, Savitri has a dialogue with each of these soul powers and visualizes a transformation of each of them.

A little earlier on in that same book, Savitri enters into the inner countries; and on her journey to find the soul she explores the plane of matter, the plane of life, and the plane of mind, in consecutive sections of the Canto, before she finds her true soul. We can see this structure of *Savitri* also in “The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds” where, as the traveller of the worlds, Aswapati explores the physical creation, and the vital creation, and then the mental creation. There are fifteen cantos in that book which explore these and other planes. So this is one of the predominant themes and structural elements of *Savitri*.

Sri Aurobindo speaks about the universe, creation, and life in terms of planes of existence. For him the physical, vital, and mental planes encompass the three-fold world of manifestation, and he wants us to learn to interpret life, and all existence, in terms of universal forces. He wants to teach the mind to shift from the sensory world and the idea world to the intuitive or higher mind world-view that sees and interprets everything in terms of universal principles. Psychologically, this has a depersonalizing or impersonalising effect, if we can do it. Then our experience of the world is no longer fragmented and judgmental. It encompasses our physical, multifarious existence, and our vital and mental existence, not as individuals but as parts of a totality that includes all individuals and everything that we see, know, and do in the world. Everything is done and seen in a field of universal physical, vital, and mental forces. One of the purposes of *Savitri*, its didactic purpose, is to guide us toward that way of perceiving.

Another theme that we find repeatedly is the theme of sacrifice, which we covered last time. The journey theme, the epic of the search for the soul, and the epic of the transformation toward the highest regions of consciousness, is there throughout. There is added to the journey a heroic element: the journey is done for a purpose; the sacrifice, the search is done for the sake of an end. And that end is no less than the salvation of humanity, the salvation of the suffering world, the transformation of the world of ignorance into a world of truth and light. This journey is undertaken not for the sake of the individual soul’s liberation; it is undertaken for the sake of the liberation and transformation of the whole. I’m going to read a few examples of that very specific, very definite recurring theme in this session.

The third theme that I want to examine is the process: what this search entails. How is it accomplished? What is the inner movement of sacrifice really, how do we do it, how does Aswapati do it, how does Savitri do it, how is it to be done? That takes us into the discovery of the soul and the opening to the higher planes through the absolute stillness of the being. This is the method.

We will explore these ideas in a number of passages so that we can become clear about these intentions, these movements, these ways of understanding that are Sri Aurobindo's: what he really has to say: what the meaning of *Savitri* really is.

There is a great danger in doing this however, because we might think that as the result of such a review, we might *understand* something about *Savitri*. And I don't want us to make that mistake. There are many speakers on the subject of *Savitri* who lead you happily right into that box and close the door. I'm hoping that by reading some of the passages that convey these ideas, we will remember that it is Savitri who is the goddess of illumination, it is Savitri that is the creation, it is Savitri that has to be known, it is not these categories that I just outlined. They are virtually meaningless. But there is a structural aspect of things, and as we started out with the most elemental structural aspect – the form, the rhythm, the metre, the way poetry works – now we are moving through an attempt to explore the meaning of it; and eventually we should aim to come to Savitri herself, the mantra, the music – towards understanding something that is beyond understanding.

For the moment then, I am going to concentrate on a few passages that deal with the aim of the sacrifice. In this passage from the second Canto, right in the beginning almost, we get an introduction to the nature of the sacrifice of Savitri.

Throughout, it always entails the principle and idea of sacrifice, and the music, the purpose of sacrifice always entails counterpoint. We are sacrificing for the purpose of changing something which exists in a form that is untenable. The method Sri Aurobindo uses in almost every Canto is to pose that which has to change with the counter position of that which has to be realized. And by juxtaposing these two, a tension is created that we feel. And then we can perform the surrender with a full knowledge of its purpose.

This is something that I often speak about as the Vedic Sacrifice. There is a call for the gods to descend and illumine the darkness. When that call is made with the full intention of the being and absolute sincerity of the being then an emptiness is created, the flame has burned. Into that emptiness there descends the response. Sri Aurobindo explains this structure at length in *The Secret of the Veda*. We generate this Agni, this energy of sacrifice, and we formulate this opposition. We call and then we surrender. And then there is the descent and there is the affirmation. Then the speech of the Rishi becomes immense, luminous, and joyful. We find this pattern repeated again and again in *Savitri*, as in the hymns of the Rig Veda, and so I refer to this as the underlying Vedic structure, which actually makes it work spiritually, and not just be poetry.

If you read these selections which I'm going to show you now, in a casual way to find out that there is an image and a structure there, it is quite meaningless. You can flip through a few pages and read a few lines, and say 'Yes, this structure of sacrifice is there'. But this is not at all what I'm hoping to leave with you. This can reduce *Savitri* to the most meaningless, almost comical, level of understanding.

We begin, then, with what Sri Aurobindo calls "The Issue":

There is a darkness in terrestrial things
That will not suffer long too glad a note.
On her too closed the inescapable Hand:
The armed Immortal bore the snare of Time.
One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.
Assigner of the ordeal and the path
Who chooses in this holocaust of the soul
Death, fall and sorrow as the spirit's goads,
The dubious godhead with his torch of pain
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.
August and pitiless in his calm outlook,
Heightening the Eternal's dreadful strategy,
He measured the difficulty with the might
And dug more deep the gulf that all must cross.
Assailing her divinest elements,

He made her heart kin to the striving human heart
And forced her strength to its appointed road.
For this she had accepted mortal breath;
To wrestle with the Shadow she had come
And must confront the riddle of man's birth
And life's brief struggle in dumb Matter's night.
Whether to bear with Ignorance and death
Or hew the ways of Immortality,
To win or lose the godlike game for man,
Was her soul's issue thrown with Destiny's dice.

p. 17

I'm going to move now to the Canto titled "The Vision and the Boon", where the mission of Aswapati is formulated very precisely, after he has travelled on his journey through the worlds and discovered what he has to know in order to do what he has to do. Here, in "The Book of the Divine Mother", he confronts her; he discovers in himself the Divine Mother. As you will see, '*In him the Earth-Mother sees draw near the change,*' and She speaks to him. Here we get another version of the nature of the sacrifice that Sri Aurobindo evokes, enacts, and communicates through *Savitri*. This is the Mother of All speaking to Aswapati about sacrifice.

Adept of the self-born unfailing line,
Leave not the light to die the ages bore,
Help still humanity's blind and suffering life:
Obey thy spirit's wide omnipotent urge.
A witness to God's parley with the Night,
It leaned compassionate from immortal calm
And housed desire, the troubled seed of things.

The subject is his spirit. It leaned down to do this.

Assent to thy high self, create, endure.
Cease not from knowledge, let thy toil be vast.
No more can earthly limits pen thy force;
Equal thy work with long unending Time's.
Traveller upon the bare eternal heights,
Tread still the difficult and dateless path

Joining the cycles with its austere curve
Measured for man by the initiate Gods.
My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.
Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart,
Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.
Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand;
Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.
Above blind fate and the antagonist powers
Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;
To its omnipotence leave thy work's result.
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour. p. 340-41

So, at the height of his realisation, and as the fruit of his sacrifice, Aswapati is granted unlimited power to raise his kind, but only within the constraints prescribed by the divine will and plan. He shouldn't demand a partial or quick solution.

In this framework of sacrifice for the heroic purpose of humanity's salvation, we recognize from time to time a kind of Christian imagery. This idea of sacrifice for the sake of the salvation of the world is a Christian idea. The whole meaning of the Christ is exactly this. No wonder Sri Aurobindo takes this image and explores it quite thoroughly. Moving a hundred pages forward to another example, in this Canto from "The Book of Fate", we find a very clear expression of this idea in its well known form, beginning with these lines:

He who would save himself lives bare and calm;
He who would save the race must share its pain:

There is an interesting juxtaposition here of the Vedic idea and the Christian idea. We will explore this further, along with the Buddhistic idea, because it occurs frequently in *Savitri*. For example:

This he shall know who obeys that grandiose urge.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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. p. 444-45

Just above this passage there are a few lines that express the essential idea: the meaning of existence, in this ancient and heroic view, is this:

Men die that man may live and God be born. p. 444

Moving to another example of this structure, in the yoga of Savitri, here we get a juxtaposition of that which one does to save himself

(the Buddhistic idea) and that which one does to save the world (the Christian idea). Both are obviously necessary.

A stark hushed emptiness became her self:
Her mind unvisited by the voice of thought
Stared at a void deep's dumb infinity. ...

Then a Voice spoke that dwelt on secret heights:
"For man thou seekst, not for thyself alone.
Only if God assumes the human mind
And puts on mortal ignorance for his cloak
And makes himself the Dwarf with triple stride,
Can he help man to grow into the God.
As man disguised the cosmic Greatness works
And finds the mystic inaccessible gate
And opens the Immortal's golden door.
Man, human, follows in God's human steps.
Accepting his darkness thou must bring to him light,
Accepting his sorrow thou must bring to him bliss.
In Matter's body find thy heaven-born soul."

p. 488

The way that this is done according to this teaching, the method in which we are being instructed by Sri Aurobindo, is explored in great depth through many cantos, but the movement is the same each time. This movement is the one that Sri Aurobindo wants to convey to us if we expect these aims to be achieved. It is his movement, his teaching – and he has not written this poem for entertainment. We will read a couple of passages that are very explicit, the most explicit that I know of. They are from Canto Five of Book One. In my opinion this is the best summary of the whole movement of yoga. I'm convinced you could spend ten years working on this Canto and it would be very fruitful.

He shore the cord of mind that ties the earth-heart
And cast away the yoke of Matter's law.
The body's rules bound not the spirit's powers:
When life had stopped its beats, death broke not in;
He dared to live when breath and thought were still.

Thus could he step into that magic place
Which few can even glimpse with hurried glance
Lifted for a moment from mind's laboured works
And the poverty of Nature's earthly sight.

p. 74

This idea of rejection and emptiness is reinforced by another passage nearby:

His soul retired from all that he had done.
Hushed was the futile din of human toil,
Forsaken wheeled the circle of the days;
In distance sank the crowded tramp of life.
The Silence was his sole companion left.
Impassive he lived immune from earthly hopes,
A figure in the ineffable Witness' shrine
Pacing the vast cathedral of his thoughts
Under its arches dim with infinity
And heavenward brooding of invisible wings.
A call was on him from intangible heights;
Indifferent to the little outpost Mind,
He dwelt in the wideness of the Eternal's reign. ...

p. 78-79

Savitri, the silence and the word, has the power to create an atmosphere in which that experience can flow if one is willing to give it the space in oneself:

All the deep cosmic murmur falling still,
He lives in the hush before the world was born,
His soul left naked to the timeless One.
Far from compulsion of created things
Thought and its shadowy idols disappear,
The moulds of form and person are undone:
The ineffable Wideness knows him for its own.

...

His spirit mingles with eternity's heart
And bears the silence of the Infinite.

p. 80

What is being transmitted by *Savitri* is not fundamentally information for the mind. If your mind gathers information from the hearing, or from this summary, that is the part you play in the process. Your mind captures something and fits it into your framework. You can then identify with it in terms of your understanding of things. But Sri Aurobindo is doing something else. He is trying to transmit from the highest levels of attainable consciousness the force of truth. It is a transformational mantra.

At some point in our progressive development we realize that we have limits. As Sri Aurobindo said, a new kind of poetry requires a new kind of hearing. The purpose is to push those limits and break them down, and ultimately to transmit truth directly to the soul. In order for this to happen, one's aspiration has to meet his aspiration on the path. And then you are in communication with 'consciousness'; then you are not interpreting anything, it's just the powerful reality that the word brings into being. That word is Savitri, she is the goddess of illumined and illuminating speech. At some point she is invoked and becomes present and fills you, not only with understanding but with the force itself. You not only see the meaning: you become identified with it. Then Sri Aurobindo is doing his work.

The Vedic Sacrifice results in the descent of the divine and manifestation of the divine. Sri Aurobindo has brought the energy to us through mantric speech, and then one works with that energy for a lifetime until it becomes a reality. In that process consciousness is transformed. It is no longer a journey through the planes of consciousness, but *being* the planes of consciousness. Savitri is that path and that force and that goal. All of the different movements and speeches and experiences that are narrated are of that spirit, of that experience, and for that purpose. The poem is a living embodiment of the path of yoga. It is not a sutra in the traditional sense that tells you these things which it tells you. Rather, it transmits the spirit and truth of these things; it transmits the movement itself. For example the principle of sacrifice is transmitted and you become that sacrifice. Then you are in a position to be a real human being.

Savitri repeats everything that Aswapati did. We hear it in the yoga of Aswapati and we hear it again in the yoga of Savitri. It's important to dwell for some time on the depth and importance and necessity of this movement: whenever there is a dwelling in the emptiness, it is followed by a descent and a realisation. This pattern is repeated throughout *Savitri*. But what would it mean to live in that state of emptiness? The process of annihilating the sense mind is arduous. Here is where the path of emptiness, Nirvana, and the path of sacrifice, suffering and crucifixion converge. Each time that there is a luminous response to the call, it affirms the utility of the emptiness. Here the path of Buddha and the path of Christ meet, and then a third possibility is discovered. You annihilate yourself, and then God can become present as you. *'The cry of the abyss drew heaven's reply.'* (p. 536) The emptiness becomes a channel and receptacle for the divine force. *'Banish all thought from thee and be God's Void.'* (p. 537)

Sri Aurobindo has identified the Void of the Supreme, God's emptiness, as the path of transformation. There is a power of emptiness which is everything. Consciousness of the All is only possible with an absolute of stillness and energy in some incomprehensible balance, so that the nature of the divine is the Void, but it is a luminous divine void that holds everything. Sri Aurobindo communicates this experience in a tangible way. The power of mantra is the power to communicate that experience. That is how mantra has been used in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

An impersonal emptiness walked and spoke in her,

...

A zero circle of being's totality.

It used her speech and acted in her acts,

The original mystery wore her human face.

Impassive the body claimed not its own voice,

But let the luminous greatness through it pass.

A dual Power at being's occult poles

Still acted, nameless and invisible:

Her divine emptiness was their instrument.

p. 552

This is the mystery, and the method, of the Vedic Sacrifice.

Savitri Bhavan News

Calendar of Events from October 2009 – April 2010

October 2009

- 3rd : Full Moon Gathering in front of Sri Aurobindo's Statue: A message of the Mother with her organ music, *Savitri* reading, chanting Sri Aurobindo's Mantra and silent concentration.
- 14th: *The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* – Half-day workshop led by Ashesh Joshi.

November 2009

- 1st : *Practical Approach to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga* – start of a new course led by Professor Kittu Reddy
- 2nd : Full Moon Gathering
- 7th and 8th: *Being Well* – two day retreat led by J.V. Avadhanulu
- 14th: *Global Oneness : Nature and healthy and wealthy communities* – film programme for the Mirra Women's Group.

December 2009

Savitri Bhavan produced a Calendar for 2010, entitled *Introduction to Savitri*. For each month there is a passage from one of the 12 books of Sri Aurobindo's poem, accompanied by corresponding symbolic photograph and a short linking narrative.

- 14th: *Meditations on Savitri* : Book Six – The Book of Fate – first showing of the latest film by Manohar of Huta's paintings, with passages from *Savitri* read by the Mother accompanied by her organ music.
- 19th: *Supramental Consciousness and Human Evolution* – film of the talk given by Sraddhalu Ranade at Savitri Bhavan on Feb. 22 2009.

January 2010:

There were two exhibitions from the start of the New Year.

In the Picture Gallery: *Meditations on Savitri* Book Two : The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, 93 paintings made by Huta under the guidance of the Mother.

In and around the main building: *Paintings and Sculptures* by Aurovilian artists Agnus Gastmans and Henk van Putten.



*Exhibition of paintings and sculptures by
Agnus Gastmans and Henk von Putten*

- 1st: Full Moon Gathering in front of Sri Aurobindo's statue
8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th: *The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* – Half-day workshops led by Ashesh Joshi.
- 21st: *The Mayan Calendar and the Evolution of Consciousness* – a talk with Powerpoint presentation by Fatih Kecelioglu.
- 28th: *Mudra-Chi – An experience to share* – demonstration of exercises based on Tai Chi and the Mother's mudras, by Anandi Fernandez
- 30th: Full Moon Gathering

February 2010

In the birthday month of the Mother there was a special exhibition of texts and photographs arranged by Loretta : *Sri Aurobindo and The Mother – Finding the Psychic Being*

5th, 12th, 19th, 26th: *The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* – half-day workshops led by Ashesh Joshi

20th: *The Psychic Realisation and Transformation in Integral Yoga*, talk by Sraddhalu Ranade

21st: *The One whom we adore as The Mother* – a new film prepared by Sri Aurobindo Archives

25th: *Meditations on Savitri*, Book Seven : *The Book of Yoga*, first screening of the latest film prepared by Manohar from the photographs by Giorgio Molinari of paintings prepared by Huta with the Mother.

28th : Special Full Moon Gathering for Auroville's Birthday.



Narad giving the first Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture on March 7, 2010. He spoke on 'Savitri – the Way of Love'. A recording of the talk can be downloaded from the Auroville Radio website www.aurovillerradio.org and the text will soon be published as a booklet.

March 2010

Cultivating Concentration class resumed by Dr. Jai Singh from this month Monday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons.

1st : New course – Study of Bhagavad Gita, led by Vladimir

7th : Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture – Narad speaks on : *Savitri* – the way of Love.

29th: First Brick ceremony for the construction of Savitri Bhavan Hostel.

29th: Full Moon Gathering

April 2010

Celebrating the Centenary of Sri Aurobindo's Arrival in Pondicherry

4th : *Seer Deep-hearted* – a programme of autobiographical poems of Sri Aurobindo read by Shraddhavan, with solo violin performance by Holger and projections by Leonard.

7th : *Offering to Sri Aurobindo* – hymns in Sanskrit, Hindi and Gujarati, performed by Mohan Mistry



During the winter Dr. Jai Singh was on a family visit to the USA. He was invited to give talks at several centres, including Matagiri.

Savitri Bhavan Hostel

Last year we made an appeal for financial support to all well-wishers of Savitri Bhavan. There was a very encouraging and helpful response, which has enabled us to move forward steadily in our work and growth.

In particular, a large donation was received from the UK specifically for making a start on the Savitri Bhavan Hostel. The Hostel is intended to provide simple boarding and lodging for visiting speakers, researchers or students, and volunteers coming to help us in our work. The plan provides 10 rooms plus a kitchen and dining area. The first brick ceremony is to be held on March 29 2010, the anniversary of the Mother's first arrival in Pondicherry. It is hoped that the funds we have in hand will be sufficient to complete the raw structure over the coming year. Additional help will be needed for the finishing works and equipping of the Hostel. It is our sincere hope that we shall be able to complete this project, by the Grace of the Mother, within two years. We aspire for an inauguration in August 2012. All help will be gratefully received.

The Dream of Savitri Bhavan

We dream of an environment in Auroville

that will breathe the atmosphere of Savitri

that will welcome Savitri lovers from every corner
of the world

that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

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

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

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

HOW TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF SAVITRI BHAVAN

Savitri Bhavan is mainly dependent on donations, and all financial help from well-wishers is most welcome. Indian taxpayers are eligible for 50% tax-relief on donations under section 80G of the IT Act. In some other countries tax relief is available on donations passed through the relevant Auroville International Centre.

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

- Cheques and DDs should be payable to Auroville Unity Fund (SAIIER) and sent to the address given below
- You can donate to Savitri Bhavan online at www.auroville.com/donate
- If you have an Auroville Financial Service account, you can transfer an offering to account no. 240001, mentioning “Savitri Bhavan” as the purpose.

If you live in India

If you would like to send your offering through Internet Banking or direct transfer, it should be sent to State Bank of India : Branch code No. 03160 : Account No. 10237876031. If you do send an offering in this way, please inform us at the time of sending, so that we can check up with the bank and acknowledge receipt as soon as possible.

If you are offering Rs. 500 or less, please consider sending it by money-order or DD, since the charges for cashing out-station cheques have become very high. If you feel like sending a regular modest offering, it may be better to send it every three months rather than monthly, for the same reason.

If you live Abroad

To send your offering by SWIFT Transfer, please use the following code :

SWIFT Code : SBININBB474
State Bank of India, Branch Code 03160
Auroville International Township Branch
Kuilapalayam Auroville 605101 INDIA
Auroville Unity Fund Foreign Account no. 10237876508
Purpose “SAVITRI BHAVAN”

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Savitri
is a Mantra
for the transformation
of the world

The Mother