Invocation

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Living with *Savitri*  
*Talk by Dr. Prema Nandakumar*                                         | 4    |
| The English of *Savitri*  
*by Shraddhavan*                                                            | 24   |
| *Savitri Sabdamrut, Volume Four*                                          | 42   |
| *An appreciation by Dr. G.N. Devy*                                       |      |
| The Composition of *Savitri*                                              | 46   |
| News from Savitri Bhavan                                                  | 56   |
Who can show to thee Truth’s glorious face?
Our human words can only shadow her.
To thought she is an unthinkable rapture of light,
To speech a marvel inexpressible. …
If our souls could see and love and clasp God’s Truth,
Its infinite radiance would seize our hearts,
Our being in God’s image be remade
And earthly life become the life divine.

Savitri p. 663
I try my best to peer far into the past – sixty-five years? seventy? To the time when I became definitely aware of *Savitri* as a book in my father’s hands, as he read from it while my mother sat by reverently, would be more than seven decades. I did not understand anything at that time, except the scent of *parijatha* flowers that had been strung as garlands by my mother to adorn the portraits of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I do not think that I even connected Sri Aurobindo with *Savitri*; but an Indian child coming in the Vedic-Puranic tradition lives with Savitri from the moment of listening to her grandmother retelling old tales to make her eat. Savitri was a familiar figure and so was the story, as grandmother could give a striking description of Yama: he came riding a buffalo, with a noose in his hand. And from childhood onwards, the Hindu girl becomes part of the Savitri *vrata* ritual. In our families, although unmarried, even the girl-child has the auspicious yellow thread tied to her wrist; this is an assurance for gaining a good husband. If we get married, the same ritual is followed but now the auspicious thread is a prayer for the longevity of the husband.

On the *vrata* day they used to recite oral narratives on Savitri’s life. Tamil women have sung traditional songs based on the tale while performing the *vrata*. However, changing life-styles, a distancing from ritualism, some impatience in performing such rituals, and wrong priorities being given to the *vrata* (on gifts and eatables but not on the self-discipline enjoined by the *vrata*) have played havoc with what is no doubt a treasure of oral narration. I am sure there are oral narratives in other Indian languages too, now fading away into the sands of Time. One such narration in Tamil was retrieved from oblivion by the renowned social worker of Madras, Sister Subbulakshmi Ammal, and published eighty years ago. The Sister’s introduction to the work is
deeply moving. Subbulakshmi had been widowed as a child and her lifetime’s work lay among widowed or abandoned girls; and yet she believed in the Savitri vrata, for she realised that what was important was the accession of soul-strength one gained from the legend, and not merely retrieval of a husband’s life: She says: “May everyone recite this powerful work and gain the grace of the Divine Mother”.

This oral narrative of Savitri Paadam is essentially based on Vyasa, but has all the charming details of a domestic happening. It is composed in simple language and with a rhythmic beat, but there is a closeness to the godheads born of the lambent faith of common people that is quite different from the epic grandeur of Vyasa’s verse. Here is the everywoman who spends much of her time in the kitchen, who cleans the altar, decorates it with kolam and flowers, and spreads the fruits, flowers and cooked offerings – not much different from my own married life for the last half a century.

The ballad follows the tale of Vyasa very closely. Only, here and there, the details remind us that this is a women’s narrative. When myths get transmitted by women, there is a natural attempt to integrate the story with the everyday life of women as homemakers. The rituals performed at home to herald the birth of a child are taken
to the royal palace of Aswapati. He is delighted, takes his purificatory bath and distributes paddy and cash. Woman-centered, this narrative associated with a *vrata* for assuring the auspicious life of a woman takes a special pride in describing the birth and growth of the girl child, the flame Savitri. When she returns from her travels after choosing Satyavan, and Rishi Narad speaks of Satyavan’s death within a year from now, Aswapati asks Savitri to choose again. Her reply is unequivocal:

Women of chastity who have once chosen a man as their husband will never choose any other men, which would affect their chastity. Even if the chosen person looks ugly, is a fool, does not have good qualities, is sick, is not deserving of being chosen, or has less years left to live on earth, he is still my beloved.

This is exactly parallel to Vyasa’s narrative, and to Sri Aurobindo’s rendering, where Savitri insists:

“Once my heart chose and chooses not again.”

Again, women of those days fondly replay Savitri’s wedding in this ballad as a retelling of the longish weddings in such homes. Savitri is every-bride of these households. It is a regular four-day, ritual-rich wedding. After Aswapati and his people leave for the city, Savitri puts away her ornaments and expensive garments and lives the very simple life of a forest-dweller. Throughout the year she follows *Gowri vrata* and the rest, and during the last three days, she observes the *tri-ratra vratam* in total silence. The ballad does not deviate from the story-line.

Sister Subbulakshmi chose this story for special study by her inmates, for in its essentials it taught a woman not to lose hope, but be ready to face the tribulations of life and hold on with faith in a greater power, so that she can overcome both the societal and fate-directed shocks that battered her in life.

By the time I completed my Masters course, the poem *Savitri* had become a familiar document, especially after the 1954 edition of the complete *Savitri* came to my home. I was now old enough to vaguely understand my father’s musings on the poem when we went for our long walks together in the sea-side city of Visakhapatnam. For a few
months it was only *Savitri* that dominated our walks. He had been asked by his dear friend, Surendranath Jauhar, to wire the title of his speech at Delhi. Father had sent a reply, simply, ‘*Savitri*’. It now became imperative for him to take hold of the epic *in toto* as well as in parts, for one never knew what doubts and questions may come from a Delhi audience! I was not surprised, for I had watched him prepare for months for his 2-hour talks on subjects like the epic novel *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville. He was never one to take his speeches lightly, and probably I began living with *Savitri* the poem as I know it now, during those walks to the beach skirting the Bay of Bengal.

Father impressed upon me that Sri Aurobindo’s poem was the same story as that of Vyasa’s *upakhyana*; only Sri Aurobindo had brought in his philosophy and made suitable modifications and some important changes which he will take time to understand he told me: “You see, when I wrote my biography of Sri Aurobindo fifteen years ago, *Savitri* was not spoken of at all. My mainstay was *The Collected Poems and Plays of Sri Aurobindo* that had been published in 1942. Shanker Gauda had got the two volumes autographed by the Master and gifted the same to me. I have never received a richer gift in my life!” Of course I was familiar with these yellow-covered volumes which were held in holy reverence by my parents. It was much later that the epic in the making became news for Aurobindonians. But by the fifties, the devotees of Sri Aurobindo wanted to know about its contents and hence father’s wire was welcomed eagerly by Surendranath Jauhar. To the best of my knowledge that was the first speech on *Savitri*, given by my father early in 1955. For the following four decades he literally lived with the poem, along with my mother. She was so much taken with it that, though she had had no education, she began translating it into Tamil. This again became another extension of our living with *Savitri*. Father would patiently explain to her at times and encourage her. Unfortunately this was only at brief intervals as he was a very busy person; but she never gave up and has left behind her work which I use when I write about *Savitri* in Tamil.

In the middle of 1957, I joined the doctoral course in Andhra University. I had to give the title of the subject. Father suggested *Savitri*, but in the eminence of my newly-acquired Master of Arts degree, I decided I was a Master of everything. I told him that I had
been listening to him on Savitri and had also read some passages, but that this philosophy is beyond me; besides, the judges may not take kindly to an Indian writing an epic in English. I said, “You did your doctoral dissertation on Lytton Strachey. I think I will do mine on another Bloomsbury author, Virginia Woolf.” Mine was not a rebellion; I would never contradict my father, and he understood my diffidence from my worried voice. In any case, his was not a nature to make my brother or myself do anything against our wishes. So it was Virginia Woolf – and the same day I went and bought the Collected Works of Virginia Woolf in several volumes that had just then been released by the Hogarth Press.

But the Mother had other plans for my life. It is fairly well known to my friends how Sri A.B. Purani happened to come to the Andhra University around this time to deliver a few lectures. He stayed in our house. Father and he were close friends. While he mesmerized the huge student audiences in the Erskine Square in the University, at home he spoke to my brother and myself with great love. One evening he was asking Ambirajan and myself about our studies. With immense pride I told him that I was already working on my subject. Father said smilingly: “Purani! I asked her to take up Savitri, but she preferred Virginia Woolf. She says she cannot understand Savitri – as if she is going to understand Mrs. Woolf!”

Purani-ji immediately flared up: “Really, Prema!” Then he went on to say that if Iyengar’s daughter was afraid, who else will take up Savitri? Here is Iyengar to explain the whole poem and give guidance. If it is possible I must make an attempt to change my subject. There was such passion in Purani-ji’s gestures and a glow in his face as he spoke of the Master and his disciples and how they had sat so very close to him as we were sitting together there. Sri Aurobindo must have had a special regard for this University for had he not accepted the University’s Humanity’s Prize? Did he accept any prize or award from anybody else? I was thoroughly shaken. Fortunately, in those days, changing a doctoral subject before the end of the first year was no problem, and so it was decided in the fading twilight of that day that I would live with Savitri as long as I was destined to remain in this world.
It has been a wonderful experience indeed. First came the primaries. I was already a student of Indian history, so easily glided into the history shelves in the Andhra University Library to take notes on the Freedom Movement. There was the life of Sri Aurobindo, and of persons associated with him, like C.R. Reddy and Subramania Bharati. I entered a fascinating world and have remained wandering in it since those days in the late ’fifties. Among other things I had to go to the library and read all available epics in English or in English translation, for father said I must try to place Savitri in world literature. He taught me to take notes and also quotations in the card index system. All those cards, grown somewhat brown by time, are still with me and I am amused at my adventures. Certainly it improved my handwriting, I guess.

But there was also the actual living with Savitri that went on day after day. Apart from reading and explaining and making me write summaries of cantos, father, as was usual with us for several years, would take me towards the Ramakrishna Beach in the coastal town of Visakhapatnam daily and so we walked the three kilometres when it was still dark. Before the sun rose, we were seated on the sands facing the east while father recited the opening canto: ‘It was the hour before the gods awake …’. Day after day he would dwell fondly over the lines and explain them as a petal-by-petal blossoming of Dawn, the eastern sky forming the backdrop:

All can be done if the god-touch is there.
A hope stole in that hardly dared to be
Amid the Night’s forlorn indifference.
As if solicited in an alien world
With timid and hazardous instinctive grace,
Orphaned and driven out to seek a home,
An errant marvel with no place to live,
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
A slow miraculous gesture’s dim appeal.
The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
When the sun had risen, russet and brilliant, we began our walk home. This is the way I learnt how just reading or reciting *Savitri* could form tapasya, for such was my father’s sadhana.

I would not call my own life as coming anywhere near the sadhana of my parents. They formed such a total contrast – probably to prove to me that living with *Savitri* was possible for everyone. He was a superb scholar with a fantastic memory, always lecturing, travelling, writing articles, writing books, sitting motionless for hours, only his hands active with the proofs, correcting, and correcting again. She was a quiet housewife whose home was her world. With no formal schooling, she had come to her husband’s tiny flat in Belgaum as a thirteen-year old. But she educated herself by sheer will-power, of course helped by my father who encouraged her to learn Marathi, and slowly and surely she became a voracious reader, as well as a translator and writer. Naturally she was drawn to Sri Aurobindo. Whether she understood the sentences or not, she read him and equipped herself so well that she could help father in reading the proofs of his revised books on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the ’seventies. The last decade of her life she spent in translating *Savitri* into Tamil. One could see, as she struggled with the words and a variety of English-Tamil dictionaries, her one-pointed involvement in the poem. What gave her strength to dare this was the Mother’s message: “Reading *Savitri* is yoga”. I am witness to the fact that this work of total involvement with the poem helped her bear with two major tragedies in her life at an advanced age. She never complained. “It is Mother’s will”, she would whisper and all at once was said.

The lesson that I learnt from these two lives was: “This is how you live with *Savitri*. Make it the central beam of your life, and the house will stand till the transformatory moment – and then hold your hand when you take your next step to the beyond.” So what have I found in this poem which has been of soul-sustenance? Watching my parents was one thing, but to bring a lifetime’s involvement with the poem was altogether different, and there were moments when I withdrew to a distance. But then again, as it happened with the coming of Purani-ji to our home when I had entered my doctoral studies, a moment of realisation flashed upon me, totally changing my view of life. To put it briefly, this is what happened:
Way back in the ’sixties, I had just received my doctoral degree for my thesis on *Savitri*. I was living in Ranchi then, a young housewife with a little child, unable to go out and take up a job. They were still building the Heavy Engineering Corporation at that time in Ranchi. My parents had come for a holiday and I was washing vessels at the sink, while my father, Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, stood near me discussing some passage of *Savitri*. I suddenly burst out: “There was no need for me to go through all those years of heavy study of the epic and its philosophy to get a degree, if I was to end up washing vessels like this!” This was the typical pride of a post-graduate nursing self-pity.

My father said quietly: “What are you doing now? This is the philosophy of *Savitri* in action.” “What do you mean?” I asked. He continued:

“You are washing vessels with a cleaning powder, tamarind and water, and will not stop till they become bright. Then you are keeping them in the shelf according to their size and utility. The vessels have now acquired a new glow! The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother also teaches us how to cleanse our consciousness, which is encrusted with a variety of desires and emotions. It has to be a constant aspiration, like the daily cleaning you have to undertake at home. But man has risen to a higher plane than Matter, unlike the vessels. The living person gets transformed into the cleaned brightness, shorn of all dirt – and that is the transformative moment. You go on trying to do the work given to you, aspiring for perfection with total faith in the Divine. Do not think of your degree as a means to get you a monthly salary. A student of *Savitri* is in the unique position of having taken a first step towards the Life Divine. You have to be a student of the poem for all your life. The transformation will come in its own time, perhaps not now nor in this life but at the proper moment, probably in the Next Future. This is yoga, nothing less, nothing more.”

From that moment when his quiet words created a *spandhana* in my being, I have never looked back. For father’s words taught me two
great values which are themselves inter-linked. From that day till now, I have never felt domestic work to be a burden at all, but have found positive joy in doing daily chores. And I have learnt that all life is one, though it gets manifested in various ways. There is no such thing as high and low in action. All action that leads to human betterment is divine action. All life is indeed yoga. This point is amply demonstrated by Savitri’s life: the Princess of Madra who is the great tapaswini, the dhyana yoga paraayanaa, is also the wife, etched beautifully in Vyasa’s upakhyana. We see the same Savitri in Sri Aurobindo’s epic. She is in the forest-dwelling, living a spartan life with Satyavan and his parents:

She made herself the diligent serf of all,  
Nor spared the labour of broom and jar and well,  
Or close gentle tending or to heap the fire  
Of altar and kitchen, no slight task allowed  
To others that her woman’s strength might do.  
In all her acts a strange divinity shone:  
Into a simplest movement she could bring  
A oneness with earth’s glowing robe of light,  
A lifting up of common acts by love.”

p. 470

However, living with Savitri brings us other wonderments too. Since you cannot read Savitri in isolation, one has to keep walking towards the receding horizon constantly. It really begins with the opening canto. Is this a mere physical description of dawn? Certainly it is an accurate description of the coming of dawn upon earth. That would take us to Sri Aurobindo’s different openings: to Chitrangada, Uloupi and of course the sublime, Fate-propelled, sad dawn that rises over Ilion; then it would slip us into the hymns to Usha in the Vedas which had been studied and translated by Sri Aurobindo. I was so charmed by the hymns to Usha that I used one of them as the epigraph to the first part of my doctoral dissertation:

\[
\text{Beholding} \\
\text{the higher Light} \\
\text{beyond the darkness} \\
\text{we came} \\
\text{to the divine Sun}
\]
Then there is the clue that Sri Aurobindo himself has spoken of it as a symbolic myth of the Vedic cycle:

Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into 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; 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 ....

This is an area of unending research, if the research is transformed into one’s yoga. Sri Aurobindo himself has opened the charmed magic casements for us to enter the Vedas, as also the culture inspired by the Vedas. This has been a personal gift from Savitri, that not only have I drawn closer to our Vedic heritage but have understood, however dimly, why I go through the samskaras, rituals of worship and the rest, as a traditional housewife. You must remember that I come from a strange milieu where the menfolk are authorized to learn, recite and talk about the Vedas, but not the women. Men have the right to perform worship to Salagrama and the images of deities, but not women. I have not been upset about the ban on ritual worshipping, for we are allowed to worship our favourite deities in our own way. I can make any number of garlands for my Krishna and Goda devi or offer them a chalice of cow’s milk. But why should there be a ban on reciting? Some explanations are given, but I have not been convinced, chiefly because there have been close to eighty rishikas (women rishis) in the Vedas who have written hymns, and when our men perform the sandhya-vandana in the morning twilight, mid-day noon and evening twilight, their prayers are mainly addressed to goddesses like Gayatri!

1. Author’s Note to Savitri
2. A special type of fossil found in the sacred river Gandaki, said to represent Vishnu.
Contrary to the generally held belief that the Vedas were received only by men (and hence women were not allowed to learn and recite them since medieval times), women had an important part even in receiving the messages from the eternal and channelizing them into significant poetry. At the dawn of Indian civilization, women were able to spread and teach Vedas and were called Brahmavadinis.

Studying *Savitri* has drawn me close to the Vedic hymns. Once I was invited to speak on the Vedas in the Sankara Math at Kumbakonam, and had chosen Shyawasva’s hymns to Bhaga Savitri, in order to speak about Sri Aurobindo’s contribution to Vedic studies. I carefully refrained from quoting the original text, using only Sri Aurobindo’s translations. The elderly Vedic scholar appreciated this and said, “This has been the tradition”. And yet we know that Sri Aurobindo has drawn the symbol of Savitri from the Vedas.

But Vedic symbol or real-life character or imagination, it is amazing that of all our Puranic heroines, Savitri is the one name with which no one has taken liberties. There have been imaginative recreations of what could have been the life of a Sita or Damayanti or Draupadi. But Savitri is the same whether she is in a Tamil ballad or an English epic or a narrative poem or a film in which Shanta Apte lives the role of Savitri. Recently I came across *Fourth Dimension*, a Shiva Vangara film on Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*. I have not seen it but I am told it is an interpretation of Sri Aurobindo’s epic. From the write-up I saw there was no misinterpretation, and felt happy. After all, each generation needs its own diction to draw close to Truth – and as Savitri is Truth, I guess that nobody dares to trifle with her personality!

All the same, this half a century’s engagement with the epic has taught me to get involved in serious thinking. Just as Ramana Maharishi’s “Who am I?” is a question that follows one as a shadow, “Why the change?” is a question that remains with us if we become a student of Sri Aurbindo’s poem. The answers are not yet complete. They can be completed only when one stops reading or meditating upon *Savitri* and that is impossible for a child of the divine Mother who has assured all of us: “Reading *Savitri* is yoga.” This itself has been
a gift of living with *Savitri*. It begins with the question: “What is this Book of the Traveller of the Worlds”? The clue is there in Vyasa’s original: the austerities of King Aswapati to get progeny: eighteen years of chanting Gayatri and performing the fire-sacrifice, leading to the vision of the divine mother Savitri who assures Aswapati that a radiant virgin (*kanya tejasvini*) would be born to him. A straightforward movement in the tale; but it has made Sri Aurobindo think. The result: The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds and The Book of the Divine Mother. This is massive expansion indeed, but it is not an addition of adipose rhetoric. The poet has himself made it clear that he has not written anything “for the sake of picturesqueness or merely to produce a rhetorical effect”\(^1\). Sri Aurobindo is here recording an experience, as he has pointed out further on in the same letter:

Savitri is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences.\(^2\)

This is a call for an extension of our consciousness to understand and appreciate the poem. This attempt at extending our consciousness, not satisfied with ourselves, puts us on the sunlit path. The sheer joy of knowing that somebody has actually experienced all this inspires us.

I knew that the political interregnum in Sri Aurobindo’s life had given him a direct experience of inferno, so I have always found two cantos in The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds absolutely realistic, especially because of my stint with political journalism. No report of India’s experiment with democracy during the last six decades can be as accurate as Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*:

A bull-throat bellowed with its brazen tongue;
Its hard and shameless clamour filling Space
And threatening all who dared to listen to truth
Claimed the monopoly of the battered ear;
A deafened acquiescence gave its vote,
And braggart dogmas shouted in the night

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1. CWSA 27:343
2. Ibid.
Kept for the fallen soul once deemed a god
The pride of its abysmal absolute.

Hence I have never doubted the accuracy of his other experiences either as a traveller of the worlds. Oh, for that Next Future!

There was no sob of suffering anywhere;
Experience ran from point to point of joy:
Bliss was the pure undying truth of things.
All Nature was a conscious front of God:
A wisdom worked in all, self-moving, self-sure,
A plenitude of illimitable Light,
An authenticity of intuitive Truth,
A glory and passion of creative Force.
Infallible, leaping from eternity.

There were then the new major insertions by Sri Aurobindo in the original tale that I had known. One such is the Book of Love. It is a tremendous passage, where Savitri remains the regal princess and yet a shy, adorable bride. Satyavan remains the exiled prince who had grown up in the forest and yet he seems to have had a wonderful education, as Sri Aurobindo suggests by making Nature as the teacher of Satyavan, instilling in him heroism and love, hard work and gentle ways, a vehicle of Truth.

Self-effacing Satyavan: what made Sri Aurobindo speak of him as “the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance”? A question that chased me for years till it struck me that the answer lay in yet another Book of the Mahabharata: a canto that reports the conversation between Dyumathsena and Satyavan when they argue about the rights and wrongs of capital punishment and the son is unflinching in his arguments, reveals why Satyavan is indeed “the soul carrying the divine truth of being”. Satyavan rejects capital punishment, proving the ancient ideal of India: karyam karnuam aryena: a noble person is revealed by his compassion.

The imaginative yet vital introduction of Savitri’s mother and the discussion between the Queen and Narada can never pall on us. The theory of avatarhood is brought out beautifully in this Book of Fate which has also these wonderful lines on the Passion of Christ:
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.  

I have read these passages in many inter-religious conventions and  
watched with joy and pride the way the faces have blossomed, as line  
followed line, like the brass bell pealing atop the temple spire. So  
have I lived with Malavi’s questions. I have actually seen a physical  
demonstration of the *Savitri* lines:

A mother’s heart had heard the fateful speech  
That rang like a sanction to the call of death  
And came like a chill close to life and hope.  
Yet hope sank down like an extinguished fire.  
She felt the leaden inevitable hand  
Invade the secrecy of her guarded soul  
And smite with sudden pain its still content  
And the empire of her hard-won quietude.  
Awhile she fell to the level of human mind ….  

Malavi’s questions are asked by all of us human born: “Why  
should this happen to *me*! And are all our strivings worthless?  
Is Fate everything? Knowing fate is incorrigible, are we not  
following our dream-visions all the time? Is it all a purposeless  
abracadabra?”

A great Illusion then has built the stars.  
But where then is the soul’s security,  
Its poise in this circling of unreal suns?  
Or else it is a wanderer from its home  
Who strayed into a blind alley of Time and chance  
And finds no issue from a meaningless world.  
Or where begins and ends Illusion’s reign?
Perhaps the soul we feel is only a dream,  
Eternal self a fiction sensed in trance.  

Can there be an answer? Yes, there is, and Rishi Narad’s long speech is, perhaps, Sri Aurobindo’s last message to humanity, to us, to me, never to lose hope and never misplace faith in the Supreme.

Death is the spirit’s opportunity.  
A vast intention has brought two souls close  
And love and death conspire towards one great end.  
For out of danger and pain heaven-bliss shall come,  
Time’s unforeseen event, God’s secret plan.

There is then Savitri’s yoga. It is a marvellous coalition of the inner and outer beings of a person, where external life is a reflection of the inner yoga. The perfect, normal life of a young bride!

Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri is an amazing example that proves how one does not cancel out the other, and it is when both the internal and external lives move in rhythm that the transcendence is achieved. This earthly life is very real to us. Living with Savitri has certainly helped me overcome the moments of unreality in this life, and thereby helped me to overcome depression.

We live here and now and it is from here that we move upwards. Hence life with its bondage is real and all these attachments are real. I have marvelled that prior to entering the world of Savitri’s yoga Sri Aurobindo gives us a clear idea of her mental make-up. She thinks of others, and it is this consideration for others that makes her a perfect human being. When she has to think of her future without Satyavan, she does not take the easy way out: no suttee for her! She thinks of the aged parents, one of whom is blind. With their son gone what will they do? So she will live for their sake. That is the matri hridaya gifted to womanhood, and which is very much in the young bride brought up in the Indian tradition:

She dreamed of her body robed in funeral flame,  
She knew she must not clutch that happiness  
To die with him and follow, seizing his robe  
Across our other countries, travellers glad  
Into the sweet or terrible Beyond.
For those sad parents still would need her here  
To help the empty remnant of their day.  
Often it seemed to her the ages’ pain  
Had pressed their quintessence into her single woe,  
Concentrating in her a tortured world.  

Savitri will not give up – so we have the panoramic six cantos spread in the Book of Yoga. If Aswapati’s yoga was not very easy to follow, at least we had plenty of sign-posts as solid images – whether it was a world-stair, the godheads of little and greater mind, godheads of little and greater life, and so on; and the perfect icon of the oratory that would lead to the Divine Mother as his yoga enters the final stage of total self-effacing, intensely meditative, integral surrender of Aswapati’s “living, sacrificed and offered heart”:

Accepting worship as its single law,  
Accepting bliss as the sole cause of things,  
Refusing the austere joy which none can share,  
Refusing the calm that lives for calm alone,  
To her it turned for whom it willed to be.  
In the passion of its solitary dream  
It lay like a closed soundless oratory  
Where sleeps a consecrated argent floor  
Lit by a single and untrembling ray  
And an invisible Presence kneels in prayer.

This step in Aswapati’s yoga has been gifted to us as an icon in our Matrimandir. However, when following Savitri’s yogas, apart from the three Mothers, we have no firm icons to hold on to. But here, as well as in the marvellous Books of Eternal Night, Double Twilight and Everlasting Day, light itself gets solidified into a visible icon we can hold on to, as Sri Aurobindo’s sublime poesy marks the various stages we get to cross even after triumphing in yoga. Transformation is not a conjuror’s trick! It is a process and even Savitri is surprised. After being chased away by her Light, Death has returned in the Everlasting Day, “changed and transfigured”, writes K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar:

Saul the scourge becomes Paul the Apostle, and Death the dark god and great destroyer becomes a god of light and life everlasting! As Savitri gazes at this wonderful face
‘that wears the mystery of a nameless Name’ there is an immediacy of response. The more she looks at him, the more is she surprised and charged with delightful surmise. Is he verily the ‘fourfold being’, the architect of the world?

He whom she had seen as death is now the tremendous Quadrilateral – Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Chaitanya-Ananda – form of the Supreme. It is a vision, as yet, for the few who have performed tapasya and gained the power to see. These rare occasions when Sri Aurobindo for a moment turns to the world divine which has been mine as a child of a Vaishnava family are, of course, favourite passages for me. When Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Supreme Being seen by Savitri as ‘the four-fold Being’, I am taken to the Vyuha theory which reveals the Eternal Brahman as a steady descent of the Immanent as Vasudeva (gunas: Jnanam-Knowledge, Balam-Strength, Aiswaryam-Prosperity, Virya-Virility, Sakthi-Power, Tejas-Radiance); from Vasudeva the descent is marked by Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. This steady descent is marked by Sri Aurobindo through Savitri’s vision or experience in the Beyond.

At once the art and artist of his works,
Spirit and seer and thinker of things seen,
Virat, who lights his camp-fires in the suns
And the star-entangled ether is his hold,
Expressed himself with Matter for his speech:
Objects are his letters, forces are his words,
Events are the crowded history of his life,
And sea and land are the pages for his tale.
Matter is his means and his spiritual sign …

Hiranyagarbha, author of thoughts and dreams,
Who sees the invisible and hears the sounds
That never visited a mortal ear,
Discoverer of unthought realities
Truer to Truth than all we have ever known,
He is the leader on the inner roads …

A third spirit stood behind, their hidden cause,
A mass of superconscience closed in light,
Creator of things in his all-knowing sleep.
All from his stillness came as grows a tree;
He is our seed and core, our head and base. …
Awake, he is the Eternal and Supreme.

Above was the brooding bliss of the Infinite.  

When this power pours into the next future all manner of things will be divine, is the comforting and even inspiring message that we get from the epic poem as we race towards the conclusion:

All earth shall be the Spirit’s manifest home,
Hidden no more by the body and the life,
Hidden no more by the mind’s ignorance;
An unerring Hand shall shape event and act.
The Spirit’s eyes shall look through Nature’s eyes,
The Spirit’s force shall occupy Nature’s force …

Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come
Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind;
A sudden bliss shall run through every limb
And Nature with a mightier Presence fill.
Thus shall the earth open to divinity
And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit’s ray
And meet the deity in common things.
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.

When I consider this continued engagement with Savitri in one form or the other down the arches of the years, I realize that it has also been a continuous engagement with the eternal contraries: Faith and Unbelief. Amazingly, faith has won each time, not as a trade but an effect of peace that is beyond the understanding of the human mind.

Certainly the story in each of its versions, and there are many of them, has had this power to help us come to terms with life. It could be
Margaret Strachey’s 1920 version: *Savitri: Other Women* published by Chatto and Windus. Mark the ending which has no sentimental clap trap but just the straightforward truth:

“Dear Satyavan,” said Savitri, “believe me, if I have ever done penance, obeyed my parents or loved my husband, this night will not be a night of sorrow for us, but a night of rejoicing.”

With these words she put Satyavan’s arm around her, and looking with love into his eyes: “Come, husband,” she said, “let us go home.”

Whoever hears the story of Savitri will never know misery.

Continued engagement with *Savitri* has been Ananda as well as puzzlement. Where am I? On the sunlit path sloping upwards? Or am I going around in circles experiencing Goethe’s *Faust* here or Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* or the epic of Nikos Kazantzakis? I have piled up notes and books and papers and files during all these decades. But have I drawn any nearer to Sri Aurobindo’s poem because of all this external help and spreading my thoughts around in ink? I have no answers. But something moves fast within me when the word ‘Savitri’ is uttered: three syllables, and suddenly any fear or blackness of mind gets dispelled. How come? This is beyond logic, metaphysics, even reason! Now I know why.

I see in my mind’s eye a young girl in her early twenties struggling to complete her thesis, questioning her guide-mentor-father at each step, and suddenly he says, “If you go on doubting everything at the first step, when will you go up the stairs to look at the blue heavens? Have faith in the Mother. You will understand.”

The young girl looks at the last paragraph of her thesis, corrected by her guide with red pencil. It was not the time of computers. With a sigh she inserts the papers and carbons in her Olivetti typewriter and types the last paragraph again:

*Savitri* is more than a poem, more even than a cosmic poem, for it is not about the dawn, or about light, or about the Life Divine; *Savitri* is the Dawn itself, it is Light, it is Life. There is so much darkness and despair in the world today;
the remedy can only be a new invasion of Light and Hope, a new incarnation of Love, and *Savitri* is such an invasion, it is nothing less than such a revelation of receding Night and the imminent arrival of a greater Dawn.¹

I do not know about others. I have neither the capacity nor courage to probe other personalities. But for me, these words set down in 1960 have formed the red badge of courage and the blue lotus of wisdom for fifty-five years. Living with *Savitri* has been carrying a chalice of faith in hand, a faith that never fails. That is all I know; perhaps that is all I need to know.

Om Anandamayi, Chaitanyamayi, Satyamayi Parame!


*Dr. Prema Nandakumar leaving Savitri Bhavan with friends after the lecture.*
The English of Savitri
Canto Four, The Secret Knowledge
Section One – lines 1-126
by Shraddhavan

The canto that we are embarking upon now is one that can be separately from the rest of the poem and read by itself as a ‘Sri Aurobindo Upanishad’, for it contains the essence of the knowledge on which the entire poem is based, the ‘Secret Knowledge’ which underlies the whole development of Sri Aurobindo’s mantric epic.

On a height he stood that looked towards greater heights.

This first line refers to King Aswapati, and it is the only line in the whole canto which does so. Throughout the rest of this canto Sri Aurobindo is outlining a view of the world: the Secret Knowledge which has been revealed to Aswapati by the powers of Wisdom which have brought about the release of his soul and ‘his mind and body’s first spiritual change’, which was shown in the previous canto. Now, making a link with the preceding canto, the poet says that Aswapati has reached a certain height, and that, as often happens to people who are climbing in the mountains, having reached that height, he sees the yet higher peaks that still lie ahead of him.

Then the poet speaks about human beings in general. He tells us that when we first turn towards the Divine and Infinite, we may have wonderful and inspiring experiences:

Our early approaches to the Infinite
Are sunrise splendours on a marvellous verge
While lingers yet unseen the glorious sun.

In the early morning, before dawn, when the sun has not yet risen above the horizon, we may see beautiful colours in the sky as the world around us is touched by a magical dawn light, ‘sunrise splendours’ that come as the Savitri sun approaches, the sun that has not yet risen above the horizon. We see the first signs of it, the
first dawning of it ‘on a marvellous verge’, on the horizon; glorious early experiences in the spiritual life are ‘sunrise splendours’, very happy and wonderful times, when we are on the brink of something wonderful and feel the first touch of the Divine. Yet, ‘What now we see is a shadow of what must come’: they are only ‘sunrise splendours’; when the full sun is seen there will be so much more light, so much more power and energy. To ‘linger’ means to take time, to move slowly: the divine Sun is still lingering unseen below the horizon.

The earth’s uplook to a remote Unknown
Is a preface only of the epic climb
Of human soul from its flat earthly state
To the discovery of a greater self
And the far gleam of an eternal Light.

‘The earth’s uplook’: we can think of our earth looking up to the sky and out into space, towards a ‘remote Unknown’ that is very far away; that upward look of our material nature is the very first step of a long journey, only a ‘preface’. A ‘preface’ is an introductory text at the beginning of a book: before you start to read the main body of the book there are a few words to encourage you and give you some idea of what lies ahead; similarly that first uplook towards a remote Unknown is the first preparatory step in an ‘epic climb’, the huge ascent which will take the human soul ‘from its flat earthly state’, from its starting point on the surface of the earth, tied to matter, through a long journey ‘to the discovery of its greater self’ and ‘an eternal Light’ which is now seen only as a ‘far gleam’ in the distance; to reach that Light, an ‘epic climb’, an immense upward journey lies ahead.

This world is a beginning and a base
Where Life and Mind erect their structured dreams;
An unborn Power must build reality.

This material world is ‘a beginning and a base’: a foundation. When we start to construct a building we need a base, a foundation; on the foundation of the material world, Life and Mind are building ‘their structured dreams’; but to build ‘reality’ an ‘unborn Power’ is needed, one that has not yet been born on earth.
A deathbound littleness is not all we are:
Immortal our forgotten vastnesses
Await discovery in our summit selves;
Unmeasured breadths and depths of being are ours.

The limited human being that we are now, this ‘deathbound littleness’, is not all we are: there is much more to us, which we have forgotten: our immortal vastnesses are waiting for us to discover them ‘in our summit selves’. The ‘summit’ is the top of a mountain. When we reach the top of our mountain, the many successive levels of our being, we shall find the ‘unmeasured breadths and depths of being’ that belong to ‘our summit selves’.

Akin to the ineffable Secrecy,
Mystic, eternal in unrealised Time,
Neighbours of Heaven are Nature’s altitudes.

‘Nature’s altitudes’, the higher levels of Nature, are ‘akin to the ineffable Secrecy’; ‘akin to’ means ‘closely related to’; the higher levels of Nature are closely connected to the ‘ineffable’ secret which cannot be expressed; they are ‘mystic’ and ‘eternal’; they have not yet been realised, they exist in ‘unrealised Time’, the time that has yet to unfold itself; and they are ‘neighbours of Heaven’. A neighbour is one who lives close to you. ‘Nature’s altitudes’ are ‘neighbours of Heaven’, the higher levels of consciousness.

To these high-peaked dominions sealed to our search,
Too far from surface Nature’s postal routes,
Too lofty for our mortal lives to breathe,
Deep in us a forgotten kinship points
And a faint voice of ecstasy and prayer
Calls to those lucent lost immensities.

Australia, Canada and South Africa were ‘dominions’ or self-ruling nations within the old British Empire; here the word is used to mean ‘realms’ or ‘kingdoms’. Nature’s altitudes are ‘high-peaked’ domains lying far up in the mountains; when we look for them, we cannot find them, for they are ‘sealed to our search’; they are too far away from our everyday nature, from ‘surface Nature’s postal routes’; postal routes go along the main highways and do not reach
far up into the Himalayas, into the highest peaks: up there, there are no post offices; if you go high enough, no letters and no telegrams will reach you; also, when you go up into the high mountains you have difficulty breathing, the air is different from the air that we are used to breathing down here; it is the same with ‘Nature’s altitudes’, the higher levels of Nature: we find it difficult to stay up there long; we cannot breathe properly up there. But something in us is always pointing to them: ‘deep in us a forgotten kinship points’; we have forgotten about our ‘kinship’, our close connection with those high levels; but something in us always feels connected to them, so it is pointing to them and calling us to look up at them. Its voice is very ‘faint’; the voice of our soul is not loud and strident; our desires and bright ideas have louder voices, compared to the quiet voice of the soul which is a voice of ‘prayer’ and of ‘ecstasy’, intense delight; it is calling to those high ‘immensities’, those vast levels; we have lost touch with them, but something in us still feels a connection with ‘those lucent lost immensities’, the higher levels of ourselves, full of light, which we have forgotten.

Even when we fail to look into our souls
Or lie embedded in earthly consciousness,
Still have we parts that grow towards the light,
Yet are there luminous tracts and heavens serene
And Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy
And temples to the godhead none can see.

Even when we forget completely, even when we do not take the trouble to look into our souls and remain ‘embedded in earthly consciousness’ like stones stuck in the mud, still we have parts that are always growing towards the higher light; those ‘luminous tracts’, those areas that are full of light, those serene heavens, calm, quiet, smiling, undisturbed, still exist whether we are conscious of them or not; there are ‘Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy / And temples to the godhead none can see’. ‘Eldorado’ is a Spanish word which means ‘The Golden One’; it was a name given by the Conquistadors, the Spanish colonisers who conquered South America, to a city they were looking for, a city built of pure gold; the word has passed into English, meaning a wonderful golden dream or goal that you are always looking for but never find. But here Sri Aurobindo says that
those golden places really do exist, those ‘Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy’: not cities built of material gold, but realms and countries of pure golden light and Truth-Consciousness; they are there and one day we shall find them. Whether we are aware of them or not, there are temples, ‘shrines’ to the inner godhead whom nobody sees; even if we forget all about Him, still His temple is there, still He is being worshipped, His power is still ruling.

A shapeless memory lingers in us still
And sometimes, when our sight is turned within,
Earth’s ignorant veil is lifted from our eyes;
There is a short miraculous escape.

Deep within us ‘lingers’, remains, a ‘shapeless memory’: it does not have a distinct form, but it remains lingering within us and does not go away. When we do look inside, ‘when our sight is turned within’, it may happen that suddenly the ‘ignorant veil’ of matter is removed and we experience a ‘short miraculous escape’ into freedom, into clear sight. I would say that this is the psychic memory, the memory that is aware of divinity. It is because we have that ‘shapeless memory’ within us that when Sri Aurobindo and Mother tell us these things we believe them; because that memory is in us, we recognize the truths that they remind us of; not all of our parts share that memory, so there may not be a full immediate recognition, but part of us knows, ‘Yes, it is like that.’ What happens when we experience ‘a short miraculous escape’?

This narrow fringe of clamped experience
We leave behind meted to us as life,
Our little walks, our insufficient reach.

We leave behind this limited life-experience that is measured out to us, ‘meted’ out: it means ‘measured in very small doses’; our earthly nature only allows us a little bit of experience at a time, just what we can receive; what is measured out to us as life is a just a ‘narrow fringe’, a thin border, we are living on the outskirts of something much bigger; there is so much more, much richer experience waiting for us: what we experience while we are under the domination of matter is a ‘narrow fringe of clamped experience’. ‘Clamped’ means ‘held tight’, unable to move freely. We have our little walks, we go here and there, and sometimes we may try to reach higher things, but we
cannot reach far enough, our reach is limited, ‘insufficient’; but in
those exceptional moments of escape when ‘earth’s ignorant veil is
lifted from our eyes’ we can leave all that behind, our souls can enjoy
a much freer range of experience.

   Our souls can visit in great lonely hours
   Still regions of imperishable Light,
   All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power
   And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss
   And calm immensities of spirit space.

These ‘regions’ are heavens or altitudes of Nature. The soul can
escape, and enjoy ‘great lonely hours’, visiting ‘still regions of
imperishable Light’, quiet, calm places full of Light that will not
fade because it is ‘imperishable’. An example of such regions is the
‘All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power’; eagles are powerful birds
that live up in the high mountains and have very strong eyesight;
when our souls visit those high peaks of consciousness, they can soar
like eagles, experience ‘silent Power’ and become ‘All-seeing’. They
can also visit oceans, vast expanses full of ‘moon-flame’, flickering
with moonlight; in India the moon is associated with ecstasy, bliss,
delight, soma; these are oceans of ‘swift, fathomless bliss’, moving
rapidly, but so deep that we can never reach the bottom of them; and
there are ‘calm immensities of spirit space’ like wide clear open skies.

   In the unfolding process of the Self
   Sometimes the inexpressible Mystery
   Elects a human vessel of descent.

‘In the unfolding process of the Self’: as we evolve and develop,
as the Self in us and in the universe unfolds and discovers itself,
the ‘inexpressible Mystery’, the ‘ineffable Secrecy’, the ‘remote
Unknown’, may choose to descend into a human being. To ‘elect’
means to choose. That human being then becomes a ‘vessel’ into which
the inexpressible Mystery pours as much of itself as the vessel can
hold. This is another kind of peak experience, the feeling that some
very high, mysterious power is pouring into you. What happens then?

   A breath comes down from a supernal air,
   A Presence is born, a guiding Light awakes,
A stillness falls upon the instruments:
Fixed, motionless like a marble monument,
Stone-calm, the body is a pedestal
Supporting a figure of eternal Peace.

A breath of life comes down into us from the supernal air which we cannot normally breathe, and ‘a Presence is born’, ‘a guiding Light awakes’; then everything in the human vessel becomes quiet: ‘a stillness falls upon the instruments’. Even the body becomes fixed, motionless like stone, like ‘a marble monument’, as if it is carved out of ‘marble’, stone that is very cool and pure and strong; the body becomes ‘stone-calm’ and forms ‘a pedestal’: a strong base for a statue or a building; this pedestal is ‘supporting a figure of eternal Peace’.

Or a revealing Force sweeps blazing in;
Out of some vast superior continent
Knowledge breaks through trailing its radiant seas,
And Nature trembles with the power, the flame.

This is also a descent, but of a different kind; instead of peace, ‘a revealing Force sweeps blazing in’: a force which gives knowledge pours into the human vessel with immense energy. ‘Out of some vast superior continent’ Knowledge breaks through the barrier of matter. A ‘continent’ is a huge, solid mass: an ocean is vast, unlimited, but fluid, liquid, flowing; a continent is solid, and usually below our feet; but this is a ‘superior continent’: although it is ‘superior’, above us, it is a vast solid mass of substance; from there ‘Knowledge breaks through trailing its radiant seas’: like a comet with its glowing tail, Knowledge pours down from above, with wide seas of radiating light following it as it comes. When that ‘revealing Force sweeps blazing’ into the human vessel ‘Nature trembles’, because the intensity of ‘the power, the flame’ is so difficult to bear.

A greater Personality sometimes
Possesses us which yet we know is ours:
Or we adore the Master of our souls.

Sometimes ‘a greater Personality’ comes and takes hold of us, ‘possesses us’; we may recognise as our own, so that we feel, ‘Oh
yes, this is my true self’; or we may adore it as ‘the Master of our souls’: a different way of experiencing and receiving the descent.

Then the small bodily ego thins and falls;
No more insisting on its separate self;
Losing the punctilio of its separate birth,
It leaves us one with Nature and with God.

If one of these wonderful peak experiences comes to us, our sense of our little limited ego, connected to our self-contained small body, becomes thin and may fall away completely; it loses its sense of limited individuality; it stops insisting on its separateness, it is ready to feel part of something much vaster; it loses ‘the punctilio of its separate birth’. The word ‘punctilio’ comes to us from Italian and Spanish and is used about people who are very particular about small details, especially details that have to do with their status, their dignity and honour: they want everyone to recognize that they are very important and must be treated properly; but the origin of the word is the Latin word ‘punctum’ which means ‘a point’. That is the way that our ego behaves: it is really nothing but a tiny point, but it thinks that it is very important; it wants the whole universe to take notice and behave properly towards it; but when one of those wonderful experiences comes the little ego loses its ‘punctilio’: it loses its sense of being a little point, and at the same time it loses its sense of being very important and needing to be respected. When that sense of separateness falls away, suddenly we can feel that we are ‘one with Nature and with God’.

In moments when the inner lamps are lit
And the life’s cherished guests are left outside,
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.

These are special moments. If we can manage to get a moment like that and light the inner lamps, shut out all the distractions of life, then the ‘spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs’: it communicates with its own depths, its deeper parts.

A wider consciousness opens then its doors;
Invading from spiritual silences
A ray of the timeless Glory stoops awhile
To commune with our seized illumined clay
And leaves its huge white stamp upon our lives.

When we are quiet like that, when we speak to our ‘gulfs’, ‘a wider consciousness opens then its doors’ and from the spiritual silences ‘a ray of the timeless Glory stoops awhile’: it bends down to touch us, to communicate with us, or like a great bird of life it swoops down and ‘communes’, communicates, with the body, with our ‘clay’, the substance of our physical body. The body is ‘seized’ and ‘illumined’, filled with the light of the ray that seizes it. That experience leaves a mark even after the ray gone; that mark will remain as a ‘huge white stamp upon our lives’. The Mother tells us that if we have such an experience it is important to remember its ‘stamp’, because the memory of it will help us to come back into communication again and again with the Power that seized us then.

In the oblivious field of mortal mind,
Revealed to the closed prophet eyes of trance
Or in some deep internal solitude
Witnessed by a strange immaterial sense,
The signals of eternity appear.

Our mortal mind is a field of forgetfulness: there is so much that we are unaware of, we are ‘oblivious’, we do not know what is going on; but when some communication like that comes, the eyes of the mind close in trance and we see things that otherwise we would not see, things that prophets see; or deep within, in ‘some deep internal solitude’ where we are all alone, ‘a strange immaterial sense’ that is not our normal sense of vision or hearing or touch, becomes aware of ‘the signals of eternity’. All these peak experiences are ‘signals of eternity’ that may come to us even in ‘the oblivious field of mortal mind’.

The truth mind could not know unveils its face,
We hear what mortal ears have never heard,
We feel what earthly sense has never felt,
We love what common hearts repel and dread;

These are different ways in which ‘signals of eternity’ may appear: as a revelation of ‘the truth mind could not know’, as if it ‘unveils its
face’; removing its veil, it shows itself and gives us some revelation or insight; or we may experience subtle hearing: ‘we hear what mortal ears have never heard’; our physical ears, which belong to this body which must die, have a certain capacity of hearing; but there is also an inner hearing, a subtle hearing. Or we may feel something. We have physical senses, our ‘earthly sense’: one of them is our sense of touch by which we feel things, but it is a limited physical touch; in that special state we may ‘feel what earthly sense has never felt’; we might feel something touching us, or fragrances may be experienced, or a special taste. The effect of these inner experiences changes our values: ‘we love what common hearts repel and dread’; in the ordinary consciousness people do not like being alone, they want to be with other people, they want to have lively and entertaining exchanges; when we begin to prefer to be quiet and silent, alone, it is a sign of the awakening of our inner being. But this might also apply to other things: sometimes we see very painful, ugly, hateful things or happenings; but if we are awake inside we can look through the appearances and see them in a deeper way and feel a great understanding and love and compassion. Sometimes the Divine Love brings us experiences which our ordinary nature would like to push away; it is only when the inner being is awake that we can feel, ‘Oh yes, this for my good’ and respond with acceptance and even gratitude. These are some of the experiences that can come when ‘our spirit sits alone and speaks to its guls’.

Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient;
A Voice calls from the chambers of the soul;
We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead’s touch
In golden privacies of immortal fire.

Our minds ‘hush’, they fall silent, and instead of their normal churning there is a consciousness full of light in which it is felt that everything is known. Or a Voice calls to us from the secret depths of our soul, ‘the chambers of the soul’. Or in some golden private place full of ‘immortal fire’ of undying intensity and purity, we might feel ‘the ecstasy of the Godhead’s touch’ a touch of the divine Presence with all the intense delight that it brings.

The description of these special experiences started at line 40 and now we have reached line 85; Sri Aurobindo has devoted 45 lines
to evoking some examples of what are sometimes called ‘peak experiences’, spiritual experiences. Now he will tell us what they mean.

These signs are native to a larger self
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives
And a diviner Presence moves the soul;

All these experiences are ‘signs’ which are ‘native’, natural and inborn, to a ‘larger self’ which is living within us ‘by ourselves unseen’; we are not usually aware of it because it is a subtle self. Only sometimes we may experience some sign of it; when it comes it brings ‘a holier influence’, a sense of something sacred; or it may bring a great wave of energy, ‘a tide of mightier surgings’; in our surface being we contain a certain amount of vital prana that carries our lives along; but in these exceptional moments, huge waves of energy may come and carry our lives, and the soul feels lifted up and moved by ‘a diviner Presence’.

Or through the earthly coverings something breaks,
A grace and beauty of spiritual light,
The murmuring tongue of a celestial fire.

‘Through the earthly coverings something breaks’: something from behind the veil breaks through the outer physical coverings and we experience an unearthly light, ‘a grace and beauty of spiritual light’ which brings a wonderful intensity: ‘the murmuring tongue of a celestial fire’. A flame looks like a tongue; the poet says that this tongue of ‘celestial fire’ is ‘murmuring’, making a sound, giving a message, communicating something. The heavenly fire of aspiration, the fire of higher will, is burning within us, and it breaks through ‘the earthly coverings’ of our dense physical matter.

Ourself and a high stranger whom we feel,
It is and acts unseen as if it were not;
It follows the line of sempiternal birth,
Yet seems to perish with its mortal frame.

This refers to the ‘something’ which breaks through the earthly coverings: it is ourself, but also ‘a high stranger whom we feel’.
Aurobindo has recounted an experience he had in his first year after his return to India: he was riding in a horse carriage in a crowded street when the horse got frightened and bolted. It was a moment of great danger: there could have been a serious accident. In that moment he felt a ‘high stranger’ who was himself, a divine presence above his head, seeing and controlling everything. When the incident was over, the sense of that presence was gone, everything was the same as before; he says ‘Only that deathless memory I bore.’¹ That Presence exists, ‘It is’, and it is acting, but it is acting and existing unseen to our surface being, as if it did not exist. That Something, that Presence ‘follows the line of sempiternal birth, / Yet seems to perish with its mortal frame’. The word ‘perish’ means to decay and spoil or eventually to die. There is something in us that seems to die when we die. We even say ‘It is because the soul has left the body – that is why we die’. But the soul does not die, it goes on, it is born again, it follows the line of many, many, many births; the eternal process of its birth is repeated over and over unendingly in time. We can say that this ‘something’ is what Sri Aurobindo calls our psychic being.

Assured of the Apocalypse to be,  
It reckons not the moments and the hours;  
Great, patient, calm it sees the centuries pass,  
Awaiting the slow miracle of our change  
In the sure deliberate process of world-force  
And the long march of all-revealing Time.

The psychic being is absolutely sure of the final revelation of the Divine in everything, ‘the Apocalypse’, the fulfilment; so it is not counting the moments and the hours, it is not counting so many past lives, so many more to come; it is patient: ‘Great, patient, calm it sees the centuries pass’. It is always waiting and working for the ‘slow miracle of our change’: our gradual change from this earthly being to the full manifestation of our true self. That slow miracle is sure to happen; the poet says that it is definitely going to happen ‘in the sure deliberate process of world-force’. The word ‘deliberate’ has two connotations: if you do something deliberately it means that you have thought about it and decided to do it; but it can also mean that you

¹. CWSA 2:607
take your time to do it very carefully; here both those meanings are present: ‘in the sure deliberate process of world-force’ the creative ‘world-force’ takes all the time needed to see that every detail is just as it intended to be; she is not concerned about how long it takes. The other factor is ‘the long march of all-revealing Time’: Time is gradually unrolling and revealing all the possibilities that have been put into this manifestation; they will all be revealed in the long slow ‘march of all-revealing time’.

    It is the origin and the master-clue,
    A silence overhead, an inner voice,
    A living image seated in the heart,
    An unwalled wideness and a fathomless point,
    The truth of all these cryptic shows in Space,
    The Real towards which our strivings move,
    The secret grandiose meaning of our lives.

These lines all refer to the divine Presence that is growing within us: ‘the origin’, the source of all the rest of our instrumentation, our life, mind, body, and capacities: they have all emerged from that original Divine consciousness, that seed of Divinity. It is ‘the master-clue’ which shows us the way, a sign or a light or a thread that we follow to find our way. If we are in a winding twisty labyrinth or maze, where we cannot find our way out, if someone or something gives us a clue, we have a thread that we can follow; the inner divine Presence is that ‘master-clue’, the master sign. If we can just get hold of the thread of that power, that Presence, that Divinity within, it will guide us through the most difficult circumstances. We may experience it as a silence in the higher levels of our consciousness. We may experience it as an inner voice, or as ‘a living image seated in the heart’. Another way of experiencing it is as ‘an unwalled wideness’ with no wall or limit, and as ‘a fathomless point’; a point so deep that the end of it can never be reached. In whatever way that ‘something’ reveals itself, it is ‘the truth of all these cryptic shows’. ‘Cryptic’ means puzzling, mysterious, difficult to understand. All the ‘shows’, the forms and shapes that we perceive in Space, are ‘cryptic’, their deeper meaning and significance is mysterious; within them all lies the truth of that Presence. All our efforts and strivings are moving towards the experience of the Real, the ultimate Reality because that Truth and that Reality is ‘the secret
A treasure of honey in the combs of God,
A Splendour burning in a tenebrous cloak,
It is our glory of the flame of God,
Our golden fountain of the world’s delight,
An immortality cowled in the cape of death,
The shape of our unborn divinity.

We find honey in the honeycombs that bees make. The sweetness of
honey is the symbol of delight, bliss, ananda. That Presence, that secret
truth of our lives, is ‘a treasure of honey in the combs of God’: these
‘cryptic shows’, all the appearances of the world, are containers that God
has created to hold his delight, his honey. His Presence within them is
‘a Splendour’, radiating light and power and beauty; it is ‘burning’ but
its flame is covered up by ‘a tenebrous cloak’ of shadows formed by our
physical body and our ignorant surface consciousness. That Presence is
‘our glory of the flame of God’: each of us has this glory of the flame of
God hidden within our cloak of shadows, and it is ‘our golden fountain
of the world’s delight’: from it pours the energy and delight that keep us
alive, without which we would just disintegrate; because this ‘golden
fountain of the world’s delight’ is within us, we go on through even
the greatest difficulties, the greatest sufferings. The divine Presence
within us is ‘an immortality cowled in the cape of death’. A ‘cowl’ is
the hood of a cloak which covers the head so that the face cannot be
seen. The immortality within us has hidden its face within this dark
cloak or ‘cape’, the disguise of death, of mortality. That Presence is
‘the shape of our unborn divinity’. It is ‘unborn’ in two senses: first,
that it has not yet fully manifested itself; it is within us as a seed and
a flame, waiting to be born; when it takes birth in us fully that will be
the psychic realisation and transformation; it is also ‘unborn’ and will
never die because it is an eternal portion of the Supreme Reality.

It guards for us our fate in depths within
Where sleeps the eternal seed of transient things.
That Presence is keeping safe deep within us our ‘fate’, our true destiny. Sometimes people think that fate means the bad things that happen in our life, but Sri Aurobindo says that our fate is the goal that our soul has chosen. The divine Presence within us is keeping that fate safe for us: our fate is sleeping deep within us ‘where sleeps the eternal seed of transient things’: there is an eternal seed which gives birth to all the ‘transient things’ that exist in the universe, which are not eternal but unfold and disappear in time, which come and go; there is an eternal seed deep within us which is giving birth to all the temporary happenings and circumstances of our lives; and all these things are meant to help us towards our ultimate fate, the destiny our soul has chosen.

Always we bear in us a magic key
Concealed in life’s hermetic envelope.

We are carrying within us ‘a magic key’ to the mysteries of existence; but it is ‘concealed’, hidden in ‘life’s hermetic envelope’. When something is ‘hermetically sealed’ nothing can get in at all: no air, no water, nothing. Sometimes this is important in manufacturing; a hermetic seal is needed that will be absolutely watertight and airtight, tight to everything; but the word ‘hermetic’ carries another suggestion too: it can mean ‘occult’, secret, in the sense that a special initiation is needed to penetrate it. There is a secret to ‘all these cryptic shows in space’: that is the Secret Knowledge which Sri Aurobindo will be sharing with us in this canto. Now he is introducing it to us gradually.

A burning Witness in the sanctuary
Regards through Time and the blind walls of Form;
A timeless Light is in his hidden eyes;
He sees the secret things no words can speak
And knows the goal of the unconscious world
And the heart of the mystery of the journeying years.

The ‘something’ within us is not only a Presence, not only a flame, a power: it is a consciousness, a consciousness which is watching: ‘a burning Witness’. In the ‘sanctuary’, the safe and sacred place deep within us, he is always watching. His eyes are hidden from us by ‘life’s hermetic envelope’, but there is a Light of consciousness in them which is not limited by time, it is ‘timeless’. He is looking through
Time, he is looking through ‘the blind walls of Form’, all the physical appearances; ‘he sees the secret things no words can speak’ and knows where the world is going to, ‘the goal of the unconscious world’. The world does not know where it is going, but the Witness knows; he is aware of ‘the heart of the mystery of the journeying years’. The unconscious world is travelling, time is travelling and carrying deep within it a mystery, a secret, and only that Witness consciousness is aware of the secret. We are all carrying that consciousness within us and all our aspirations, all our higher movements come from there. They come from the soul and are pure and noble and beautiful in their origin; as they pass through the ignorant outer layers of our being they get distorted, twisted this way or that way; but the original impulse is always coming from our innermost soul-need to move forward on the universal journey.

Since Shraddhavan’s comments on all the five cantos of Book One are now available in book form (see announcement below), in the next issue of Invocation we shall be discontinuing serial publication of the remaining sessions of The Book of Beginnings and instead beginning serialisation of ‘The English of Savitri’ exploration of Book Two, The Traveller of the Worlds.

Savitri in Sindhi

A recent addition to the Savitri reference collection in Savitri Bhavan is this translation of selected lines and passages from Sri Aurobindo’s epic translated into Sindhi by Dr. K.S. Punshi of Amravati. For each passage, the English text is given beside the Sindhi translation.
The English of Savitri

This book is based on transcripts of classes given by Shraddhavan at Savitri Bhavan from August 2009 to October 2010, covering all the five cantos of Book One of Savitri, the Book of Beginnings. Readers of Invocation will need no introduction to this series, but for this publication the articles earlier published in the journal have been thoroughly re-edited for greater conciseness and clarity. The intention is that this volume should be the first of a series aimed to assist understanding and appreciation of the poem which the Mother has characterised as ‘the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision’.


This book is also available in the following formats: as an epub file to be viewed on iPad in iBooks application (free); on Android phone or tablet using Mantano Reader (available on Google Play) (free); and on PC using Adobe Digital Editions, (http://www.adobe.com/in/solutions/ebook/digital-editions.html) (free); as a Kindle file that can be viewed on Kindle Reader iPad in Kindle application (available through Apple Apstore) (free); on Android phone or tablet using Kindle application (available on Google Play) (free); or on PC using Kindle for PC (http://www.amazon.com/gp/kindle/pc/download) (free); and as a portable pdf.

For details please see the Savitri Bhavan website savitribhavan.org
Two valuable new publications
From Havyavahana Trust

Meditations on Savitri
Book One, The Book of Beginnings

The final versions of Huta’s paintings covering the five cantos of Book One, accompanied by the corresponding passages from Sri Aurobindo’s poem; these paintings were made under the guidance of the Mother from 1961 to 1965 and subsequently retouched or repainted according to the Mother’s instructions. They are published here in their final forms for the first time.

276 pages, art paper, hard-bound, 127 full colour plates

About Savitri – Part One

This is a long awaited reprint of the Mother’s comments on the whole of Canto One of the first Book of Savitri, illustrated by Huta’s paintings inspired and approved by the Mother.


Both books are available from SABDA
G. N. Devy felt attracted to Sri Aurobindo’s literary works in the 1970s. He wrote his doctoral dissertation (1978) on Sri Aurobindo’s poetry and aesthetics. Later he moved to Baroda to teach English Literature at the Maharaja Sayajirao University. While doing further research on Sri Aurobindo’s activist work during the Baroda years, Devy came in contact with the tribal communities in Gujarat and decided to move to the Tejgadh village 90kms east of Baroda. He has established the Adivasi Academy there for spreading harmony. He writes in English, Marathi and Gujarati and has published over twenty books on literature, linguistics and anthropology. Recently, he has completed a comprehensive 50-volume Linguistic Survey of India. He has been honoured by many awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award for his book After Amnesia. In January 2014 he was awarded Padma Shri in recognition of his work with education for de-notified and nomadic tribes and his work on dying-out languages. An informed reader and student of Sri Aurobindo’s writings, he has honoured our friend Shri Kirit Thakkar by writing a Preface to the 4th volume of Savitrisabdamrut, which completes the latter’s translation of all Shraddhavan’s ‘English of Savitri’ commentaries of the five cantos of Book One of Savitri. We found this Preface so perceptive and revealing that we feel like sharing it with our readers here – for which Dr. Devy has kindly given his permission.
Sri Aurobindo’s magnum opus ‘Savitri’ has kept inspiring innumerable seekers of Truth. With its vast range of spiritual illuminations and the intricate detailing of myriad layers of realization, Savitri becomes the guiding star for every seeker in pursuit of the divine. The rishi who composed this epic spent several decades revising it, writing and re-writing parts till he felt certain that every word in every single line of the epic had the perfection that he expected of this great work of his. His being a polyglot scholar and having imbibed diverse traditions of great poetry – the Greek of Homer, the Latin of Virgil, the Sanskrit of Vyasa and Valmiki, the Italian of Dante and the English of Shakespeare and Milton – there is a highly complex web of allusions, cultural references and turns of phrase embedded in the poem, not easy to discern for the eye of even an erudite reader. Besides, understanding the language alone is not enough to fathom the depths of Sri Aurobindo’s vision in Savitri. It has within it an amazingly vast expanse of yogic experiences, schools of philosophy, mystical practices and visions of the divine. Hence, despite Savitri being the most extended, inclusive and explicit among the statements of Sri Aurobindo’s vision of life and the divinity enveloping it, a reading of Savitri without explicatory help is likely to impoverish the reading experience. Sri Aurobindo’s epic is like a deep ocean of meaning inviting readers to take a deeper plunge, and offering yet deeper recesses of meaning with every new plunge. Shraddhavan’s explication of the epic, Book by Book, Canto by Canto and Section by Section is the most helpful approach to Savitri for the community of seekers in the path of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga.

Shraddhavan’s method of explaining the epic is based on what is known in the history of English literary criticism as ‘New Criticism.’ Initially developed by F.R. Leavis and R.S. Crane, this method focuses on individual words and phrases and reads in them multiple layers of meanings beyond the mere surface meaning. This allows the readers to get insight into the functioning of the mind of the poet, giving them reasons to understand why exactly a certain phrase or element of diction is employed by the maker of the poem and how the phrase or the word relates to other associated phrases or diction of the poem. In the process, the explanation brings to the
reader the richness of the ‘texturing’ of the poem. Traditionally, the New Critical method is employed for unraveling lyrics by poets like Shelley and Keats. Shraddhavan has used this tool immensely gainfully in commenting on an epic, and particularly an epic of the highest symbolic power.

One needs to bear in mind that a symbolic poem yields its meaning through an intensely intuitive engagement with the sound, the subtleties of evocative layers of the text. However, this cannot happen, is not possible, unless the primary task of appreciating the beauties and the sinews of the individual phrases and words has been undertaken. In that direction, Shraddhavan has rendered invaluable help to lay readers of Savitri. For instance, when we are told that the English ‘yoke’ – derived from the Old English word ‘goec’ meaning a cross-bar used for making a defeated soldier stand under it as punishment – has some shared etymological past with the Sanskrit ‘yog’ or ‘yoga’, the element of surprise makes us look at the specific word and the line in which it occurs with a new sense of amazement. In order to allow the readers to fully appreciate the depths of the epic, Shraddhavan has followed the practice of selecting manageable sections of a Canto or a Book – in this case the sections of Canto Five of Book One of the poem.

Sri Aurobindo’s epic is written in English, and Shraddhavan’s commentary too is in English. Shri Kirit Thakkar, an ardent sadhak of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga, has taken upon himself the arduous task of bringing the commentary into the Gujarati language so that the illumination becomes easily accessible to aspiring readers whose command of the English language may not be adequate for grasping the mighty verse of the Master.

The task undertaken by Kirit-bhai is not without its challenges. For one thing, any commentary that follows the New Critical method of focusing on phrases and terms is highly resistant to transposition into another language. Kirit-bhai has devised excellent translation strategies by allowing the English terms to stand as they are in the original and giving side by side their Gujarati rendering. Then, the prose rhythm of the original commentary of Shraddhavan has a flow of its own, tuned to the English tradition of exegetical rhetoric,
quite necessary in English for taking the audience along with the thought-flow. In Gujarati, there is no comparable prose rhythm easily available. The language has a very different tradition for such texts. Kirit-bhai has overcome this major difficulty by using sentences made consciously shorter. This has eminently helped him in achieving his primary aim of bringing the illuminations of Shraddhavan to Gujarati readers. This kind of work requires a deep devotion and a complete surrender to the original, in this case both the great epic of Sri Aurobindo and the illuminating commentary by Shraddhavan. Shri Kirit Thakkar’s translation of the present segment of the on-going commentary on Savitri displays both these abundantly.

Normally, a good translation is one which effaces the original completely in such a way that the readers rarely think that it is a translation. In my case, I decided to read Kirit-bhai’s translation first before turning to Shraddhavan’s commentary and I found that the Gujarati text is capable of standing on its own entirely. The translator, therefore, deserves our applause. I have no doubt that Gujarati seekers of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga and lovers of Savitri will find this publication immensely useful. I would like to hope that Kirit-bhai will continue his translation series and bring the fullness of the epic home for Gujarati readers.

SAVITRI SHABDAMRUT Volume 4

Gujarati translation by Shri Kirit Thakkar of Shraddhavan’s ‘English of Savitri’ talks on Book One, Canto Five of Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri, along with a new essay on Book Two, The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds.

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250 pages. Price : Rs 80/- plus postage in Gujarat Rs. 10/-, outside Gujarat Rs. 30/-.
The Composition of *Savitri*

As we read, study and go deeper into Sri Aurobindo’s mantric epic it becomes interesting to know something about the process of composition by which it has come into existence. In an early issue of *Invocation* (no. 3, April 1999) we published some materials on this topic; here, for the interest of our readers, we are reproducing some extracts from the helpful and interesting ‘Note on the Text’ provided by the editors of the 1993 edition of the poem, which have been updated in the light of the latest research on the many manuscripts housed in the Sri Aurobindo Archives.

*Savitri* began as a narrative poem of moderate length based on a legend told in the Mahabharata. Sri Aurobindo considered the story to be originally ‘one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle’¹. Bringing out its symbolism and charging it progressively with his own spiritual vision, he turned *Savitri* into the epic it is today.

By the time it was published, some passages had gone through dozens of drafts. Sri Aurobindo explained how he wrote the poem:

> I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level. … In fact *Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one’s own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative.²

The following outline of the composition and publication of *Savitri* draws upon all existing manuscripts and other textual materials, supplemented by the author’s letters on the poem. In brief, *Savitri* took shape through three major phases.

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1. Sri Aurobindo, *Author’s Note to Savitri*
2. CWSA 27:272
(1) From 1916 to about 1920, Sri Aurobindo made a number of drafts of a narrative poem retelling in an original way the tale of Savitri and Satyavan. Its last version had a plan of eight books in two parts; the books were not divided into cantos.

(2) In the late 1920s, he set about converting this narrative poem into an epic. For a long time he concentrated on the description of Aswapati’s Yoga prior to the birth of Savitri, creating by 1945 a new Part One with three books and many cantos.

(3) In the last phase, besides revising Part One for publication, he reworked and enlarged most of the books written in the first period. He added a book on the Yoga of Savitri, making twelve books and forty-nine cantos in all and completing Parts Two and Three.

The opening of the first known version is dated “August 8th 9th / 1916”. Further dates occur later on in the draft. From the death of Satyavan to the end of Savitri’s debate with Death, the manuscript is marked every few pages with dates from a three-day period, 17-19 October. After this, the consecutive narration breaks off and the notebook contains only disconnected passages. Some of these are sketches for the conclusion of the poem. Most of them go back over what was already written. They represent the beginning of the long process of rewriting which was to continue until 1950.

This earliest surviving manuscript of Savitri shows every sign of being the first draft.\(^1\) It is one of the few versions that Sri Aurobindo dated. But even if precise dates cannot be assigned to them, the manuscripts of the poem can almost always be placed in a definite order after a careful comparison. This is because changes made when one draft was revised were usually incorporated in the next draft, which would then be further altered and most often expanded.

Initially the poem was short enough not to require division into books or cantos. Its sections were separated only by blank lines. But soon

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1. A slightly enlarged fair copy of this draft appeared in the Ashram journal *Mother India* from August 1981 to February 1982 under the title ‘Sri Aurobindo's First Fair Copy of His Earliest Version of Savitri’. It has recently been made available in digital format by The Overman Foundation of Kolkata (https://overmanfoundation.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/sri-aurobindos-earliest-draft-of-savitri-1916/).
Sri Aurobindo was dividing it into “Book I”, ending with the death of Satyavan, and “Book II”, recounting Savitri’s debate with and victory over Death. Next he adopted a scheme of six cantos and an epilogue. The canto titles were: Love, Fate, Death, Night, Twilight and Day.

After making a few drafts in cantos, he started substituting the word “book” for “canto”. There were now six books with the same names as the former cantos. Meanwhile the larger division had reappeared as two parts, “Earth” and “Beyond”. At first each part comprised three books, not counting the epilogue. But before long, the rapidly growing first book was broken up into two. The second book kept the name “Love”; the first was renamed “Quest”. A manuscript beginning with “Book I / Quest” has the title “Sâvithrî: A Tale and a Vision”. (In early versions, “Sâvithrî” was the usual spelling of the heroine’s name.) Sri Aurobindo referred to this stage in the poem’s history in a letter of 1936:

_Savitri_ was originally written many years ago before the Mother came [i.e., _before the Mother’s final arrival in 1920_], as a narrative poem in two parts, Part I Earth and Part II Beyond … each of four books—or rather Part II consisted of three books and an epilogue.¹

This was the plan of _Savitri_ at the end of the first phase of its composition. But the last manuscript actually completed was in six cantos and an epilogue. After “books” replaced the “cantos” and the number of books increased, some books were worked over several times. Others were hardly touched. There is a partial draft of “Book III / Death”, for example; there is none from the stage when “Death” would have been the fourth book. After 1945 when Sri Aurobindo incorporated material from the early poem into what was by then a full-fledged epic, he sometimes went back to a manuscript of the six “cantos” as his starting-point.

_Savitri_ was apparently put aside during the early 1920s, a period when Sri Aurobindo did little writing. The first evidence of its resumption is found in manuscripts belonging to the late 1920s. In a letter of 1931, Sri Aurobindo speaks of a radical change in the conception and scope of the poem. Already the subtitle, “A Legend and a Symbol”, is present in his mind:

¹. CWSA 27:277
There is a previous draft, the result of the many retouchings of which somebody told you; but in that form it would not have been a ‘magnum opus’ at all. Besides, it would have been a legend and not a symbol. I therefore started recasting the whole thing; only the best passages and lines of the old draft will remain, altered so as to fit into the new frame.¹

Throughout the thirties and early forties, it was primarily Book One that was affected by this recasting. At first this book was still called “Quest”. It extended as far as Savitri’s arrival at “The Destined Meeting-Place” (the eventual title of Book Five, Canto One). But by the early thirties, the brief description of the Yoga of King Aswapati near the beginning had swelled to hundreds of lines. What was to become the second and longest book of the epic, “The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds”, had also begun to take shape.

In a letter of 1936, Sri Aurobindo mentioned a new first book, the “Book of Birth”, carved out of the overgrown “Quest”. Another letter of the same year reveals the internal structure of this book. It was “divided into sections and the larger sections into subsections”. Up to this point, the books had been divided only into passages separated by spaces, as many cantos are now. As these sections increased in length, they were recognised as formal units and began to be named and numbered. Section marks (§) were usually put before and after the numbers.

The Book of Birth, whose last section related the birth and childhood of Savitri, was still disproportionately long and was constantly growing. Early in 1937, Sri Aurobindo expressed his intention of rearranging the opening books into a Book of Beginnings and a Book of Birth and Quest.

Progress on the poem was intermittent in the thirties due to Sri Aurobindo’s heavy load of correspondence. From the end of 1938 to mid-1940, work on Savitri was suspended.² But on 6 September 1942, a 110-page draft of the Book of Beginnings was completed. The fourth of its eight sections, “The Ascent through the Worlds”, accounted for

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1. CWSA 27:261
2. A version of Part One as it stood in early 1938 was published in three instalments in the Mother India issues of December 1982 and January and February 1983.
more than half the total length and had twelve subsections. In the next version, this section became Book Two with the title it now has. The last four sections were grouped into Book Three, “The Book of the Divine Mother”.

The second phase in the composition of Savitri reached its culmination when the first three books were written out in two columns on large sheets. Many passages, including the whole of the first and third books and much of the second, went through two or more drafts in this form. The last complete manuscript is dated “May 7. 1944” at the end.

It was while revising this manuscript that Sri Aurobindo reintroduced the word “canto” which he had not used since an early stage, applying it to the former “sections” of the books. At this point the third section of Book One, “The Yoga of the King”, was turned into Cantos 3-5 with their present titles. The three opening books were for the first time identified as “Part One”.

The two-column manuscript is the last continuous version of Part One in Sri Aurobindo’s hand. But he went on reworking Book One and passages throughout Book Two. For this purpose he began using small note-pads whose sheets, containing new or rewritten matter, could be torn out and pinned to the principal manuscript at the appropriate places.

By the mid-1940s, Sri Aurobindo’s eyesight was failing and his handwriting was becoming less and less legible. He needed the help of a scribe in order to put Books 1-3 into a finished form, take up the long-neglected later books, and prepare Savitri for publication. This third phase of its composition saw periods of rapid and decisive progress. But it was to be interrupted the month before Sri Aurobindo’s passing, a little short of definitive completion.

Much had still to be done with the first part. Sri Aurobindo asked the scribe to read the last version to him. After dictating changes, insertions and transpositions, he had his assistant copy it into a large ledger. This copy was meticulously revised before being given to another disciple for typing. The typescript in its turn was read out to Sri Aurobindo and similarly revised. Heavily revised pages were often retyped. The same process was sometimes repeated, especially in the later cantos of Book Two, where three typed copies exist.
Savitri now began to appear in print, though not yet in its final form. The first and third books were brought out canto by canto from August 1946 to February 1948 in journals connected with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. They were also published in fascicles identical to the journal instalments. The second book was issued in 1947 and 1948 in two large fascicles. Differences between the typescripts and the printed texts show that proofs of the latter must have been revised in detail by Sri Aurobindo. Afterwards a copy of each fascicle was read to him. Even at this advanced stage, he made extensive alterations and added new lines and passages.

Meanwhile he had turned his attention to the later books. The plan of Parts Two and Three resembled that of the pre-1920 poem, whose books had been divided into “Earth” (Quest, Love, Fate, Death) and “Beyond” (Night, Twilight, Day, Epilogue). By 1945, however, most of these books had remained untouched for twenty-five years. Everything written under what Sri Aurobindo termed in 1934 “the old insufficient inspiration” would have to be thoroughly recast. Moreover, a new book had been conceived: The Book of Yoga. Destined to become one of the longest in the epic, six of its seven cantos were still to be drafted.

The material in the Book of Birth and Quest had for a long time been included in Book One. As a result it had gone through several drafts in the 1930s, while other books lay dormant. The last book to be set aside, it was also the first to be taken up again. One manuscript of it precedes the 1942 draft of the Book of Beginnings. The final version was evidently written within a year or so of this. Since much work had already been done on it, this book needed less modification than others. Yet especially in the first two cantos, Sri Aurobindo dictated substantial changes and additions when he revised the manuscript and typescript.

The Book of Love shared to some extent in the good fortune of the previous book during the thirties and early forties. But the last version in Sri Aurobindo’s hand, in the notebook which starts with his final manuscript of Book Four, breaks off in the middle of the second canto. The continuation is in the scribe’s hand. It was copied there probably two or three years later when the systematic revision of the later books had been undertaken.
The remainder of this notebook contains the scribe’s copy of Books Six, Nine and Ten, reworked from the corresponding books in the old poem, expanded, divided into cantos and renamed “The Book of Fate”, “The Book of Eternal Night” and “The Book of the Double Twilight”. Once Sri Aurobindo had done enough with Books Four and Five for the time being, it appears that he took up these three books one after the other. After Book Six, he skipped to Book Nine, postponing extensive work on Books Seven and Eight. However, he may have revised slightly the versions of the original third book or canto, “Death”, on which Book Seven, Canto One and the present Book of Death are based.

Drafts of “Fate”, “Night” and “Twilight” had been written on one side of loose sheets of paper, like other cantos or books in several early versions of Savitri. This facilitated the complex process of revision which was now set in motion. When the space between lines and in the margins was filled up, the backs of the pages were available. In extreme cases, whole cantos were written on the reverse sides of the pages with little relation to what was on the front. Sri Aurobindo drafted many passages in small note-pads of the type used for Part One. Lines for Books Five and Nine and large portions of Books Six and Ten were written in this way.

Canto Two of Book Six was almost entirely new. The passages drafted for it were transferred by the scribe to another note-pad, with changes dictated by Sri Aurobindo at the time.

The metamorphosis which the Book of Fate underwent included the introduction of the Queen: some of Aswapati’s later speeches in the old version were now given to her, and her long speech at the beginning of Canto Two was composed. Sri Aurobindo worked on this book in 1946 and brought it close to its final form. But he was to return to it at the end and add significantly to the second canto.

An early manuscript of “Night” was substantially revised and turned into the two cantos of Book Nine. But in this instance Sri Aurobindo seems to have found the pre-1920 version more adequate than usual. He left it intact to a greater extent than in the case of other books on which he bestowed his full attention in the 1940s. Only the Book of Death and the Epilogue stayed closer to their original shape, but he always intended to come back to these.
On the other hand, old drafts of “Twilight” formed merely a starting-point for the four cantos of Book Ten. The speeches of Savitri and Death were refashioned, rearranged in their order, and new ones inserted. As he proceeded from one canto to the next, Sri Aurobindo added longer and longer passages that were quite new. The first section of Canto One, the long speech of Death which ends Canto Two, all but the last few pages of Canto Three, and most of Canto Four—especially its second half, where Savitri finally triumphs over Death—owe little or nothing to any early version.

In a letter of 22 April 1947, Sri Aurobindo summarised the status of the various books of the second and third parts. Books Four, Five, Six, Nine and Ten had by then “been completed, in a general way, with a sufficient finality of the whole form but subject to final changes in detail”.¹ The other four books were far from even a provisional completion. A “drastic recasting of the last two books” was felt to be needed and “only a part of the eleventh” had been subjected to that process. But a yet larger task lay ahead, the splitting up of the original Book of Death and the writing of the new cantos that would go into the Book of Yoga. In his letter of April 1947 Sri Aurobindo did not say what he planned to do next. But there are reasons to believe that, rather than going on directly from Book Ten to Book Eleven, he now retraced his steps to Book Seven.

The description of Savitri’s Yoga, complementing that of Aswapati’s Yoga in Part One, was drafted in a thick notebook whose first hundred pages are filled with drafts for Book Ten, Canto Four. By March 1947, even before finishing the tenth book, Sri Aurobindo had begun to use this notebook for preliminary work on Book Seven. The scribe was not asked to copy the semi-legible handwriting of the draft. Instead, Sri Aurobindo dictated to him the lines he had jotted down, often in a somewhat different form. The dictated version was extensively revised before a typed copy was made.

The Book of Yoga had four cantos at first. But the second, “The Parable of the Finding of the Soul”, grew to an inordinate length. When the typescript was revised, it was broken up into Cantos 2-5, from “The Parable of the Search for the Soul” to “The Finding of

¹ CWSA 27:270
the Soul”. Revision of the typed copy was so elaborate in places (as elsewhere, especially in Book Six, Canto Two and in Book Eleven) that sometimes there was not enough room on the page. The scribe would then write on separate slips of paper, attaching as many as ten of these to a single page of the typescript.

Canto One of Book Seven has a different background. Early in the evolution of Savitri, the third canto of the poem (later, the third book) was called “Death”. It described the year leading up to Satyavan’s death as well as the fatal day itself. The latest version, with the heading “Book III”, is incomplete and stops before the last day. Sri Aurobindo used this manuscript as far as it goes when he put Book Seven, Canto One into its present form.

The second half of an earlier “Canto III” had to be used as the manuscript for Book Eight. It was revised slightly near the beginning and a substantial passage was dictated at the end. Sri Aurobindo apparently intended to return to the Book of Death, but this was not to be. On 20 July 1948 he was compelled to admit, “even Savitri has very much slowed down and I am only making the last revisions of the First Part already completed; the other two parts are just now in cold storage.”¹ When the later parts were taken up again, the most important task remaining was evidently to bring the almost untouched eleventh book up to the level of what preceded it. The old “Book VII / Day” on which it would be based was among the best-developed portions of the early poem. But after thirty years, Sri Aurobindo had more to say at the climax of Savitri.

There was also the Epilogue; but the contemplated revision of this must have seemed less essential to the total design. Although a few pages of an early version were significantly retouched at some stage, the concluding two sections of the Epilogue stayed almost exactly as they were. Thus the closing pages of the epic, like most of Book Eight, remained as a sample of the style in which Savitri was originally written.

Near the end of his life, Sri Aurobindo’s eyesight was so poor that he no longer wrote at all. He made no more drafts for Savitri and the

¹. CWSA 27:271
work proceeded entirely by dictation. Virtually the whole revision of “The Book of Everlasting Day” was done in this purely oral manner and may be inferred to belong to this late period. There exist only a few pages of drafts for it in Sri Aurobindo’s hand, found in note-pads he used around 1946. He was probably referring to these when he wrote in 1947 that he had already recast “part of the eleventh” book.

Book Eleven culminates in the longest continuous dictated passage in Savitri. The passage was written by the scribe in a separate note-pad and seems to have no antecedent in any previous draft. This is the section which begins on p. 702 with “Descend to life …”, and ends at the bottom of p. 710 with “This earthly life become the life divine.” Regarding Sri Aurobindo’s dictation in Book Eleven, the scribe reports that “line after line began to flow from his lips like a smooth and gentle stream and it was on the next day that a revision was done to get the link for further continuation.”

By this time, cantos of Parts Two and Three were coming out in journal instalments and fascicles like those of Part One. Most of the cantos of Books Four, Five, Six and Nine were published in this way in 1949-50. Unlike the fascicles of the first part, they were not revised afterwards by Sri Aurobindo. But in 1948, an extract from Book Six, Canto Two had already been printed in the Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual. An offprint of this was read to Sri Aurobindo and the changes he dictated were incorporated in a retyped copy. The painstaking revision of this second typescript was reportedly the last work he did on Savitri. A short paragraph before the concluding description of Narad’s departure was the final passage to receive detailed attention in November 1950, less than a month before Sri Aurobindo’s passing. The thirteen-line paragraph was expanded to the seventy-two lines beginning “Queen, strive no more to change the secret will….”

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News from Savitri Bhavan

Some Highlights since November

*The English of Savitri in book form*

In the first days of December, the final matter for a book entitled *The English of Savitri* was given to the Auroville Press. It consists of thoroughly revised and edited transcripts of Shraddhavan’s weekly classes at Savitri Bhavan, covering the whole of Book One of *Savitri* – The Book of Beginnings. This is intended to be the first of a series. The second volume, planned for publication later in 2015, will deal with Book Three – The Book of the Divine Mother, and a third, covering Book Seven – The Book of Yoga, is also in preparation. The first volume was released by Dr. Prema Nandakumar on February 19th, on the occasion of the 5th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture. For details of the book, please refer to the announcement on page ???

**Book Seven, The Book of Yoga**

A workshop on this Book was held for 12 instructors from an Integral Yoga centre in the Netherlands from January 6 to 27. It consisted of 9 sessions led by Shraddhavan. The first session was gave an overview of Books One to Six of the poem, then each of the cantos of Book Seven was explored in turn, in a series of seven sessions. The concluding session gave an all-too brief summary of Books Eight to Twelve. All the sessions were recorded, and supplementary study materials were provided to the participants.

**Meditations on Savitri exhibition and book**

During the months of November 2014 to February 2015, members of the Savitri Bhavan team gave support and assistance to the Trustees of Havyavahana Trust with three projects: a) the first publication of the final version of Huta’s *Meditations on Savitri* paintings for the whole of Book One, The Book of Beginnings; b) the long-overdue reprinting of Part One of the *About Savitri* series, which contains
the Mother’s comments on the first canto of Sri Aurobindo’s epic, illustrated with paintings by Huta inspired by the Mother’s comments and approved by her; and c) the preparation of an exhibition of the 125 Meditations on Savitri paintings covering Books Four to Seven: The Book of Birth and Quest, The Book of Love, The Book of Fate, and The Book of Yoga. This display was held in the Exhibition Hall of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry from February 17 to 24 – the first time that Huta’s paintings had been shown there since the full exhibition of the entire series, arranged by the Mother in February 1967. The Meditations on Savitri volume as well as the reprinted About Savitri – Part One were released in February by the Havyavahana Trust. For details please see page 23.

Nadkarni Memorial lecture
The 5th Dr. MV Nadkarni Memorial Lecture was originally planned for 13 August 2014, but unfortunately had to be postponed, because Mrs. Nadkarni was unable to join us on that date. Dr. Prema Nandakumar generously agreed to speak instead on February 19 2015, on the theme Living with Savitri. The text of her talk appears on pages 4-23 of this issue.
During our recent trip to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville, I had a few experiences especially at the march-pass before the mass display in the sports ground and with the OM Choir and visiting Sri Aurobindo’s room on the 5th December Darshan.

I was at first skeptical about the OM Choir. I believe in the power of OM but wondered why it is called a choir. The answer was revealed to me during the OM Choir session held at Savitri Bhavan.

The OM Choir of about one hundred people who were mostly non-professional singers began with the singing of the first five notes of the western music major key as warming up exercises. This is to prepare our voice for singing the OM, like and other singers or athletes who need warming up.

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1. Devotee from Singapore
I was able to recognise the five notes of the warming up exercises because there is a structure. But when the choir started to sing, there was no structure. There was total freedom.

In western and eastern music, musicians try to achieve freedom with improvisation. However what they achieve is improvisation within a structure. There is no total freedom.

Because there is no structure, each member is free to sing the OM in any pitch and no one is able to sing “out of tune”. Yet, there is harmony. This is the mystery of the OM Choir.

Another mystery that I discovered: the sound I heard that evening was more beautiful than the music produced by Sunil from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Ravi Shankar or any western or eastern musicians and singers. My wife asked me, “Is the music from the CD player?”

I had another strange experience. After listening to the music I chose a pitch to sing the OM but the OM I produced was different from what I had prepared mentally to sing. This made me realise that the OM Choir produces music that is beyond the mind.

In Singapore we have started the OM Choir. It will be great if we can have an annual international OM Choir meeting where one thousand people from all over the world gather under the Banyan tree in Auroville to sing the OM.

Savitri Bhavan website
savitribhavan.org

On this site you can find all kinds of information and materials from Savitri Bhavan, including all the back issues of Invocation in pdf format, an interactive architectural plan of the complex, the monthly calendar of activities, and audio and video recordings. Currently, videos of Shraddhavan’s weekly English of Savitri classes are available, covering Books Three, Four and Five.
Regular Weekly Activities:

Sundays 10.30-12 noon Savitri Study Circle
Mondays 7-8am Sanskrit Chanting
3-4pm ‘Yoga and the Evolution of Man’ led by Dr. Jai Singh
5-6pm ‘The Integral Yoga in Savitri’ led by Dr. Ananda Reddy
Tuesdays 3-4pm ‘Yoga and the Evolution of Man’ led by Dr. Jai Singh
4-5pm L’ Agenda de Mère – listening to recordings with Gangalakshmi
4.45-5.45pm ‘Mudra-chi, led by Anandi
5-6pm Savitri study in Tamil led by Sudarshan
5.45-7.15pm OM Choir
Wednesdays 9-12 Workshop on Integral Yoga, led by Ashesh Joshi
5.30-6.30pm Reading The Life Divine led by Shraddhavan
Thursdays 7-8am Sanskrit Chanting
4-5pm The English of Savitri led by Shraddhavan
Fridays 3-4pm ‘Yoga and the Evolution of Man’ led by Dr. Jai Singh
4-5pm L’ Agenda de Mère – listening to recordings with Gangalakshmi
Saturdays 4-5pm L’ Agenda de Mère : listening to recordings with Gangalakshmi
5-6.30pm Satsang led by Ashesh Joshi

Monthly Activities:

Full Moon Gatherings in front of Sri Aurobindo’s statue every month on the Full Moon Day.

Special Events

October:

1-31 Three exhibitions: Meditations on Savitri: Books Two and Three – 110 paintings made by Huta under the Mother’s guidance.
Glimpses of the Mother’s Life: Photographs and textsl
Sri Aurobindo : A Life-Sketch in Photographs

6 Film: Auroville, The City The Earth Needs
8 Workshop for a Chinese group led by Ashesh Joshi.

13 Film: *The Aim of Life*

20 Film: *Let us work to restore The Veda: Part I*: a talk given by Shri Kireet Joshi at a conference in Jaipur in 2006.

20-25 Intensive Course on Sanskrit given by Dr. Sampadananda Mishra.

27 Film: *Meditations on Savitri*: Book 11: The Book of Everlasting Day

31-2 Well Being Pranayama Workshop of 3 sessions by JV Avadhanulu.

**November:**

1-30 Exhibitions: *Glimpses of the Mother’s Life*  
*Sri Aurobindo: A Life-Sketch in Photographs*

3 Film: *Let us work to restore The Veda: Part 2*

10 Film: *Shri Kireet Joshi: Let us work to restore The Veda: Part 3*

13 A group of people from Sweden visited Savitri Bhavan and Shraddhavan gave a talk.

17 The Mother’s Chair was on display in the Square Hall on 17th, the Mother’s Mahasamadhi day, from 9am-5pm for concentration.

17 Films: *The Mother, Glimpses of Her Life* and *Adoration of the Divine Mother*

24 Film: *Meditations on Savitri*: Book Twelve: Epilogue, The Return to Earth

28-30 Well Being Pranayama Workshop of 3 sessions by J. V. Avadhanulu.

*On December 18th 2014, Australian singers Heather Lee and Kim Cunio presented a passage from Book Three of Savitri in the style of Gregorian chant*
December:
1 Film: *The Mother on Sri Aurobindo*
8 Film: *Let us work to restore The Veda, Part 4*
15 Film: *Let us work to restore The Veda, Part 5*
15 Exhibition: Meditations on Savitri: Books Eight to Twelve
22 Film: *Journey of Love*: the third Dr. MV Nadkarni Memorial Lecture by Dr. Alok Pandey.
29 Film: *Meditations on Savitri: Book One, Canto 1: The Symbol Dawn*

January 2015:
5 Film: *Home* by Jann Arthus Berthaud shows the beauty of the Earth seen from above.
12 Film *The Genius of India* based on Sri Aurobindo’s *The Renaissance in India.*
19 Film: *Let us work to restore The Veda, Part 6.*
22-24 Well Being Pranayama Workshop of 3 sessions by J.V.Avadhanulu
26 Film: ‘Meditations on Savitri: Book One Canto 2: The Issue
31 Musical Offering: Traditional melodies and improvisations from Turkey: recital by Tugay Basar on the Ney, a traditional Turkish reed flute.

Tugar Basar playing the Turkish Ney, a flute used especially for sacred music.
February
2 Film: *Building Matrimandir: Labour of Love 1971-2008*
9 Film: *Pictures of Sri Aurobindo’s Poems, Part One* - Paintings and recitations by Huta
16 Film: *The Teachings of Flowers: the life and work of the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram*  
19 *Living with Savitri*: the 5th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture, given by Dr. Prema Nandakumar
23 Film: *Meditations on Savitri: Book One Canto 3, The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul’s Release*

March
2 2 filmed talks by Shri Kireet Joshi: *Auroville, the City the Earth needs*, Parts 1 and 2 and *Interview in March 2013*
6 *The Eternity Game* and *The Golden Ball*: presentation by Franz Fassbender of the psychological oracle game invented by Yvonne Artaud and Medhananda
9 Film: *The Yoga of the Earth* The Mother’s reading and comments on selected passages from Book One, Canto One of *Savitri* illustrated by Huta
12 Inaugural meditation for the Auroville Retreat
15 Violin recital by Ladislav Brozman
16 Film: *Sri Aurobindo and his Dreams for the Future of Mankind.*
20 *The Eternity Game* and *The Golden Ball*: presentation by Franz Fassbender of the psychological oracle game invented by Yvonne Artaud and Medhananda
23 Film: *Pictures of Sri Aurobindo’s Poems, Part Two*: paintings and recitations by Huta.

The University of Human Unity offered the following advanced seminars from January 22 to March 15 at Savitri Bhavan:
1) *The Vedic Gayatri Mantra* in the context of the original Yoga of the ancient Rishis: Vedic philology and philosophy presented by Nishta Muller.
2) *The Philosophy of Consciousness: Hegel and Sri Aurobindo*: philosophical thought by Rod Hemsell.
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.
TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF SAVITRI BHAVAN

Savitri Bhavan is mainly dependent on donations, and all financial help from well-wishers is most welcome. Please consider how to help the dream of Savitri Bhavan to become a reality.

By Credit/Debit card transfer
Access www.auroville.com/donations and enter the amount you wish to offer. Amounts of INR 500 to INR 10,000 are accepted. Specify ‘Savitri Bhavan’ as the recipient. Please be aware that charges will be deducted from the amount before it enters our account, and that therefore the amount mentioned on our receipt will be less than the exact amount that you sent. This will be a consideration if you require tax relief on your offering.

By Cheque or DD
Cheques and DDs should be made payable to Auroville Unity Fund and sent to Savitri Bhavan at the address given below. 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 in India
To send your offering through Internet Banking or direct transfer, it should be sent to State Bank of India : Branch code No. 03160 : Current account no. 10237876031; For 100% tax exemption under section 35 (i) (iii) of the IT Act use Current account no. 31612623238.

If you live Abroad
To send your offering by SWIFT Transfer, please use the following code:

SWIFT (IFSC) Code : SBININBB474
State Bank of India, Branch Code 0003160
Auroville International Township Branch
Kuilapalayam Auroville 605101 INDIA
Auroville Unity Fund Foreign Account no. 10237876508
Purpose “SAVITRI BHAVAN”

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Savitri Bhavan is a unit of SAIIER
(Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research)
Savitri is a Mantra for the transformation of the world

The Mother