

# Invocation

*Savitri*

---

B H A V A N

*Study notes No. 47*

*INVOCATION is an occasional publication of SAVITRI BHAVAN  
in Auroville. All correspondence may be addressed to:*

**SAVITRI BHAVAN  
AUROVILLE 605101, TN  
INDIA**

*Telephone: 0413-2622922  
e-mail: savitribhavan@auroville.org.in  
www.savitribhavan.org*

*This publication has been funded by SAIER  
(Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research)*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*Unless otherwise indicated all quotations and photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are copyright of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, reproduced here with acknowledgements and thanks to the Trustees. We are particularly grateful for permission to use the word 'Invocation' in Sri Aurobindo's handwriting as our banner.*

*Edited by Shraddhavan for Savitri Bhavan, Auroville  
Design by Prisma, Auroville  
Printed at Auroville Press, Auroville*

*November 2017*

## C O N T E N T S

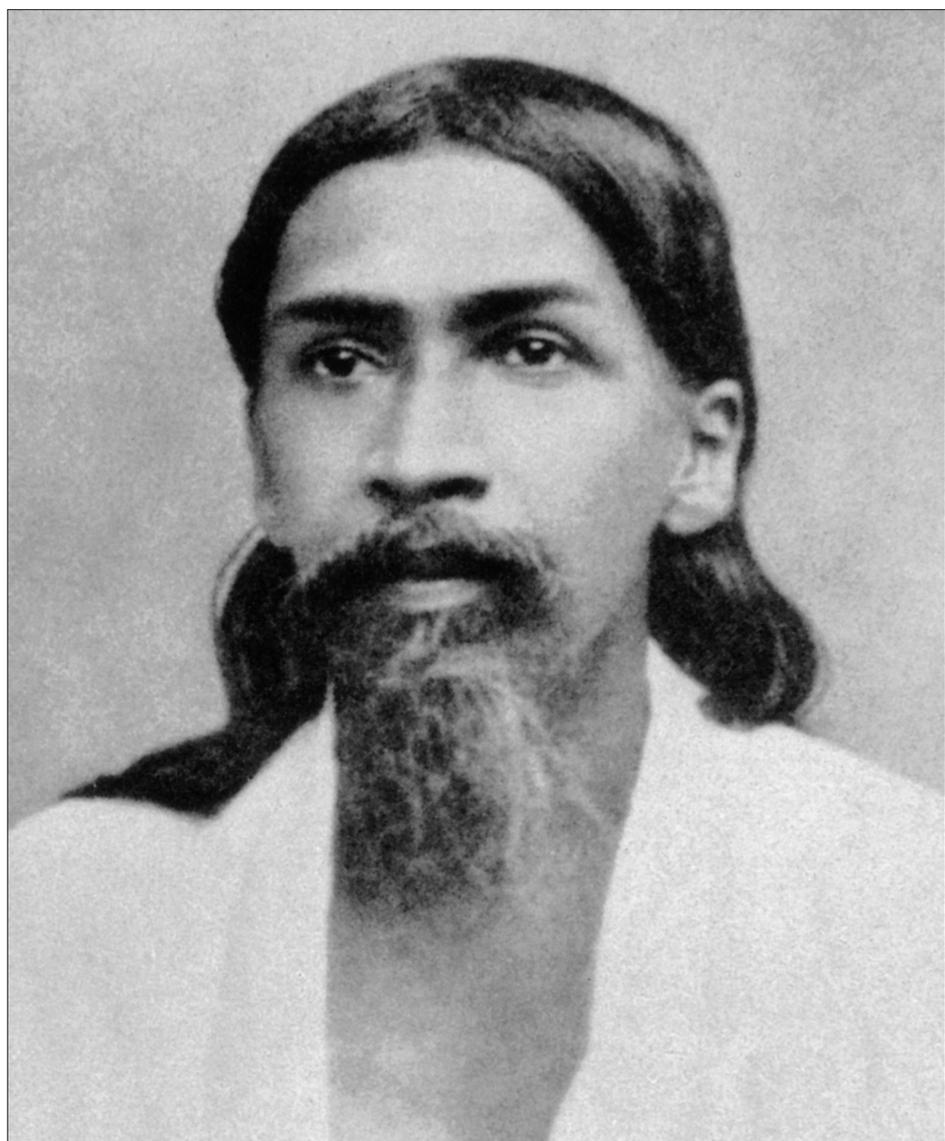
|   |    |
|---|----|
| Some Vedic Insights into <i>Savitri</i> :<br><i>Extracts from a talk at Savitri Bhavan</i><br><i>November 16, 2005 by Dr. R. L. Kashyap</i> | 4  |
| The English of <i>Savitri</i><br><i>by Shraddhavan</i>  | 10 |
| Savitri Readers' Foundation Bhubaneswar:<br>The Journey So Far<br><i>by Bharat Bhusan</i>   | 53 |
| News of Savitri Bhavan<br><i>Some Highlights</i>  | 55 |
| Calendar of Events<br><i>March to October 2017</i>  | 59 |

24.11.2017

*(91st anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's Siddhi Day)*

Sri Aurobindo's message  
is an immortal sunlight  
radiating over the future.

THE MOTHER  
MCW 13:19



# Some Vedic Insights into *Savitri*:

*Extracts from a talk at Savitri Bhavan*

*November 16, 2005 by Dr. R. L. Kashyap*

*Vedanga Vidvan Dr. R.L. Kashyap is the Honorary Director of the Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastry Institute of Vedic Culture (SAKSI) in Bangalore. He is the author of many books on the Vedas, and is passing his great learning on to the younger generation through workshops and classes. Amongst Aurobindonians, he is also known for his unique insights into Savitri. We were fortunate to have him with us at Savitri Bhavan in November 2005. Here are some extracts from the talk he gave then.*<sup>1</sup>

## **Mantra**

Each mantra has three components. First there is the component of sound; that is why we insist that it must be chanted properly – because each word has a power of its own. Second, each mantra has a meaning – *artha*. The meaning is not simply a composite of the words; rather, when you know the words and read them correctly there is an explosion as it were in your mind. That is what the Sanskrit grammarians called the *sphota*. That is the meaning. But why should we need both of them? Because each mantra represents a revelation to the rishi of a *darshana*, of, shall we say, a supraphysical event; the mantra is a compressed version of that *darshana*; therefore when you recite it correctly, knowing its meaning, then the decompression starts and the *darshana* becomes revealed to you. This is why it is important for us to understand these points: why we have to recite it properly, to take the trouble of knowing the meanings of the words, and of course reading with devotion is an essential part of the thing; with these three things together you get the *darshana*. These are the three steps towards

---

1. The full text of Dr. Kashyap's talk was published in *Invocation* 26 of February 2007.

the revelation of the deeper meaning of the mantra. Whenever we speak of mantras, this is the common factor of all of them. That being the case, each mantra has its own power of suggestion. Therefore, speaking of mantra, Sri Aurobindo calls it ‘the word of Illumination’.

### **The meaning of ‘Aswapati’**

Sri Aurobindo planned to write a commentary on the Upanishads. He did not complete all of it, but the first phrase of the Brihad Aranyaka made a big impression on him. The first section of the first chapter of the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad represents the *aswa*, the sacrificial horse, as the entire manifestation. The first mantra reads:

*Ushava ashwasya medhyasya shiraha*

Sri Aurobindo translates it as:

Dawn is the head of the horse sacrificial.

In a footnote, he adds the following explanation:

Aswa meant originally “being, existence, substance”. From the sense of speed & strength it came to mean “horse”. The word is therefore used to indicate material existence & the horse (the image usually conveyed by this name) is taken as the symbol of universal existence in annam [i.e. matter – S.]. The horse is symbolic & the sacrifice is symbolic. We have in it an image of the Virat Purusha, of Yajnya Purusha, God expressing himself in the material universe.

The name of Savitri’s father is Aswapati. Sri Aurobindo translates it as ‘The Lord of the Horse’. But we should understand that when Sri Aurobindo speaks of Aswapati, he is not speaking of the ordinary horse, not even of only the life energy – normally when we speak of *aswa* there is always the limited idea of a vital energy – but he is referring to a different power: the energy of the entire manifestation.

### **The Worlds**

As you know, we are made up of seven worlds. There is the world of Matter – *anna*; there is the world of all our vital energies, *prana*;

there are the lower vital and the upper vital: all our high ideals and that sort of thing are the upper vital, cravings are the lower one, and all of these energies come under the *prana*; and then there is Mind. Mind is made up of the *indriyas* or nerves, the five senses which control them, plus the *manas* which exudes our actions, plus the *buddhi*, the power of judgment – What should I do, this or that? – plus everything in which it floats, called *chitta*. This is our Mind.

Sri Aurobindo says, take the animal: the animal when it sees with the eye, that is the decision-maker: the sense is the decision-maker; but when we come to the human being, there is a difference: the *buddhi* takes a decision and asks the *manas* to carry it out. So we have *anna*, *prana*, *mana*, these are the three lower principles. Corresponding to them are three higher principles, *sat*, existence; *chit*, consciousness-force; and *ananda*, bliss. Sri Aurobindo always says that Ananda is the foundation of the world. The Taittiriya Upanishad says:

*Anandena khalu imani sarvani bhutani jayante.*

The whole world comes out of this ananda, *anandena jivanti*.

To make a loose comparison, when we speak of *sat* it is something that has formed everything else; therefore we can connect *sat* with Matter, *chit* with prana and *ananda* with the mind. What is the difference between the top three and the bottom three? The bottom three are also divine powers, except that they have forgotten their divine source. They have forgotten that there is a unity among them, so they are always fighting. The vital is fighting, ‘I want this I want this.’ Mind is saying, ‘No, you have a heart problem don’t eat it.’ The body says, ‘I can’t handle your demands’. So they are always fighting. Why does death come? Death comes because the soul has decided that the body simply cannot handle any more experiences. The soul says “I quit” and as a result death starts, not the other way round.

That being the case, there is an intermediate plane, known as the *mahas*. The Upanishad calls it *mahas*, The Veda calls it *vignana* – that is the fourth world. The point is that when the original manifestation takes place, Sacchidananda, when it comes to the *mahas* the unity remains intact. It remembers from where it has

come, it is intact. But when it comes down from there to *anna-prana-mana* that unity vanishes. Therefore, when we speak of the recovery of the Supermind, what are we saying? We want to recover the integral features, to remember. There is a permanent memory in our consciousness. *Anna-prana-mana* comes directly from that. That integral knowledge is not the ordinary knowledge. It is something else, Sri Aurobindo calls it '*The Greater Knowledge*'. Each of these different worlds has its own '*loka*', meaning 'world'. Each world is built by a particular level of consciousness, it has a structure of its own and its own powers which rule it, its gods and godheads. Sri Aurobindo wanted to put down all the intuitions he had in these seven planes. That is the connection between the Veda and *Savitri*.

The whole of the second book of *Savitri*, Aswapati's book, is concerned with the description of the World-Stair; not just a simple description like "A is here, B is there" but also how to ascend it, first point, and then point number two: what is the goal of this human life? That is the whole point. The World-Stair really goes from one peak to another. What is the earliest reference for that? It is in the Rig Veda, in the very early part, the First Mandala, 10th Sukta, second mantra, which is dedicated to Indra.

In the Veda two ideas are always there: The idea of climbing and the idea of a boat journey, that our life is like travelling in a boat: *naveva sindhum*. And then it speaks of rebirth as an educational tour. Dhīrghatamas is a poet in the first Mandala who is known for exceedingly complex symbolism, in whatever he writes. He writes in his first Mandala, 140th Sukta, 12th mantra, that our whole life is not a journey in a single boat: rather we travel in one boat, finish our task, then take another boat and do another task, then a third boat and so on.

Some people want to have complete liberation. They do not want to come back here. Other people, like us for example, want to have rebirth because each birth is an experience for getting more and more perfection. That is the reason why we see a person at the age of 4 becoming a great musician: because he has carried over his attainment of perfection in an earlier birth. He stops, he becomes

something else: maybe he becomes a mathematician, or he becomes a sculptor. So it goes on and on and on. Therefore we look forward to a new life because we are moving from one perfection to another perfection. These are the voyages of the spirit. Both these ideas are there in the Veda: climbing the peak, and voyaging. The voyage image is the one Sri Aurobindo uses in the fourth canto of Book One of *Savitri*, ‘The Secret Knowledge’.

A few words on some of the Worlds will be useful for you. For example, there is a canto called ‘The Paradise of the Life-Gods’. Do you know where the word ‘paradise’ comes from? ‘Paradise’ comes from two words: *para* + *desha* meaning ‘another world’. In ‘The Paradise of the Life-Gods’ who are these Life-Gods? In the Indian tradition, we speak of the *gandharvas* and *apsaras*, who spend all of their time singing and dancing. They were very popular with Kalidasa for obvious reasons, and it is these people who inhabit this Paradise.

Later we come to the Heavens of the Ideal. To understand what these are, we have to go forward to Book Ten, Canto 1, ‘The Dream Twilight of the Ideal’. There we find the line:

There is a morning twilight of the gods.

Then Death tells Savitri, ‘You see, take a look at all the bright ideas you people have, and see what happens to them.’ But what our *Mrtyu*, our Death, does not understand is that the new ideal is not a repetition of the old ideal. It is built on the strength of the old ideals. Therefore there is always a progression, up and up and up.

Then at the end of Book Two Aswapati comes to ‘The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge’. There, in some sense, we have an exposure of the world of Swarga – how perfection can be there. Sri Aurobindo spends a comparatively small amount of time on that. Remember how much time he spends on the Kingdoms of the Little Life and the Godheads of the Little Life and the amount of time he spends on the gods of the Falsehood – a really long time! He had to spend that much time because in the Veda there is a repeated reference to this battle between the gods and the hostile forces. Who are these forces who prevent us from carrying out our higher aims?

These are what we call the hostile forces, who do not want to see people climb up. They always put some sort of an obstacle on the ladder. When you overcome the obstacle, then a new power comes to you. The argument is that Agni or Indra does nothing to help you overcome the obstacle, but once you use your will-power to overcome the obstacle, then you understand, then you have learned something and get a new power. There is always the idea that the gods are silent. That is not quite so, the gods are always somehow active; but until you get the hang of how to do this sort of work obstacles are always there, so Sri Aurobindo had to spend a lot of time on these worlds of the Falsehood.

While in the classical Vedanta there always seems to be an idea that good and bad are simply the converse of each other, Sri Aurobindo shows that the powers of falsehood are actively engaged in obstructing human progress. We really cannot deal with those guys by human effort alone. Therefore our prayers go to Indra, ‘Come and help us, come and help us!’

The entire second book of *Savitri* connects us with the details of the many different worlds which are hinted at in the Veda. In fact the understanding of these seven worlds is even more detailed in *Savitri*. Even the Puranas do not go into all the details which Sri Aurobindo gives in the Book Two, ‘The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds’.

## Corrections

We apologise to the people concerned for two errors appearing on page 54 of *Invocation* 46 in the paragraph about the release of *Savitri Sabdamrut* Volume 6. This volume covers Cantos 1, 2 and 3 of Book Seven, not Book Three as stated. Also the person who addressed the gathering was Shri Nilkanth Joshi of Baroda and not Shri Nilkanth Desai as mentioned.

# The English of *Savitri*

*Book Two, Canto Three, The Fall of Life, Section 5  
with Canto Four, The Kingdoms of the Little Life,  
Sections 1, 2 and 3  
by Shraddhavan*

*(Continued from issue 46)*

## 1. Introduction: King Aswapati and the Realms of Life

In Book Two, ‘The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds’, Sri Aurobindo shows us King Aswapati on his journey through the subtle planes in search of the Power or Principle that will enable the transformation of the earth-life from its present imperfect state to its intended fulfilment, the Divine Life upon Earth.

In Canto One of Book Two, Aswapati was shown the planes of existence with their worlds piled one upon the other in the form of a great mountain or World-Stair, and he began to climb it. After visiting the Kingdom of Subtle Matter in Canto Two, Aswapati enters the planes of Life. In the opening section of Canto Three of Book Two, ‘The Glory and the Fall of Life’ Aswapati sees life as it is in our experience, here on earth at our present stage of evolution. But in the following sections of this canto he is granted first the knowledge and then the vision of the true origin of life – its closeness to the source of everything, where ‘...*endless Bliss is her eternal home*’ (p.118). The first four sections of this canto were studied in the previous instalment of this series.

In the fifth and final section of Canto Three Sri Aurobindo shows us that although Aswapati has been granted the vision of the blissful worlds that are the true origin of life, he is unable to enter them, because ‘*A darker air encircled still his soul / Tied to an image of unquiet life.*’ Then the poet reveals to us how this distortion of the true nature of life has come about as the lovely Life-goddess pours out all her power and beauty and bliss into the world of Matter.

In the following canto, Canto Four, ‘The Kingdoms of the Little Life’, Aswapati explores the plane that has manifested as a result

of the ‘*dolorous meeting*’ of Life with a dark power that seems to negate her gifts. Sri Aurobindo shows us the Life-power struggling to emerge from under the dominance of Matter, imaging the Life-goddess lost in the material universe like ‘*a child-soul left near the gates of Hell / Fumbling through fog in search of Paradise.*’ (p.135).

The meeting of Life and Matter has created the worlds which Aswapati will explore next in ‘The Kingdoms of the Little Life’. It is quite a long canto and is followed by Canto Five, ‘The Godheads of the Little Life’, which is also quite long. We may ask why Sri Aurobindo is giving so much importance to this ‘Little Life’.

In *The Synthesis of Yoga* he has referred to the importance of what he calls ‘the psychic prana’. ‘Prana’ refers to energy – not material but vital energy, Life-energy. He writes:

Our whole mind-consciousness is shot through with the threads and currents of this Prana, this Life-energy that strives and limits, grasps and misses, desires and suffers, and only by its purification can we know and possess our real and eternal self. ... [In our] upward procession it is the life-energy which has become the obstinate knot of the ego, it is the desire-mind which refuses to relax the knot even when the intellect and the heart have discovered the cause of their ills and would be glad enough to remove it; for the Prana in them is the Animal who revolts and who obscures and deceives their knowledge and coerces their will by his refusal.<sup>1</sup>

This subtle prana is based in the very primitive levels of our body and our being. If this element is not observed and controlled and eventually purified our higher development is obstructed and yogic realisation is impossible. That might be one reason why Sri Aurobindo has decided to explore it in so much detail here.

In his search for the Power that can save the earth and bring about its intended fulfilment in the divine life, Aswapati has to retrace all the steps of Life in the evolution. Now we have reached Canto Four – only in Canto Nine is Aswapati able to enter the Life Heavens,

---

1. CWSA 23-24:352

the blissful ‘*native home*’ of the Life-goddess. A major part of Book Two (five cantos covering 109 pages) is concerned with this issue: what will enable Aswapati to experience the bliss which is the origin of Life? We shall see that he has to go right down into the depths of the world of falsehood and there confront the Mother of Evil and the Sons of Darkness before he can find, at the deepest, darkest level of the subconscious, the key to that realisation. In the second section of Canto Four Sri Aurobindo gives us a foretaste, a glimpse, of the terrible worlds of Falsehood which Aswapati will have to explore in Cantos Seven and Eight of Book Two, in the course of his quest.

In the following sections of Canto Four the poet introduces to us three successive realms of the Little Life. Sections 3 and 4 of Canto Four are devoted to the first of the three ‘kingdoms’ that are described in this canto, in which the Life-principle is only just emerging from the inconscience and inertia of Matter: ‘*Hardly she availed, wallowing, to bear and live*’. The second stage is described in the long fifth section, and the third is dealt with in the final sixth section. We could say that these are the realms of, first, the most material vital, dominated by the principle of tamas, inertia; then the ‘vital vital’ dominated by a more rajasic ‘*frier breath of life*’, and at last the beginnings of a slightly more sattwic and mentalised life-consciousness illumined by ‘*a glint of light*’.

In this instalment we shall look at the final section of Canto Three, ‘The Glory and the Fall of Life’ and the first three sections of Canto Four, ‘The Kingdoms of the Little Life’. It is hoped to continue the exploration of Canto Four in the next issue of *Invocation*.

## **2. Book Two, Canto Three: The Fall of Life**

### **Section 5, lines 441-538**

This canto marks the beginning of King Aswapati’s exploration of the subtle Life realms, which will continue up to the end of Canto Nine, ‘The Paradise of the Life Gods’. In the first section of this Canto Three, which was explored in the previous issue of *Invocation*, we saw him entering ‘*wide obscure disputed fields*’ where ‘*life is the manifest incalculable*’: a ‘*movement of unquiet seas*’ and a ‘*vexed disturbance in the eternal Calm*’, a description of Life as we

experience it in the material world at our level of evolution. But the section closes with the following words:

Yet pure and bright from the Timeless was [*Life's*] birth,  
A lost world-rapture lingers in her eyes,  
Her moods are faces of the Infinite:  
Beauty and happiness are her native right,  
And endless Bliss is her eternal home. p.118

In Sections 2, 3 and 4 of Canto Three, also explored in the previous issue, the blissful regions which are the eternal home of Life were revealed to Aswapati. Now, in the closing section of this canto, Aswapati finds that although he can see that '*world of bliss*' he is unable to enter it; and Sri Aurobindo will explain why that is so and how Life became what King Aswapati experienced at the beginning of the canto: the troubled, lost and restless life of extremes that we are familiar with.

This world of bliss he saw and felt its call,  
But found no way to enter into its joy;  
Across the conscious gulf there was no bridge.  
A darker air encircled still his soul  
Tied to an image of unquiet life.

Aswapati can see the '*world of bliss*' described in the previous sections and he feels its attraction, but he is unable to enter into its joy. He does not find any way to enter those higher levels of life. He is separated from them by a '*gulf*', a deep gap in consciousness, with no bridge across it. Sri Aurobindo tells us that this is because '*A darker air encircled still his soul*'. Something of our darkened earthly atmosphere is still surrounding Aswapati's soul, which is still '*Tied*', bound to the image that we have of life, the unquiet, restless, mixed life of pleasure and pain, good and evil.

In spite of yearning mind and longing sense,  
To a sad Thought by grey experience formed  
And a vision dimmed by care and sorrow and sleep  
All this seemed only a bright desirable dream  
Conceived in a longing distance by the heart  
Of one who walks in the shadow of earth-pain.

The human mind yearns for that world of bliss; even our bodily senses long for the happiness of those higher levels of Life; but there is something in our earth-consciousness – ‘*a sad Thought*’ that has been formed ‘*by grey experience*’ and a way of viewing things that has grown dim through seeing too much ‘*care and sorrow and sleep*’ – which prevents us from entering it. Maybe very young children experience something of that original pure and spontaneous bliss, but soon even their vision is ‘*dimmed by care and sorrow and sleep*’. To us, those glorious planes of the pure delight of Life seem only ‘*a bright desirable dream*’ which has been conceived from ‘*a longing distance*’ in the heart of one like us, one like King Aswapati, whose life-experience has been dominated by ‘*the shadow of earth-pain*’. All of us walk in that shadow and if we glimpse or get an idea of those worlds of bliss they may well seem like a product of our own imagination, our own wishful thinking, an unrealisable dream.

Although he once had felt the Eternal’s clasp,  
Too near to suffering worlds his nature lived,  
And where he stood were entrances of Night.

In Cantos Three and Five of Book One we can read about the wonderful spiritual experiences which King Aswapati has known through the liberation of his soul. He has felt the embrace of the Eternal, ‘*the Eternal’s clasp*’, and closeness to the Transcendent. But despite that, his nature is still living ‘*Too near to suffering worlds*’, and particularly to our human world. The place where he is standing now and receiving the vision of the blissful higher worlds which are the ‘*native home*’ of Life is close to the ‘*suffering worlds*’ of earthly experience and at that level there are entrances that lead down into the dark lower depths, the ‘*Night*’ of falsehood and evil that he will have to enter later on.

It is very interesting to look at the different ways in which Sri Aurobindo uses the word ‘Night’ in the course of this poem. It is only in the ‘legend’ part, in Books Four to Eight, that we find this word being used as we normally use it, to mean the hours of the day when the sun is on the other side of the earth, so that the sky is dark. Otherwise the poem starts with the deep psychological darkness of ‘*the huge foreboding mind of Night*’, and ends with

Night transformed. In Cantos Seven and Eight of Book Two we shall find Aswapati having to descend into the lower life-levels which are ruled by the Night of falsehood and evil. In Book Nine, Death leads Savitri through the world of Eternal Night, a world of fear and hopelessness, of negation, of death. In other parts of the poem the word is used to refer to the darkness of unconsciousness and ignorance; but in the lower life-worlds ignorance and unconsciousness lead to falsehood, to the perversion of the truth that we would call evil. Where Aswapati is standing now there are entrances leading down into those hellish nether worlds.

Hardly, too close beset by the world's care,  
Can the dense mould in which we have been made  
Return sheer joy to joy, pure light to light.  
For its tormented will to think and live  
First to a mingled pain and pleasure woke  
And still it keeps the habit of its birth:  
A dire duality is our way to be.

*'Hardly'* means *'with difficulty'*. *'The dense mould in which we have been made'*, the dense matter of our physical form, has great difficulty in responding to pure joy and light – it is almost impossible for it, because although it is living matter, it is still full of inertia; and at the same time it is constantly *'beset by the world's care'*, under attack from all the trouble and sorrow and anxiety of the world which affect us through our nerves and feelings and emotions. This *'dense mould in which we have been made'* can only *'Hardly'*, with great difficulty *'Return sheer joy to joy, pure light to light'*. It simply cannot respond. There is a distortion in its response. And this is because of its evolutionary past. This is because the *'will to think and live'* first awoke in living matter to a mixture of *'pain and pleasure'*, and it still keeps that habit: *'A dire duality is our way to be'*. Our physical substance cannot experience anything fully or purely; every sensation and emotion leads to its opposite: pleasure turns to pain, enthusiasm leads to exhaustion, sweet turns to bitter or sour, happiness to sorrow. In fact it often seems that we cannot experience or enjoy anything without feeling the contrast of its opposite. We would not feel cold if we had not been feeling hot earlier. This *'dire duality'* afflicts our *'will to think and live'* so that it

becomes twisted and perverted and tormented. It cannot help feeling pain. If Life is divine and blissful in its origin, how did this state of things come about? Sri Aurobindo will explain this to us in a way that is quite different from the scientific understanding of how evolution has unfolded.

In the crude beginnings of this mortal world  
Life was not nor mind's play nor heart's desire.

If we look back to the '*crude beginnings*' of this world which is ruled by death, '*this mortal world*' in which we human beings live, where whatever lives has to die, in the very beginning, when it first came into existence, there was no life and there was no play of mind and so there could be no desire of the heart. There was only matter.

When earth was built in the unconscious Void  
And nothing was save a material scene,  
Identified with sea and sky and stone  
Her young gods yearned for the release of souls  
Asleep in objects, vague, inanimate.

When this planet earth was formed '*in the unconscious Void*', in the emptiness of universal space, there was nothing but '*a material scene*'. We can try to imagine the earth before any life appeared on it: there was nothing but '*sea and sky and stone*' – a very different earth from the one we know today. But there were young divine beings, creative powers, inhabiting the earth and looking after it. At first they were totally identified with the '*material scene*', with all that '*sea and sky and stone*'; but because the divine principle was involved in matter, those '*young gods*' began to yearn, to long for '*the release of souls*'. Hidden within the material forms, there were small sparks of the divine, '*Asleep in objects, vague, inanimate*'. The forms, the objects, could not exist unless the divine presence was within them. The '*young gods*' of earth began to wish, to aspire that those soul-sparks should wake up and become free, released from the grip of unconscious matter.

In that desolate grandeur, in that beauty bare,  
In the deaf stillness, mid the unheeded sounds,  
Heavy was the uncommunicated load

Of Godhead in a world that had no needs;  
For none was there to feel or to receive.

Imagine what it is like: very beautiful in a way, very grand, the sea and the sky and the stone, but it is '*desolate*'. There is nothing living there. That beauty is '*bare*' and empty. There is '*a deaf stillness*'; there may be sounds, the sounds of the sea, the winds, of volcanoes and stones rolling and rumbling, but all those sounds are '*unheeded*', because there are no ears to perceive them, no consciousness to notice them. In that situation, in that '*material scene*', in that empty landscape, '*Heavy was the uncommunicated load / Of Godhead in a world that had no needs*'. How is the involved Divine Presence going to express itself? It cannot communicate. There are no needs. There are no beings to feel or to receive. There is a heavy load of divinity without any means of expression, of experience or communication.

This solid mass which brooked no throb of sense  
Could not contain their vast creative urge:  
Immersed no more in Matter's harmony,  
The Spirit lost its statuesque repose.

'*This solid mass*' of earth did not '*brook*', did not permit or allow any living '*throb of sense*'. There was no sense of vision, no hearing, no smell, taste or touch. That solid unmoving inanimate mass of matter could not contain the '*vast creative urge*' of those '*young gods*'. So far they had been identified with the '*sea and sky and stone*', immersed in '*Matter's harmony*', unmoving, at rest, like a statue; but now '*The Spirit*' involved in Matter '*lost its statuesque repose*': it became restless and tried to see and feel.

In the uncaring trance it groped for sight,  
Passioned for the movements of a conscious heart,  
Famishing for speech and thought and joy and love,  
In the dumb insensitive wheeling day and night  
Hungered for the beat of yearning and response.

The Spirit totally identified with and immersed in '*Matter's harmony*' seemed to be in an '*uncaring trance*', not paying attention to anything; but now, with the yearning of earth's '*young gods*', it begins to grope blindly in the darkness of the inconscience, trying

to find its way to sight. Its longing, its aspiration becomes intense: it '*Passioned for the movements of a conscious heart*'. It is '*Famishing for speech and thought and joy and love*'. '*Famishing*' means feeling such an intense hunger that you will die if you cannot eat. '*In the dumb insensitive wheeling day and night*' of that purely material scene the Spirit begins to awaken with an intense aspiration for a more sensitive state.

The poised inconscience shaken with a touch,  
The intuitive Silence trembling with a name,  
They cried to Life to invade the senseless mould  
And in brute forms awake divinity.

Everything had been '*poised*' – in perfect balance – in the inconscient harmony and equilibrium of Matter, but now that has been '*shaken*' with the '*touch*' of their intense longing. The '*deaf stillness*' becomes an '*intuitive Silence*' which is '*trembling with a name*', as if sensing the suggestion, the hint of '*a name*', the very beginning of form and personality. Those young gods '*cried to Life to invade the senseless mould*', calling out to the Life principle to enter into Matter. The word '*mould*' has a double suggestion: we use a '*mould*' to shape wax into a candle or metal into a statue; but '*mould*' can also mean '*earth*', '*soil*'. That original '*material scene*' had no Life, no senses, no capacity to see and feel; but earth's young gods appealed passionately to Life to pour herself into that '*senseless mould*' to awaken the possibility of '*divinity*' in the inert, rough forms of material objects.

A voice was heard on the mute rolling globe,  
A murmur moaned in the unlistening Void.  
A being seemed to breathe where once was none:  
Something pent up in dead insentient depths,  
Denied conscious existence, lost to joy,  
Turned as if one asleep since dateless time.

There is a response to their aspiration, their longing, their call. A voice is heard on the '*mute rolling globe*' of the earth, '*A murmur moaned in the unlistening Void.*' The emptiness of space is not listening to it, but something does respond to that murmur: '*A being seemed to breathe where once was none.*' Breath is the first sign of

life, of a living existence. ‘*A being*’, something or someone who has been ‘*pent up*’, imprisoned in a very small space, compressed, under pressure in the ‘*dead insentient depths*’ of matter where there was no possibility of feeling, a being who has been deprived of ‘*conscious existence*’ and was therefore ‘*lost to joy*’ begins to wake up as if from a sleep that had lasted an immensely long time. That ‘*Something*’ moved: it ‘*Turned as if one asleep since dateless time*’. In that state time cannot be measured; how long has that existence been pent up in insentient matter like that? Now at last, it can move a little bit.

Aware of its own buried reality,  
Remembering its forgotten self and right,  
It yearned to know, to aspire, to enjoy, to live.

That being, that soul who has been denied conscious existence, wakes up to awareness of its own reality, even though that reality is buried and pent up; it remembers who it is, ‘*its forgotten self*’ and its ‘*right*’ to consciousness and joy. It has been deeply asleep for an immeasurable length of time, but now it wakes up and yearns ‘*to know, to aspire, to enjoy, to live*’.

These lines and what they express remind us of the very beginning of the poem, where in the total darkness something stirs; the Mother says it is like the very first movement of aspiration; then that ‘*unremembering entity*’ begins to wake up.<sup>1</sup> This call to Life is something like that.

Life heard the call and left her native light.  
Overflowing from her bright magnificent plane  
On the rigid coil and sprawl of mortal Space,  
Here too the gracious great-winged Angel poured  
Her splendour and her swiftness and her bliss,  
Hoping to fill a fair new world with joy.

Wherever and whenever there is an aspiration, there is a response – that is how the universe works; so ‘*Life heard the call and left her native light*’: leaving her native home of bliss, she overflows ‘*from her bright magnificent plane*’ onto this ‘*rigid coil and sprawl of*

---

1. *Savitri* pp.1-2

*mortal Space*': our material universe. Even though it is coiling and sprawling over immeasurable distances, our universe is still 'rigid', stiff and hard and dense. Onto the rigidity of Matter, Life pours out '*Her splendour and her swiftness and her bliss*'. In contrast to the inertia and rigidity of Matter, the movement of Life is fluid and splendid and full of delight. In response to the call of the young gods of earth, '*the gracious great-winged Angel*' of Life pours out all her possibilities of movement and beauty and bliss on the material universe, in the hope of filling '*a fair new world with joy*'.

As comes a goddess to a mortal's breast  
And fills his days with her celestial clasp,  
She stooped to make her home in transient shapes;  
In Matter's womb she cast the Immortal's fire,  
In the unfeeling Vast woke thought and hope,  
Smote with her charm and beauty flesh and nerve  
And forced delight on earth's insensible frame.

*'As comes a goddess to a mortal's breast / And fills his days with her celestial clasp'*. These lines must refer to an experience Sri Aurobindo himself had. He has written a poem about the legend of the union between the Apsara Urvashi and the powerful rishi-King Pururavas. The possibility of a marriage, a union between a divine power and a human being is referred to in many ancient traditions. Sri Aurobindo is comparing the descent of the Life principle into Matter with such a union between a divine being and a human. In a similar way, Life stoops down, bends down '*to make her home*' in the '*transient*', short-lived, forms of the material world, and plants '*the Immortal's fire*', the energy of immortal Life, in the womb of Matter so that material Nature can give birth to living forms. In the midst of the apparently unconscious and insensitive vastness of the material universe, the Life principle awakens the possibility of '*thought and hope*', and '*Smote with her charm and beauty flesh and nerve*'. '*Smote*' is the past tense of the verb 'to smite', meaning 'to give a strong blow'. '*With her charm and beauty*' Life gives a shock to '*flesh and nerve*', the physical matter into which she has infused her energy, and in this way '*forced delight on earth's insensible frame*', the material framework of living beings. The purely material world had no capacity for sensation or delight, but now that the Life-force

has poured herself into matter, delight becomes possible even in the physical body. Then Sri Aurobindo gives us a wonderful description of the living earth:

Alive and clad with trees and herbs and flowers  
Earth's great brown body smiled towards the skies,  
Azure replied to azure in the sea's laugh;  
New sentient creatures filled the unseen depths,  
Life's glory and swiftness ran in the beauty of beasts,  
Man dared and thought and met with his soul the world.

This is the result of the descent of Life into Matter. Earth becomes alive, her '*great brown body*' is '*clad*' or clothed with plants: '*trees and herbs and flowers*', and it is as if she is smiling upwards '*towards the skies*'. A living consciousness is there, so that '*Azure replied to azure in the sea's laugh*'. '*Azure*' is a poetic word for vivid blue. Of course even before the descent of Life the sea and sky must have been blue, but there was no living consciousness to experience and enjoy it: now the whole earth has become alive and is filled with '*sentient creatures*', creatures with senses, who can see and feel and respond to the world around them. The poet is giving a very condensed evocation of the evolution of Life in matter, of the way that life seems to have emerged first in the sea, and then on land, where '*Life's glory and swiftness ran in the beauty of beasts*' and eventually even in human beings who can express the potentialities of Life in courage, daring, and thought, and have souls to face and experience the world around them.

But while the magic breath was on its way,  
Before her gifts could reach our prisoned hearts,  
A dark ambiguous Presence questioned all.  
The secret Will that robes itself with Night  
And offers to spirit the ordeal of the flesh,  
Imposed a mystic mask of death and pain.

But although these potentialities of Life do get realised on earth, something else also happens: something intervenes, a '*dark ambiguous Presence*' which perverts the pure delight of Life into '*a mystic mask of death and pain*'. The Life which prevails on earth now is not the divine Life which Aswapati had witnessed in the

original blissful worlds that are the native home of the goddess. The divine gifts of Life have not reached our human hearts imprisoned in Matter. How and why has this distortion come about? Sri Aurobindo tells us that there is a '*secret Will*' that clothes itself with darkness and '*offers to spirit the ordeal of the flesh*' – as if offering the spirit a painful test and challenge, but at the same time a great opportunity: the experience of physical existence in a mortal body has imposed on the glorious and blissful Life-goddess '*a mystic mask of death and pain*': a mysterious disguise which is the very opposite of her true original nature.

Interned now in the slow and suffering years  
Sojourns the winged and wonderful wayfarer  
And can no more recall her happier state,  
But must obey the inert Inconscient's law,  
Insensible foundation of a world  
In which blind limits are on beauty laid  
And sorrow and joy as struggling comrades live.

'To sojourn' means 'to stay', 'to live for some time'. Now '*the winged and wonderful wayfarer*', the pure free-moving spirit of Life, is living '*Interned*', detained and imprisoned in the painful passage of earth-time, '*the slow and suffering years*' and has to obey '*the inert Inconscient's law*' – the law of Matter. That law is the '*Insensible foundation*', the insensitive, unfeeling basis of our material world, which imposes '*blind limits*' on beauty and makes sorrow and joy inseparable in earth-experience, forcing them to live side by side as comrades and partners who are in constant conflict.

A dim and dreadful muteness fell on her:  
Abolished was her subtle mighty spirit  
And slain her boon of child-god happiness,  
And all her glory into littleness turned  
And all her sweetness into a maimed desire.  
To feed death with her works is here life's doom.

The glorious goddess of Life, imprisoned in Matter, has become dumb, mute – she can no longer express '*her subtle mighty spirit*'; her wonderful gift of '*child-god happiness*' has been destroyed, and '*all her glory*' has been turned '*into littleness*': diminished and

impoverished. All her divine sweetness has been transmuted into ‘*a maimed desire*’, injured and disabled. Here, in the material world, Life is doomed to ‘*feed death with her works*’: all her achievements and creations are eaten up by the insatiable universal hunger that is death.

So veiled was her immortality that she seemed,  
Inflicting consciousness on unconscious things,  
An episode in an eternal death,  
A myth of being that must for ever cease.  
Such was the evil mystery of her change.

In fact in the inconscient material universe the glorious immortal Spirit of Life appears out of place: ‘*An episode in an eternal death*’: a transient phenomenon in a world ruled by mortality, where she seems to be ‘*Inflicting consciousness on unconscious things*’: forcing consciousness on material forms that would prefer to remain peacefully unconscious. In our world it even seems as if Life is no more than ‘*A myth of being that must for ever cease*’: an unreal, illusory appearance of existence, which cannot possibly continue but must cease to be. This is ‘*the evil mystery*’ of the way that the glorious Life-goddess has been changed by her immersion in Matter, her subjection to the law of unconsciousness and death.

End of Canto Three

### **3. Book Two, Canto Four: The Kingdoms of the Little Life Section 1, lines 1-110**

A quivering trepidant uncertain world  
Born from that dolorous meeting and eclipse  
Appeared in the emptiness where her feet had trod,  
A quick obscurity, a seeking stir.

Aswapati finds himself in a world that has been born from the meeting between Life and Matter. The poet tells us that this world is ‘*quivering*’, shaking like leaves in a very light breeze; it is also ‘*trepidant*’, full of fear and trembling. The world that has emerged from that painful ‘*dolorous meeting*’ and the ‘*eclipse*’ of Life’s glory and beauty by the density of matter, is ‘*uncertain*’, full of

doubt and danger; nothing can be relied on there, nothing is sure. An *'eclipse'* happens when the moon passes between the earth and the sun, or the earth's shadow falls upon the moon so that for a time it no longer reflects the light of the sun: its light cannot be seen. *'In the emptiness'* where the Life-goddess had set her feet this *'uncertain world'* has appeared, a world whose characteristic is *'A quick obscurity, a seeking stir'*. Life brings movement and search into matter, and the possibility of growth. *'Obscurity'* means darkness or thick mist in which one cannot see clearly. The word *'quick'* commonly refers to speed, but we also speak about *'the quick and the dead'*, making a distinction between things that are living and things that are not. *'Quick'* means not only *'speedy'* but also *'alive'*, *'sensitive'*; both those meanings apply here, evoking both the speed and sensitivity of Life; and in that realm there is *'a seeking stir'*: a movement, perhaps only a very small movement, but one with a purpose: living things are searching and exploring in their material environment.

There was a writhing of half-conscious force  
Hardly awakened from the Inconscient's sleep,  
Tied to an instinct-driven Ignorance,  
To find itself and find its hold on things.

*'Writhing'* describes the movement of an earthworm or a snake. Force or energy is often represented by a snake, a worm or a dragon. The first manifestation of Life in matter is *'half-conscious force'*, writhing, moving, struggling, and *'Hardly awakened from the Inconscient's sleep'*: not fully awoken from the unconscious sleep-state of inorganic matter. This *'writhing'* is the first movement, the first *'seeking stir'*, of an ignorant consciousness that is driven by *'instinct'* to try to find itself and to explore and grasp the world around it. *'Instinct'* is consciousness expressing itself not as knowledge but as movement and action which is often amazingly accurate, precise and exact, as if infallible, faultless.

Inheritor of poverty and loss,  
Assailed by memories that fled when seized,  
Haunted by a forgotten uplifting hope,  
It strove with a blindness as of groping hands

To fill the aching and disastrous gap  
Between earth-pain and the bliss from which Life fell.

The half-conscious force of Life, which has been born from the '*dolorous meeting*' of Life with matter and the eclipse of its native glory, has inherited a state of '*poverty and loss*'. Life's native glory and bliss have been lost. This '*half-conscious force*' is '*Assailed*', attacked or besieged, by vague memories which slip away before they can be recalled clearly. She is '*Haunted by a forgotten uplifting hope*': an encouraging hope comes to her vaguely again and again, but she cannot grasp that either, she has forgotten what it might be. Hope always lifts us up, gives us courage when things seem impossible; but what is that hope that has been forgotten? It is hovering around her like those ungrasped memories, but it is having an effect. A ghost haunts a place: nobody can see it but it is there, creating an atmosphere which affects the consciousness of people who enter it. The half-conscious Life-force is impelled to make a blind effort, groping around in the dark to find what it needs '*To fill the aching and disastrous gap / Between earth-pain and the bliss from which Life fell*'. There is such an enormous and painful gap between the blissful native home of Life and the imperfect and limiting material existence into which she has fallen. There is a huge contradiction between the qualities and characteristics of Life and the qualities and characteristics of matter; in the world where matter is dominant, Life is no longer a free and glorious goddess but only a poor prisoner who has inherited nothing but '*poverty and loss*'. Her first half-awareness is painful, especially because from the very start she senses that there should be, there must be a happier and more perfect state. She is driven to grope for that higher state, however blindly.

A world that ever seeks for something missed,  
Hunts for the joy that earth has failed to keep.  
Too near to our gates its unappeased unrest  
For peace to live on the inert solid globe:  
It has joined its hunger to the hunger of earth,  
It has given the law of craving to our lives,  
It has made our spirit's need a fathomless gulf.

The '*quivering trepidant uncertain world*' of half-awakened Life-force is always searching for something that it is missing; it cannot remember what it has lost, but it cannot help hunting for '*the joy that earth has failed to keep*'; so it is in a constant state of '*unappeased unrest*', unsatisfied restlessness. 'To appease' means 'to bring peace by satisfying some demand or need'. The influence of that restless dissatisfied world is very close to us. The gates of our material world may be closed to it, but it is always there, just outside, like a beggar outside the locked gates of a country mansion. How can our world be at peace when all that longing is on our doorstep? That is why peace cannot live on this '*inert solid globe*', this material earth. The '*hunger*', the longing of that world of fallen Life, has been added to the native hunger of earth itself and adds to it a dynamism that the inertia of matter cannot express. It '*has given the law of craving*', the law of desire, to our lives; and at a higher level of our being '*It has made our spirit's need a fathomless gulf*'. The spirit under the domination of matter, the spirit in the material world, desperately longs for higher and deeper levels of consciousness; and the unappeased longing of fallen Life makes that need of our spirit into '*a fathomless gulf*', a bottomless depth which can never be filled.

An Influence entered mortal night and day,  
A shadow overcast the time-born race;  
In the troubled stream where leaps a blind heart-pulse  
And the nerve-beat of feeling wakes in sense  
Dividing Matter's sleep from conscious Mind,  
There strayed a call that knew not why it came.

An '*Influence*' is something formless and insubstantial that flows in imperceptibly and has an effect. An '*Influence*' from that world of '*unappeased unrest*' has '*entered mortal night and day*', this world of dualities, of life and death, that we inhabit. That '*Influence*' has cast a shadow over the human race that is born in time. Our bodies are kept alive by the stream of prana, of Life-energy that is circulating in our blood, in our nerves, but into that prana, into that '*troubled stream*' where the pulse of the heart and the beat of the nerves come in contact with outer things, has entered a never-satisfied longing: '*a call that knew not why it came*'. In the very substance of our prana, our Life-energy, there is a call, a longing, an appeal; it is wandering

in our Life-stream. 'To stray', means 'to wander' or 'to get lost', 'to enter a realm where you do not belong'. This longing has forgotten what it is longing for; it does not know why it is there or where it came from. As a result this '*troubled stream*', this disturbed and disturbing flow of energy, is dividing '*Matter's sleep from conscious Mind*': Between the sleep-state of inorganic matter, which is the base of all our physical experience, and the half-awakened mental consciousness flows this '*troubled stream*' of Life-force.

A Power beyond earth's scope has touched the earth;  
The repose that might have been can be no more;  
A formless yearning passions in man's heart,  
A cry is in his blood for happier things:  
Else could he roam on a free sunlit soil  
With the childlike pain-forgetting mind of beasts  
Or live happy, unmoved, like flowers and trees.

Sri Aurobindo uses the word 'earth' here to refer to the material principle. In the Indian tradition, Prithvi, Earth, represents the principle of matter. With the coming of Life, a Power from beyond has entered into matter: '*A Power beyond earth's scope has touched the earth*'. In this way, the original material harmony has been destroyed: '*The repose that might have been*', that might have lasted forever, '*can be no more*'; it cannot last any longer, because the material realm has been touched by the influence of a new principle, the principle of Life. As a result, '*A formless yearning passions in man's heart*'. Here the word 'passions' is used as a verb, to convey the movement of an intense longing for something that cannot be formulated or imagined, but which is constantly longed for. Surely every human being has the feeling that things should be better than they are: there is a cry in our blood '*for happier things*'. What we are really longing for is the Ananda, the Bliss, of the pure original plane from which Life has entered into Matter. The poet says it is conceivable that if things had happened differently, there could have been human-like forms roaming on this '*free sunlit soil*', experiencing all the beauty of the material world '*With the childlike pain-forgetting mind of beasts*'. The Mother has pointed out that animals of course suffer pain but they do not make it worse for themselves by thinking about it, dwelling on it; they forget it quickly

as young children seem to do. Earth-beings might have been able to live '*happy, unmoved, like flowers and trees*'. But in us mental beings the longing which is the characteristic of the fallen Life-force imprisoned in the grip of matter becomes conscious and casts a shadow over all our experience.

The Might that came upon the earth to bless,  
Has stayed on earth to suffer and aspire.  
The infant laugh that rang through time is hushed:  
Man's natural joy of life is overcast  
And sorrow is his nurse of destiny.  
The animal's thoughtless joy is left behind,  
Care and reflection burden his daily walk;  
He has risen to greatness and to discontent,  
He is awake to the Invisible.

The '*Might*', the conscious force that Life represents, '*came upon the earth to bless*' it, to fill it with joy. Imprisoned in matter it '*Has stayed on earth to suffer and aspire*', and in a way that is the gift that it gives. But we miss the childlike innocence, the '*infant laugh*' which early humanity perhaps enjoyed; there is something so beautiful and appealing about the free and spontaneous laughter of very young children. We have the feeling that in the beginning of human time there must have been some state like that; but now that innocent laughter has been silenced: '*Man's natural joy of life is overcast*'. The sky gets overcast with the clouds. We cannot see the sun. It begins to look dark, as if it might rain. '*Sorrow*' has become our '*nurse of destiny*'. Sorrow nourishes and feeds us, helps us to grow through our dissatisfaction. We may even feel that someone who seems always happy and contented might not progress very much. Humanity has left behind the thoughtless joy of animals. Instead we wake up in the morning and look at the day ahead and think of all the things that have to be taken care of: '*Care and reflection*' have become a '*burden*' that we have to carry on our '*daily walk*'. But because of this, man has risen to higher possibilities, '*to greatness and to discontent*': we cannot be satisfied with things as they are. We have become '*awake to the Invisible*', because of this goad of dissatisfaction driving us always onwards.

Insatiate seeker, he has all to learn:  
He has exhausted now life's surface acts,  
His being's hidden realms remain to explore.  
He becomes a mind, he becomes a spirit and self;  
In his fragile tenement he grows Nature's lord.  
In him Matter wakes from its long obscure trance,  
In him earth feels the Godhead drawing near.

'*Insatiate*' means not only 'unsatisfied' but 'unsatisfiable'. We human beings are 'satiated' when we have taken in so much food or so much experience that we cannot take any more; but we digest it and then again we feel dissatisfied. The human being is an '*Insatiate seeker*' who has everything to learn. To a certain extent mankind has learned about the surface of Life but the '*hidden realms*' of our being remain to be explored. A human being is not an animal although we have animal bodies; we become truly human when we develop the mind and become mental beings. A human being can become '*a spirit and self*'. Even though he lives in the '*fragile tenement*' of a physical body, he can become '*Nature's lord*', master of Nature. A '*tenement*' is a temporary home – usually an apartment building with many cheap rooms or flats for poor people. We do not own the perishable body we are occupying for the moment, we are only living in it temporarily; but in this weak '*fragile tenement*', this easily damaged body, a human being can become to a certain extent the master of his nature and the world around him. In her human children, her creations, material nature '*wakes from its long obscure trance*' that has lasted so many billions of years. In humanity '*earth*', the material principle, feels '*the Godhead drawing near*': she feels the approach of the divine being and the divine life which is the destined goal of earth and men.

An eyeless Power that sees no more its aim,  
A restless hungry energy of Will,  
Life cast her seed in the body's indolent mould;  
It woke from happy torpor a blind Force  
Compelling it to sense and seek and feel.

Under the domination of matter, the Life-power has become '*eyeless*', blind; she can no longer see where she is going, no longer

knows her aim; so she has become '*A restless hungry energy of Will*', forever searching, forever unsatisfied. In the material world this blind power has '*cast her seed in the body's indolent mould*'. '*Mould*' refers to soil; like a farmer seeding his land with the crops he wants to grow, Life has seeded her '*restless hungry energy*' in the '*indolent mould*' of the body. '*Indolent*' means '*lazy*', '*reluctant to move*'. The physical body, dominated by matter, is quite lazy; what it wants is ease and rest and repose. The farmer casts his seed on the mould, the soil, and there it will sprout and grow; when the seed of Life sprouts in the body, the '*blind Force*' of matter has to wake up from its '*happy torpor*', its inert passive state; the Life-force compels it to see, hear, taste, smell, touch, to '*seek and feel*', experiencing not only physical sensations but also emotions.

In the enormous labour of the Void  
Perturbing with her dreams the vast routine  
And dead roll of a slumbering universe  
The mighty prisoner struggled for release.  
Alive with her yearning woke the inert cell,  
In the heart she kindled a fire of passion and need,  
Amid the deep calm of inanimate things  
Arose her great voice of toil and prayer and strife.

Life has poured herself and her gifts into the world of matter and has herself become imprisoned in its inertia and unconsciousness; but she is struggling for release, trying to free herself. With her dreams and her longing to recover her lost bliss, this '*mighty prisoner*' is disturbing '*the vast routine*', the fixed ways and habits of the '*slumbering universe*'. The inert cells of material bodies wake up, stimulated by her yearning. Physical hearts no longer simply beat to carry the prana in the blood stream around the body: they get filled with '*a fire of passion and need*'. The inertia of lifeless objects gets upset by Life's '*great voice of toil and prayer and strife*'. That disturbs the routine, the settled ways of Matter, so that something wakes up and gets expressed on the most material level in the form of the first living cells. When things evolve further we come to the human level: in human hearts a '*fire of passion*', of intense feeling and need, is aroused which disturbs '*the deep calm of inanimate things*'. How simple things must have been before there was any

life at all! Of course there were volcanoes and storms and so on, but '*Matter's harmony*' prevailed. But then the voice of Life arose amid that '*deep calm of inanimate things*' and it is still one of the strongest forces on earth: it has produced so much toil and effort, striving and conflict, the needs and dissatisfactions which constantly dominate our psychology and our life and our experience, and which are driving us on our upward evolutionary journey.

A groping consciousness in a voiceless world,  
A guideless sense was given her for her road;  
Thought was withheld and nothing now she knew,  
But all the unknown was hers to feel and clasp.

Here the pronouns 'she' and 'her' refer to the Life Principle, the creative Life-force evolving in matter. She carries within her all the wonderful capacities of the supreme creative power, but in the material universe she is a prisoner, subject to the domination of the inertia and unconsciousness of matter. She still possesses some kind of consciousness, but in '*a voiceless world*' which has no power of expression that consciousness is '*groping*', trying to feel her way around, as we have to do if all the lights go out and we cannot remember where the flashlight is or the matches are. All she has to help her is '*A guideless sense*'. The senses are an expression of consciousness in living matter. At the human stage they provide sensations to be interpreted by the mind; but the very first living creatures which emerged on earth seem to have been tiny single-celled creatures moving about in the oceans; they had no mind to guide them, but they could sense light and darkness and instinctively move away from or towards light or warmth or cold. The fallen Life-force is given this capacity to help her on her way: '*A guideless sense was given her for her road*'; but '*Thought was withheld*'. '*Withheld*' means 'held back'. The power of thought has not yet been given to her, so '*nothing now she knew*': she has no mental awareness, '*But all the unknown was hers to feel and clasp*'. This is what the senses can do: they can touch and grasp, seize hold of things.

Obeying the push of unborn things towards birth  
Out of her seal of insentient life she broke:  
In her substance of unthinking mute soul-strength

That cannot utter what its depths divine,  
Awoke a blind necessity to know.

There is a '*push of unborn things towards birth*', a pressure of things that have not yet manifested but want to be born, latent possibilities that want to be realised. That is what the creative Life-force has come into the material world to do. She obeys '*the push of unborn things*' that want to be born. That impulsion helps her to break out of the '*seal of insentient life*'. A '*seal*' is used to close something and keep it closed. The drive '*of unborn things towards birth*' enables the Life-power to break out of her imprisonment in '*insentient life*', the earliest life-forms without any sense-capacity. The substance of Life is '*unthinking*', for thought is still withheld, but it is a substance of '*unthinking mute soul-strength*': even without the capacity for sense or thought or expression it is full of '*soul-strength*', but it '*cannot utter*' – it is unable to express '*what its depths divine*'. 'To divine' means 'to know intuitively'. There are 'water-diviners' who can walk across a field and feel the best place to dig a well; they cannot say exactly how they know that water is there, but they are often amazingly accurate in their divinations: they feel with a subtle sense or intuit where water can be found. This word is connected with the French word 'deviner', which means 'to guess'; but such sensitive people do not really guess: they know intuitively or through some subtle sense where there is a good reserve of water. In the depths of life-substance there is a hidden consciousness by which she blindly knows things that she cannot express. Responding to the pressure of unborn or unmanifested things to take birth, within living matter there wakes up '*a blind necessity to know*'.

The chain that bound her she made her instrument;  
Instinct was hers, the chrysalis of Truth,  
And effort and growth and striving nescience.

At this early stage of evolution, the principle of Life is tightly bound by the chain of Matter. In her blind need for knowledge, she makes use of matter as '*her instrument*', and uses '*Instinct*', along with '*effort and growth and striving nescience*'. '*Instinct*', says Sri Aurobindo, is '*the chrysalis of Truth*'. A '*chrysalis*' is a stage

in the life of a butterfly or moth. The fully developed butterfly lays eggs out of which hatch caterpillars; when a caterpillar is fully developed it spins itself a cocoon, a protective covering, its '*chrysalis*'. Inside the chrysalis it loses its caterpillar form and eventually emerges as a butterfly. Amazingly, the caterpillar form does not change into the butterfly form: it dissolves completely and becomes liquid, unrecognisable; but in that liquid is contained all the information needed for shaping the mature butterfly. '*Instinct*' is like that: it contains in its formlessness all the needed knowledge, the full superconscience, for it is '*the chrysalis of Truth*'. In the early stages of evolution, the Truth-consciousness gets expressed as instinct. The Life-force has that to help her. She also has a lot of energy to help her efforts, her power of growth and her '*striving nescience*'. '*Nescience*' means 'a state without knowledge', 'a state of not knowing'. This imprisoned Life is in a state of 'not knowing' but she is guided by instinct which supports her effort to know, her blind aspiration for knowledge.

Inflicting on the body desire and hope,  
Imposing on inconscience consciousness,  
She brought into Matter's dull tenacity  
Her anguished claim to her lost sovereign right,  
Her tireless search, her vexed uneasy heart,  
Her wandering unsure steps, her cry for change.

Matter does not seem to want to change. It just stays the way it is. Sri Aurobindo says that it is '*dull*': it does not move, it is not very responsive, it just holds on. '*Tenacity*' is the capacity of holding on, of resisting change. But when the Life-force enters into the '*dull tenacity*' of matter she brings with her '*Her anguished claim to her lost sovereign right*' – the painful feeling that she has lost something that belongs to her by right. What is she missing? Bliss, Delight: her right to free enjoyment, to delight and to creative action. She is always searching tirelessly for that. Her heart is forever '*vexed*', troubled, disturbed; and so she is forever wandering here and there, unsure of her way and her aim; and because she does not find the joy she is looking for, there is always a '*cry for change*': "This is not good enough, it must change". She brings all this unrest into Matter. This has the effect of forcing on our bodies '*desire and hope*'. The

unsatisfied Life-force brings its own unrest and longing and hope into our bodies. The body would like to rest, to find a comfortable position and simply lie there and enjoy it; but whenever we get into a comfortable position like that, Life will poke us with some desire, some hope. She will get us moving. 'To inflict' and 'to impose' are very similar in meaning. A tyrant may inflict a law on his people – unwillingly, they have to accept it. The body resists the driving of the Life-force, it would like to be at peace, at ease – '*desire and hope*' are so troublesome; but despite the body's resistance Life imposes these disturbing urges on it. In this way, the unrest of Life is forcing inconscient matter to become conscious, not yet with mental consciousness but through the senses.

Adorer of a joy without a name,  
In her obscure cathedral of delight  
To dim dwarf gods she offers secret rites.  
But vain unending is the sacrifice,  
The priest an ignorant mage who only makes  
Futile mutations in the altar's plan  
And casts blind hopes into a powerless flame.

All life is a kind of sacrifice, Sri Aurobindo says, whether made willingly or unwillingly. If we are conscious we can make a voluntary sacrifice in order to progress; but if we are not conscious then nature imposes the sacrifice on us and in that way forces us to progress. Here in these lines of *Savitri* he shows us how the ignorant sacrifice is carried out by the Life-force imprisoned in matter. She is adoring and worshipping '*a joy without a name*': she does not know clearly what she is worshipping. She is offering worship in '*her obscure cathedral of delight*'. A '*cathedral*' is an important place of worship, but because at this stage she is confined in the lowest life-forms, Life's '*cathedral*', her sacred place of worship dedicated to '*delight*', is obscure, dark, full of shadows. There, '*To dim dwarf gods she offers secret rites*'. The powers to which she is offering worship are small dark beings, the '*Godheads of the Little Life*' which Sri Aurobindo will introduce to us in the next canto. Although she repeats her sacrifice unendingly it does not bring the desired result. For a sacrifice to have its full effect, it has to be offered by a person with knowledge who can

perform the ritual correctly and with the right consciousness. For us, the priest of our sacrifice should be Agni, the flame of Will and Aspiration that can carry our prayers to the higher powers; but in the lower levels of Life the priest is ‘*an ignorant mage*’. A ‘*mage*’ is a person who practices magic, and this mage is ignorant: he does not know how to do the rites properly. All he can do is to make ‘*Futile mutations in the altar’s plan*’. Matter provides the altar and the things to be offered, and there is the flame of Life-energy; but instead of performing the sacrifice correctly and with full consciousness, this ‘*ignorant mage*’ can only rearrange the implements on the altar. Sometimes, observing things that we human beings do in our lives, these words come into my mind: ‘*futile mutations*’. We think that we are making meaningful changes and do not notice that we are only rearranging the implements on the altar because we do not know how to take meaningful actions that will lead to real improvements. That priest only ‘*casts blind hopes into a powerless flame*’: no real conscious offering goes into the sacrificial fire, the purifying flame that should carry our aspirations to the gods; only ‘*blind hopes*’ are offered; and this is ‘*a powerless flame*’: it is not going to bring about the results that we are hoping for.

A burden of transient gains weighs down her steps  
And hardly under that load can she advance;  
But the hours cry to her, she travels on  
Passing from thought to thought, from want to want;  
Her greatest progress is a deepened need.

By her efforts, the Life-power does achieve some results, but they are ‘*transient gains*’: they do not last long; they even become a ‘*burden*’ to her, a load that she has to carry, and such a heavy load that she can hardly move forward under its weight. But time is passing – she is impelled to continue her journey, ‘*Passing from thought to thought, from want to want*’, from one thing to the next without really knowing where she is going. ‘*Her greatest progress is a deepened need*’: the greatest progress that she can make is a deepening of the need she feels, so that she can no longer remain satisfied with a succession of trivial surface enjoyments and begins to long for deeper, higher and truer aims.

Matter dissatisfies, she turns to Mind;  
She conquers earth, her field, then claims the heavens.  
Insensible, breaking the work she has done  
The stumbling ages over her labour pass,  
But still no great transforming light came down  
And no revealing rapture touched her fall.

With the deepened need of Life, material achievements are no longer satisfying. She turns to a subtler, higher consciousness, to '*Mind*'. '*She conquers earth*', her new field of action; then she '*claims the heavens*': the higher levels of consciousness. In this way the Life-force has accomplished a tremendous work of creative evolution up to the present day; but much of what she has done has been destroyed by the passage of time. '*The stumbling ages*', long periods of time moving on blindly, are '*insensible*': they show no respect or appreciation for her work but break it down and stumble over the ruins as they move inexorably forward. So much time has passed since Life entered the material world, and so many of her achievements have been destroyed and lost, '*But still no great transforming light came down*' to change her situation; '*no revealing rapture*', no revelatory touch of bliss has come to change her fallen state.

Only a glimmer sometimes splits mind's sky  
Justifying the ambiguous providence  
That makes of night a path to unknown dawns  
Or a dark clue to some diviner state.

The maximum that happens is that '*mind's sky*' is occasionally split open by a faint gleam of light. It is not very bright, only '*a glimmer*', but even that faint light is an indication that Life's strivings are worthwhile in a way. '*Providence*' is the Divine's way of taking care of his Creation and his creatures. Often we do not understand his ways. In our ignorance we cannot distinguish what is good or bad for us. But when that '*glimmer*' comes into our minds we may just for a moment glimpse that this terrible night of inconscience and ignorance might become '*a path to unknown dawns*'. Sri Aurobindo tells us that every night is preparing a dawn, and perhaps the darker the night, the more glorious may be the dawn that follows. The night

of inconstance and ignorance may lead to the dawning of a new light, new knowledge, new consciousness. Or, the poet says, it may be ‘*a dark clue to some diviner state*’. A ‘*clue*’ is a guiding indication, a thread that shows us the way. In mystery stories the detective is always looking for clues that will help him to solve the riddle. The original meaning of the word is a spool of thread that we can follow to find our way through the labyrinth of life. This can happen even in the lower states of Life: a faint light comes from above into the mind and suggests that the darkness we are passing through may be a necessary preparation for entering into a higher state.

In Nescience began her mighty task,  
In Ignorance she pursues the unfinished work,  
For knowledge gropes, but meets not Wisdom’s face.

Life began ‘*her mighty task*’ – the enormous work she has to do – in ‘*Nescience*’, the not-knowing of unconscious matter. As a result of her work, ‘*Ignorance*’ has emerged. There is a difference between the two states: ‘*Nescience*’ is completely without any knowledge, but ‘*Ignorance*’ is a state of partial knowledge in which we know enough to be aware that we do not know everything. In the Ignorance, Life ‘*pursues*’ or continues the ‘*unfinished work*’ that she has begun. She continues to grope, feeling her way through the darkness to find knowledge, but she is unable to meet the face of Wisdom, of true knowledge.

Ascending slowly with unconscious steps,  
A foundling of the Gods she wanders here  
Like a child-soul left near the gates of Hell  
Fumbling through fog in search of Paradise.

Life is ‘*Ascending*’, but slowly, with no conscious light to guide her steps. ‘*Here*’, in the world of Matter, she is a ‘*foundling of the Gods*’. A ‘*foundling*’ is an abandoned child. Life is like a child who has been abandoned by her divine parents. In our world she is wandering, lost, ‘*Fumbling*’, feeling her way through thick fog as well as she can, ‘*Like a child-soul left near the gates of Hell*’: the gates of falsehood, darkness, distortion, perversion. She has some vague memories of her blissful home, so she is constantly searching for paradise, the heavenly native home which she has lost; but here

she is, abandoned and imprisoned in the material world. Not only she has been '*left near the gates of Hell*', she has also been left in a thick fog and cannot see where she is going.

End of Section 1

#### **4. Book Two, Canto Four** **Section 2, lines 111-150**

King Aswapati is exploring the mystery that separates our life experience from the realms of griefless Life, the native home of the Life-goddess, which he has been able to see and gain knowledge of, although he was unable to enter them because his being was still too closely connected to the terrestrial world of evolving Life, dominated by duality and contradiction, by pain and suffering. The life that we experience is not a divine life; it is not the life of the blissful higher planes which are the native home of Life. In the previous section we read that Life here in the material world is like a lost child:

A foundling of the Gods she wanders here  
Like a child-soul left near the gates of Hell  
Fumbling through fog in search of Paradise.

Within Life there is an instinct for bliss, for delight, for a divine life, the paradisaal state of her origin; but here in the material world she is like a lost child who has been abandoned near the gates of Hell and is blindly trying to find the divine state she feels to be her true home. And because the Life-force here is lost and suffering, we too suffer and are unable to find the griefless divine life we long for. Aswapati is searching for the way to change this, and Sri Aurobindo tells us what he must do next in his quest:

In this slow ascension he must follow her pace  
Even from her faint and dim subconscious start:  
So only can earth's last salvation come.  
For so only could he know the obscure cause  
Of all that holds us back and baffles God  
In the jail-delivery of the imprisoned soul.

In order to find the key to a diviner life on earth Aswapati has to trace all the steps, the paces that Life has taken in her ascent ‘*Even from her faint and dim subconscious start*’: from the very beginning of the emergence of Life in the material world. Aswapati has to follow her whole journey to see where it started and how it has gone wrong. This is the only way, Sri Aurobindo says, in which ‘*earth’s last salvation can come*’, because in order for earth’s salvation to come, Life as it is, as we experience it here, has to be transformed: it has to become the Life divine. So now Aswapati is trying to find out ‘*the obscure cause*’, the dark mysterious source of everything that is holding us back from achieving our diviner possibilities, the origin of everything that ‘*baffles God / In the jail-delivery of the imprisoned soul*’: all that obstructs and hinders the Divine from delivering the human soul from its imprisonment. When we want to make progress, to become better human beings, to help the whole human race to become better and to move further in its evolution, something always seems to be holding us back, preventing us from truly changing, because human nature, the Life-force in us, is not able to escape from its limitations and old habits. Even though God himself is trying to deliver us, to set our souls free from this prison, something is baffling him, preventing him from doing it. Aswapati wants to know the ‘*obscure cause*’ of this difficulty; and the only way that he can find that out is to go back to the beginning, trace the beginnings of Life – where did it go wrong?

Along swift paths of fall through dangerous gates  
He chanced into a grey obscurity  
Teeming with instincts from the mindless gulfs  
That pushed to wear a form and win a place.

This second section of Canto Four provides an overall introduction, not only to this canto, but also to the next five, in which the poet introduces us to other realms of Life: ‘The Godheads of the Little Life’ (Canto Five), ‘The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life’ (Canto Six), then Aswapati’s ‘Descent into Night’ (Canto Seven), and his exploration of ‘The World of Falsehood, The Mother of Evil and the Sons of Darkness’ (Canto Eight). It is only after he has reached the very deepest darkest level of the subconscious at the end of Canto Eight and found there ‘*the secret key of Nature’s*

*change*’ that Aswapati is suddenly projected into ‘*The Paradise of the Life-Gods*’ (Canto Nine), the blissful worlds which are the native home of Life which he had seen from a distance in Canto Three, and from where he soon moves on into the worlds of Mind. Here, in this section of Canto Four, Sri Aurobindo is giving us an introduction that prepares us to follow Aswapati on that tremendous journey through the Worlds of Life. It is always said that the downward paths to the lower levels of consciousness are very smooth and easy: once you start in that direction you can move very quickly, without any hindrance or obstruction: nothing is trying to stop you. But those paths lead through ‘*dangerous gates*’. The great Italian poet Dante described the gates of Hell in his epic *Il Divina Commedia*, saying that above them is written “Abandon hope all you who enter here”. Aswapati passes through those dangerous gates and enters into a ‘*grey obscurity*’, a dark misty atmosphere which is ‘*Teeming with instincts from the mindless gulfs*’. If we disturb an ants’ nest, uncountable numbers of insects rush out and teem around in all directions; or in films of the streets of Tokyo or New York we see people teeming everywhere. What Aswapati sees teeming in that ‘*grey obscurity*’ are not people or ants but ‘*instincts*’ emerging from underground, ‘*from the mindless gulfs*’, the deep subconscious levels where no mind is found. Each of these instincts is pushing ‘*to wear a form and win a place*’, to express itself in the manifestation. The Mother has said that when we look at the sky it looks empty to us: it is blue with clouds here and there and looks quite pretty; but if we could see with subtle eyes, she says, we would become aware that the atmosphere is full of teeming, swarming instincts which are really very ugly, not beautiful at all. Aswapati is able to see those teeming instincts, swarming around like termites.

Life here was intimate with Death and Night  
And ate Death’s food that she might breathe awhile;  
She was their inmate and adopted waif.

On those lower levels which have just emerged from the subconsciousness of matter, the beautiful Life-goddess has become an abandoned child, ‘*A foundling of the Gods*’ who has been adopted by ‘*Death and Night*’. As their ‘*inmate*’, living in their house, eating

their material food is the only way that she can survive. She is their ‘*adopted waif*’. ‘*Waif*’ is another word for a lost child, a child without a home, living in very deprived conditions. She cannot escape; they have adopted her – where else can she go?

Accepting subconsciousness, in dumb darkness’ reign  
A sojourner, she hoped not any more.

As a prisoner in the world of Matter, the Life-force has to accept ‘*subconsciousness*’. She has become a ‘*sojourner*’ ‘*in dumb darkness’ reign*’. That dumb dark realm is not her home, it is not where she really belongs, but that is where she is living. ‘To sojourn’ means ‘to stay temporarily, for a time’. She is forced to stay there, and she has lost all hope of anything better: ‘*she hoped not any more*’.

There far away from Truth and luminous thought  
He saw the original seat, the separate birth  
Of the dethroned, deformed and suffering Power.

In that home of Death and Night, ruled by dumb darkness, ‘*far away from Truth and luminous thought*’, Aswapati sees ‘*the original seat*’, the place of ‘*the separate birth*’ of Life, cut off, separated from her true origin. In her blissful native home Life was a goddess, a great power; but she has been ‘*dethroned*’, deposed and outcast. There she was a being of beauty and delight and joy; here she has become ‘*deformed*’, distorted, ugly, and ‘*suffering*’.

An unhappy face of falsity made true,  
A contradiction of our divine birth,  
Indifferent to beauty and to light,  
Parading she flaunted her animal disgrace  
Unhelped by camouflage, brutal and bare,

In this realm of darkness Life wears an ‘*unhappy face of falsity*’: because she has been separated from her divine origin she has turned into her very opposite. That ‘*unhappy face*’ is not her true appearance: it is a falsehood, a ‘*falsity*’; but in this ‘*dumb darkness*’ that falsehood has become true. Now the Life-goddess appears as ‘*A contradiction of our divine birth*’, denying and contradicting our divine origin. Adopted by Death and Night, living in their home and eating their food, she has become ‘*Indifferent to beauty and to*

*light* – she no longer cares about those higher things. Instead she ‘*flaunted her animal disgrace*’, proudly showing off the ugliness of her beastly animal state, ‘*brutal and bare*’, without the slightest disguise: ‘*Unhelped by camouflage*’. Her ugliness and falsity are displayed in all their nakedness, without any covering or disguise, ‘*camouflage*’.

An authentic image recognised and signed  
Of her outcast force exiled from heaven and hope,  
Fallen, glorying in the vileness of her state,  
The grovel of a strength once half divine,  
The graceless squalor of her beast desires,  
The staring visage of her ignorance,  
The naked body of her poverty.

‘*To flaunt*’ means ‘to show off’, ‘to display proudly’. Life has lost her beauty, but she is showing off ‘*her animal disgrace*’, her distorted undivine appearance. Aswapati sees this ‘*authentic image ... Of her outcast force exiled from heaven and hope*’. This ugly picture has been ‘*recognised and signed*’, authenticated: “Yes, this is me.” This is the image of Life in her outcast state, ‘*exiled from heaven and hope*’. This is Life cut off from her blissful divine origin, swallowed up by Matter, able to express herself only in ugly distorted forms. She has been cast out of heaven, sent away: an ‘*outcast*’ is a person who has been rejected by society. She has been exiled, sent away from the heavens which are her native home; she has been denied all hope. And now it seems as if she glories in that fallen state – parading and flaunting it. She says, “Yes, look at me – this is what I am”. Now she is ‘*glorying in the vileness of her state*’. ‘Vile’ means ‘perverted’, ‘depraved’, ‘loathsome’, ‘foul’, ‘obscene’ – disgusting and inhuman. Life in her original state was ‘*half divine*’. Now she is grovelling, crawling in the mud, showing off the ‘*graceless squalor of her beast desires*’. ‘*Squalor*’ means ‘filth’, the dirtiness of extreme poverty. That glorious goddess has lost all her grace and become like an animal, rolling in filth, delighting in ‘*beast desires*’, displaying the ‘*staring visage of her ignorance*’, the blank face of one without intelligence, and the ‘*naked body of her poverty*’: she has lost all her divine wealth. She has nothing to cover herself with.

Here first she crawled out from her cabin of mud  
Where she had lain unconscious, rigid, mute:  
Its narrowness and torpor held her still,  
A darkness clung to her uneffaced by Light.

This is the level where Life has just begun to emerge from matter. '*Here first she crawled out from her cabin of mud*', the little mud hut where she had been lying completely immersed in matter, '*unconscious, rigid, mute*': without consciousness, unable to move, unable to speak or express herself in any way; '*Lain*' is the past participle of the verb 'to lie'. Sri Aurobindo tells us that the Life-force is latent in matter but there it has no means of expression. It is only when a certain flexibility and plasticity comes into matter that Life is able to crawl out of '*her cabin of mud*'. Probably it was where the earth became muddy, sticky and slimy that the first forms of Life – yeasts and bacteria – could evolve. Even then, the '*narrowness and torpor*', the dense inertia of matter, still holds her tight so that she can hardly move, and so does its darkness, its unconsciousness. That darkness has not yet been '*effaced by light*'. 'To efface' something means to wipe it out. Light effaces darkness, but the light of consciousness has not yet come to the Life-force: she is still so close to her total immersion in Matter.

There neared no touch redeeming from above:  
The upward look was alien to her sight,  
Forgotten the fearless godhead of her walk;  
Renounced was *the glory and felicity*,  
The adventure in the dangerous fields of Time:  
*Hardly she availed, wallowing, to bear and live.*

In this state, Life does not feel any touch of divinity from above that would 'redeem' her, set her free. In fact she does not look upwards at all: '*The upward look was alien to her sight*', it is not part of her way of seeing things. She has completely forgotten '*the fearless godhead of her walk*', in her original state. By her immersion in Matter, the Life-goddess has had to renounce, give up '*the glory and felicity*' – '*felicity*' means happiness – of her original state, and has also lost the sense of adventure with which she undertook her plunge into '*the fields of Time*' and the material universe.

Now she is a prisoner experiencing all the unconsciousness, the limitations and struggle of the evolutionary process. ‘*Wallowing*’, submerged in the mud of this squalid and graceless state, Life ‘*Hardly ... availed ... to bear and live*’: she could only just manage to endure and stay alive.

End of Section 2

## 5. Book Two, Canto Four Section 3, lines 151-200

A wide unquiet mist of seeking Space,  
A rayless region swallowed in vague swathes,  
That seemed, unnamed, unbodied and unhoused,  
A swaddled visionless and formless mind,  
Asked for a body to translate its soul.

As Aswapati enters into this first realm of ‘The Little Life’ he perceives ‘*A wide unquiet mist of seeking Space*’: a wide space which expresses the restless seeking of the fallen life-force. It is ‘*unquiet*’, anxious, troubled; the original harmony of Matter has been disturbed by the invasion of the restless unsatisfied seeking of the Life-force. That realm is foggy, shrouded in mist so that one cannot see clearly; it is a ‘*rayless region*’: there is no ray of light. It is ‘*swallowed in vague swathes*’, hidden by formless veils of cloud and mist. That Space seems like a consciousness that is searching for something, a ‘*swaddled visionless and formless mind*’. ‘*Swaddled*’ means ‘wrapped up in bandages’. Mothers used to do this with newborn babies: to keep its limbs straight they would wrap the baby up tightly with strips of cloth, ‘swaddling bands’, so that it could not move its arms and legs. This ‘*formless mind*’ is not only ‘*swaddled*’ and cannot move freely, it is also ‘*visionless*’ – it cannot see. It is also ‘*unnamed, unbodied and unhoused*’: it has no name, no body and no home – nothing to contain or shelter it. But it has some consciousness and it seems to be aspiring for a form through which it could express itself: it is asking ‘*for a body to translate its soul*’. It is a soul, but that soul cannot manifest until it has a body, a form which can express it.

Its prayer denied, it fumbled after thought.  
As yet not powered to think, hardly to live,  
It opened into a weird and pigmy world  
Where this unhappy magic had its source.

But its *'prayer'*, its aspiration for a body, a form, is denied: it is not granted a body; so *'it fumbled after thought'*. 'Fumbling' is similar to 'groping': if you cannot see what you are trying to do, your hands fumble, moving clumsily, without skill. Sometimes our minds fumble: we feel that we have some knowledge, the name of a person or something we have to do, but we cannot remember it properly and our mind fumbles: it tries clumsily and unsuccessfully to remember or find what it wants. This consciousness is not allowed to have a body, so it tries to think, but it is not yet capable of thinking, it is not yet empowered to think; it is hardly able to live, to exist; but it does open onto, becomes aware of and enters *'a weird and pigmy world'*: the first of 'The Kingdoms of the Little Life'. *'Pigmy'* means 'very small'; this is a world of smallness. It is also *'weird'*: strange, even twisted, distorted. This *'weird and pigmy world'* is where the *'unhappy magic'* of Life's change *'had its source'*. This strange world of smallness and distortion has appeared in response to the wish of a *'swaddled visionless and formless mind'* for *'a body to translate its soul'*; that wish was denied, so that inchoate mind tried to think – but was not empowered to do so. Instead it has been granted entrance into this *'weird and pigmy world'* where Life is just beginning to emerge from the domination of matter.

On dim confines where Life and Matter meet  
He wandered among things half-seen, half-guessed,  
Pursued by ungrasped beginnings and lost ends.

Following in Life's traces, Aswapati is also groping in the mist on the *'dim confines'*, the frontiers or borderlines *'where Life and Matter meet'*. These frontiers are *'dim'* – there is very little light. He is wandering *'among things half-seen, half-guessed'*: everything there is very unclear, so he can only half-see them, and the rest he has to guess or surmise; he is being *'Pursued by ungrasped beginnings'*: everywhere he goes, he finds false starts or opportunities that have

not been seized, and ‘*lost ends*’: outcomes or aims which seem cut off from their origins.

There life was born but died before it could live.  
There was no solid ground, no constant drift;  
Only some flame of mindless Will had power.

In that strange realm, Life appears but then dies before it has a chance to really live; it comes into existence for a moment and then is gone again. There is ‘*no solid ground*’: no firm basis; there is not even a ‘*constant drift*’. A ‘*drift*’ is a current in a stream or the sea which follows a particular direction; if the drift is constant, it keeps flowing in one direction; but if there is ‘*no constant drift*’ the flow is fluctuating unpredictably, constantly changing direction. In that realm or state there is ‘*some flame of... Will*’ which has some power, some energy, but it is a ‘*mindless Will*’, and a ‘*flame*’ can even flicker and move unpredictably, not burning steadily upwards; there is some energy of Will, but one without any conscious direction behind it.

Himself was dim to himself, half-felt, obscure,  
As if in a struggle of the Void to be.

In that realm even Aswapati ‘*was dim to himself, half-felt, obscure*’. In exploring this realm, he has identified with its consciousness, so this is his experience: it is as if ‘*the Void*’, the Nothingness of non-existence is struggling to begin to exist, ‘*to be*’.

In strange domains where all was living sense  
But mastering thought was not nor cause nor rule,  
Only a crude child-heart cried for toys of bliss,  
Mind flickered, a disordered infant glow,  
And random shapeless energies drove towards form  
And took each wisp-fire for a guiding sun.

In the ‘*strange domains*’, the countries and territories of this first Kingdom of the Little Life, ‘*all was living sense*’: the only form of consciousness is ‘*sense*’, which takes different forms. That was the only tool that is given to Life there. The first primitive living creatures had only some kind of sense to guide them, to tell them ‘This is good for you’ or ‘This is dangerous, better draw back’, ‘This is something I can eat’ or ‘This is not good for me’: a very primitive sense-

consciousness. In those domains there is no *'mastering thought'* to give guidance, no sense of *'cause'* or of *'rule'*: *'Only a crude child-heart cried for toys of bliss'* – this is the only way in which the Life-force can express itself – in a very simple form of desire and longing. *'Mind'* there can only show itself as *'a disordered infant glow'*, a first disorganised form of light. There, *'random shapeless energies drove towards form'*: formless energies that have emerged by chance, without rhyme or reason, are pressing to take form, but they have no discrimination and no guiding principle. They *'took each wisp-fire for a guiding sun'*. With this phrase *'wisp-fire'* Sri Aurobindo makes us think of the *'will-o'-the-wisp'* phenomenon. It is caused by marsh gasses such as methane produced by rotting vegetation in swampy areas. In the dark these exhalations glow with a kind of phosphorescence or bio-luminescence as they drift above the muddy ground. There are tales of foot-travellers in marshy areas being led astray by these faint and inconstant lights. Those Life-energies seeking for form will follow any light, however faint or misleading, as if it were *'a guiding sun'* that will lead them towards truth, reality, a higher Life.

At this stage in the development of Life, there is no mastering thought, no possibility of stepping back, observing, understanding and controlling. There does not even seem to be any particular cause; everything is just happening randomly, by chance. No rules or laws have yet been established. There are only experimental attempts – fumbings, gropings, seekings – nothing has yet been fixed and organised. The only direction is given by *'a crude child-heart'*, unformed, without guidance, instinctively crying out for things to play with: *'toys of bliss'*. (Actually, we are all the time crying out for bliss. We think we want this or that, but what our heart really longs for is bliss.) Mind is just beginning to be born. It is flickering like a candle flame in the wind; this first light of mind-consciousness is disordered, unreliable. It is just an infant, newly born; it is only a glow, a faint light. There are energies – formless, shapeless energies. They are moving at random without any directing mind or will behind. They are pushing towards form, they want bodies to translate their souls; but they too have no guidance. They take any little light that appears – *'each wisp-fire' – 'for a guiding sun'*.

If you can see a sun you can tell which way you are going even if it is a very distant sun, a star; even if it is only a moon, the reflection of a sun, you can guide yourself by that. But the lights that hover over muddy, swampy places – we call them ‘will-o’-the-wisps’ – are gasses emitted by rotting vegetation. If you are travelling at night you might see such a light moving here and there above the marsh. If you take it for a guiding sun you will just end up in the mud. Those first shapeless Life-energies cannot distinguish between a guiding light and a misleading one.

This blindfold force could place no thinking step;  
Asking for light she followed darkness’ clue.

The ‘*blindfold force*’ of Life just emerging from matter has no consciousness to guide her. She is aspiring and seeking for light, but has no discriminating mind-vision; she cannot take any ‘*thinking step*’; she cannot help following ‘*darkness’ clue*’: any hints or indications she follows in her seeking for light can only come from the darkness around her.

An inconscient Power groped towards consciousness,  
Matter smitten by Matter glimmered to sense,  
Blind contacts, slow reactions beat out sparks  
Of instinct from a cloaked subliminal bed,

Sri Aurobindo is beautifully describing the processes by which consciousness has emerged from the original inconscience of earth. ‘*An inconscient Power*’, the Life power imprisoned in Matter, is groping towards consciousness; that movement causes some friction in Matter itself; ‘*Matter*’ is ‘*smitten by Matter*’: there is contact between different material forms, so that material substance ‘*glimmered to sense*’: dimly became aware of the sensation of contact. These first experiences take the form of ‘*Blind contacts, slow reactions*’, but they ‘*beat out sparks / Of instinct ...*’. When we strike one stone against another sometimes there will be a spark, a tiny flash of light and energy. Similarly these ‘*Blind contacts*’ and ‘*slow reactions*’ stimulated the emergence of small sparks of ‘*instinct*’ from the bedrock of unconsciousness, for hidden within it, ‘*cloaked*’, disguised, is a layer of ‘*subliminal*’ consciousness. ‘*Subliminal*’ means ‘below the threshold of waking

consciousness'; 'limen' means 'threshold' in Latin, while 'sub' means 'below'. Below the threshold of waking consciousness lie subliminal layers which may emerge into awareness. In the evolution of Life from Matter, Sri Aurobindo says, some first '*blind contacts*' between material forms and substances, caused by the pressure of the Life-force towards consciousness, led to some '*slow reactions*' taking the form of awareness of contact and reaction to it, and striking out sparks of energy and consciousness in the form of '*instinct*'.

Sensations crowded, dumb substitutes for thought,  
Perception answered Nature's wakening blows  
But still was a mechanical response,  
A jerk, a leap, a start in Nature's dream,

As a result, in the first forms of living matter '*Sensations crowded, dumb substitutes for thought*'. The thought-capacity has not yet been formed, but there is some first awareness in the form of sensations. Those first primitive life-forms could feel differences: cold, warm, light, dark, salty, bitter, sweet and so on; those sensations are '*dumb*' – they cannot speak – but they do convey messages. These contacts and reactions, says Sri Aurobindo, were '*Nature's wakening blows*', waking up consciousness in those unconscious life-forms in the form of '*Perception*'. Consciousness was deeply asleep in them, in their substance; in response to these '*blows*' from Nature, from the surrounding environment, the capacity of '*Perception*', awareness, begins to emerge. But at first the response is still a mechanical one: '*A jerk, a leap, a start in Nature's dream*' – Nature is dreaming but still asleep, she has not yet woken up.

And rude unchastened impulses jostling ran  
Heedless of every motion but their own  
And, darkling, clashed with darker than themselves,  
Free in a world of settled anarchy.

When a sensation is felt, impulses are aroused; but at first these are very crude ones: '*rude unchastened impulses*'. They have not been purified or refined or educated in any way. They are just raw responses. There are many of them and as they move they 'jostle' each other, bumping into each other, pushing and shoving; they

are '*Headless of every motion but their own*': they do not pay any attention to what is going on around them, each of them is aware only of its own movement. Here in India I am amazed that even in very dense crowds people almost never bump into each other. That means that people are consciously aware, in their bodies, of the movement of other people around them and avoid contact; they have their antennas out and they are aware of the motion around so they do not crash into each other. But these impulses are not like that. They are constantly jostling each other. They are '*darkling*' – dark in their consciousness and dark in every way – so they are constantly crashing into other dark and even darker things. They are all moving freely without any conscious control. That realm is '*a world of settled anarchy*'. '*Anarchy*' means 'no government', 'no rule', 'no control'. That is the state they are in, and it does not change, it is '*settled*', fixed.

The need to exist, the instinct to survive  
Engrossed the tense precarious moment's will  
And an unseeing desire felt out for food.

Each of those beings, those impulses, is completely absorbed, '*Engrossed*' in '*The need to exist, the instinct to survive*'. This need and this instinct occupy all their awareness, there is no room for anything else. So at every moment they feel endangered, threatened, so there is tension, insecurity. When you feel '*precarious*' it means you fear that at any moment something dangerous, even fatal, can happen to you. These beings never feel safe. Whatever little consciousness is there is totally taken up with the need to exist and the instinct to survive which leads to a blind desire to nourish its existence by devouring part of its environment: '*an unseeing desire felt out for food*'. To be and to remain in existence and to absorb as much of the environment as possible into itself seems to be the primary instinct of Life emerging from unconscious matter.

The gusts of Nature were the only law,  
Force wrestled with force, but no result remained:  
Only were achieved a nescient grasp and drive  
And feelings and instincts knowing not their source,

Sense-pleasures and sense-pangs soon caught, soon lost,  
And the brute motion of unthinking lives.

The only powers influencing this chaotic state were *'The gusts of Nature'*. 'Gust' is a word with two meanings. It can be a strong blast of wind. In stormy weather, gusts of wind may come from different directions and blow things around. The other meaning of the word is 'enthusiasm': some people have 'a gust for life' and do many things with energy and 'gusto'; this word is connected with the French word 'goût', meaning taste, liking or preference. The tastes and desires and rushing winds of Nature drive those beings and impulses in different directions. Forces wrestle with each other but cancel each other out so that no results of those efforts remain. Then Sri Aurobindo lists the achievements of this state, this stage of evolution: *'a nescient grasp and drive'* – a blind unknowing impulsion and a capacity to seize sensations for a moment; then *'feelings and instincts knowing not their source'* – instinctive perceptions unaware of their origin; *'Sense-pleasures and sense-pangs soon caught, soon lost'* – sensations that give either pleasure or pain, which are felt only for a moment and are soon lost; and *'the brute motion of unthinking lives'*. Life-forms are there, capable only of rough unrefined movements ruled not by thought and conscious choice but by *'the gusts of Nature'*.

It was a vain unnecessary world  
Whose will to be brought poor and sad results  
And meaningless suffering and a grey unease.  
Nothing seemed worth the labour to become.

This realm seems to be *'a vain unnecessary world'*. A *'will to be'* is there, but it brings about only *'poor and sad results'*. There is no true joy of Life but only *'meaningless suffering and a grey unease'*, restlessness and discomfort and dissatisfaction. *'Nothing seemed worth the labour to become'*: simply existing seems to demand so much effort, and then that existence does not even seem worthwhile. Why should such a world exist at all?

The very first life-forms – which represented life on earth for about two million years, I learned recently – were single-celled entities, clustering together to form slimes and moulds in colonies called

‘stromatolites’. There are still remnants of them in a few places on earth today. If this was the best that Life could do in the world of Matter, indeed it would hardly seem ‘*worth the labour to become*’. But King Aswapati sees things differently: in the first lines of the next section the poet tells us:

But judged not so his spirit’s wakened eye.  
As shines a solitary witness star  
That burns apart, Light’s lonely sentinel,  
In the drift and teeming of a mindless Night,  
A single thinker in an aimless world  
Awaiting some tremendous dawn of God,  
He saw the purpose in the works of Time.

As Aswapati looks at this apparently useless and unnecessary world he is able to see its value and the important role that it plays in the evolutionary process. We shall look at that next time.

End of Book Two, Canto Four, Section 3

*(To be continued)*

## ***The English of Savitri***

### **Volume 3**

### **Book Seven – The Book of Yoga**

is now available from SABDA and Savitri Bhavan  
hardbound, 444 pages, price Rs. 550.00

Also available in e-publication format from [www.auro-ebooks.com](http://www.auro-ebooks.com)

### **Other volumes in this series**

Volume 1, Book One – The Book of Beginnings,  
2nd revised edition 2017, Rs. 550.00

Volume 2, Book Three – The Book of the Divine Mother, 2016, Rs. 450.00

Volume 4, Book Ten – The Book of the Double Twilight  
is in preparation for publication in 2018

# **Savitri Readers’ Foundation**

## **Bhubaneswar: The Journey So Far**

*by Bharat Bhusan*

December 6, 2015 – this day will remain etched in golden script in the hearts of *Savitri*-lovers living in and around Bhubaneswar, Odisha. They had been nursing a long-cherished aspiration, the dream of a congenial space exclusively dedicated to regular reading of *Savitri*. By a surprise bounty of Sweet Mother in August 2015, devotee Sri Manoranjan Dash came forward with the offer that an entire floor of the multi-storeyed building which he was then constructing at Om Gardens, Chandrasekharapur, Bhubaneswar could be used for running a centre for the study of *Savitri*.

The layout was suitably modified to provide a lecture hall for one hundred facing a large terrace, a library and reading room, a guest room and so on, and this complex was named Savitri Bhavan and inaugurated on the 6th December, 2015 by Dr Alok Pandey. He later held discourses for two days which kept about 250 devotees engrossed . On this occasion a book entitled *Savitri Adhyayan* Part One was released, authored by Sri Pravakar Mishra which gives a lucid interpretation in Odia of Book One Cantos I & II of Sri Aurobindo’s epic, with corresponding references from eminent devotees such as M.P. Pandit, Dr. Nadkarni and others.

A Trust was formed with the name ‘Savitri Readers Foundation’ and registered under the Indian Trust Act on the 25th March, 2017 with Registration Number 41081702527. Sri Pravakar Mishra is the Managing Trustee. Pravakar-bhai is the strength and fulcrum of the Trust. With the support of his wife, Urmila Didiji he holds *Savitri*-reading sessions every week on Monday and Tuesday evenings, which are regularly attended by about 15 devotees.

With encouragement from Savitri Bhavan in Auroville, the Savitri Readers’ Foundation Bhubaneswar (SRF) has been making steady progress since inauguration. Regular collective reading of *Savitri*

is being held on Saturdays led by Sri Pravakar Mishra, who also gives explanations to enable clear understanding by the participating devotees. On days when Pravakar-bhai is unavailable, Sri Pravanjan Mohanty competently fills his place. On normal Saturdays at least twenty five devotees participate.

During the first Anniversary of SRF in December 2016, discourses were given by Sraddhalu Ranade over two days. Then in April 2017, when Dr Alok Pandey made an unexpected visit to Matrubhavan, Cuttack for the Annual Day Celebration of all All-Odisha Study Circle group, he graciously agreed to stop over at Savitri Bhavan on his return journey, and gave an illuminating two and a half hour session on *Savitri's Yoga* followed by Questions Answers.

Apart from discourses by these eminent sadhaks and *Savitri*-researchers, SRF celebrates Sri Aurobindo's Birthday every year with discourses by learned devotees of Odisha like Sri Pravakar Mishra, Professor Dr. Saroj Kanta Mishra and Sri Rabindra Nath Padhi, who has translated Sri Aurobindo's poems into Odia. This year on 15 August, 2017 there were two speakers. While Pravakar-bhai dealt with Narad's response to the anxiety of Savitri's mother the Queen from 'The Way of Fate and Problem of Pain', the talk of Dr Saroj K. Mishra was based on Book Eleven ('The Soul's Choice and the Supreme Consummation')

As a token of social responsibility, SRF is defraying the tuition fees for a well-mannered, intelligent and needy girl who is a good student too and studying in class seven in an English-medium school.

For the second Anniversary of the Centre on 6-7 December 2017, SRF has earnestly requested a visit by Dr Alok Pandey. It is also planned to release the second part of Sri Pravakar Mishra's *Savitri Adhyayan* during this event.

Reposing its faith on the Mother's Grace, the Savitri Readers' Foundation, Bhubaneswar is moving ahead with its dream of providing an inspiring centre of Savitri studies in Odisha.

# News of Savitri Bhavan

## *Some Highlights*

### **Savitri Study Camp in Tamil**

From May 13 to 17 Bhuvana Sudarsen offered a Study Camp in Tamil to 25 participants from various Sri Aurobindo Centres around the State, focusing on Book One – The Book of Beginnings, Canto One – The Symbol Dawn. A second camp on Canto Two is planned for November 24-26.



*Savitri Study Camp for members of Tamil Nadu Sri Aurobindo Centres*

### **International Yoga Day**

International Yoga Day June 21st, 2017 was commemorated in Auroville by a wide variety of activities, commencing with a silent concentration near the Matrimandir, followed by chanting of Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri Mantra and group practice of Suryanamaskar.

At Savitri Bhavan on the evening of June 20th a 3D animation film created by the Sopanam team of Auroville and entitled *Introduction*



*Introduction to Integral Yoga: workshop led by Ashesh Joshi*

to *Integral Yoga* was shown, and on the 21st itself a full programme of events took place throughout the day, including Sanskrit Mantra Chanting, followed by a workshop, ‘Introduction to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’ led by Ashesh Joshi. This workshop was accompanied by an exhibition of quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Yoga and introduced by release of a new book by Ashesh Joshi with the same title. The major event in the afternoon was an informal sharing amongst Aurovilians on the topic of ‘*The Newness of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga*’ and ‘*Auroville and Yoga*’ accompanied by PowerPoint presentations prepared by members of the Savitri Bhavan team. In the evening a new film entitled *The Yoga of the Earth* was shown, with selected recitations and comments of the Mother from the first canto of *Savitri* and paintings by Huta.

### **Dr. Alok Pandey’s Talk**

On August 22, Dr. Alok Pandey gave a talk in the Sangam Hall as the concluding session of his Study Camp at the Sri Aurobindo Society in Pondicherry on Book Seven of *Savitri* – The Book of Yoga. Many of his students as well as Aurovilians attended. It was agreed to make this a regular event in August each year, following in the footsteps of our beloved Dr. Nadkarni.



*Dr. Alok Pandey speaking in the Sangam Hall on August 22, 2017*

### **The Savitri Around the World Project**

Early in this year, Savitri Bhavan agreed to host the final event of this project initiated by members of Auroville International as part of Auroville's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations in February 2018. Since then preparations have been going ahead here and around the world. At least 333 readers representing 70 countries will be participating

## ***Inside the World Stair***

### **The 8<sup>th</sup> Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture**

will be given by

**Sonia Dyne**

at Savitri Bhavan on

**Sunday 18 February 2018, 4 – 5 pm**

As usual, transport will be provided from Pondicherry and light refreshments will be offered at Savitri Bhavan

**Everyone is welcome**

in this complete continuous reading of *Savitri*, planned to start from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and encircle the globe to close in Auroville. Look out for this unique event, planned for release on YouTube during the Birthday Week. At the same time it will also unfold on the big screen in Savitri Bhavan's Sangam Hall.

### **Reading *The Life Divine***

This weekly study-group, launched in December 2008, reached the end of the book on Wednesday September 20. Forty-five members were present for the final session. It was agreed that the group would take up regular weekly study of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* from Wednesday October 11, 2017 onwards.

### ***The Life Divine***

Recorded readings by Shraddhavan  
of all the 28 Chapters of Book One  
**'Omnipresent Reality and the Universe'**  
are now available on request from  
the information desk at Savitri Bhavan

### ***Savitri Shabdarnut Volume 7***

This Gujarati translation by Shri Kirit Thakkar of Shraddhavan's *English of Savitri* talks on Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri*, covering Cantos Four, Five, Six and Seven of Book Seven – The Book of Yoga, was released on Guru Purnima day, 9 July 2017. As usual, the volume includes original lines of *Savitri* along with Pujalal-ji's verse translation of them and translation in prose by Shri Kirit Thakkar, followed by the Gujarati translation of Shraddhavan's explanations.

444 pages, soft-bound, Price Rs. 160.00

(Postage in Gujarat Rs. 20.00, outside Rs. 50.00)

Published by Yogayukta Prakashan, 2017;

Available from: Yogayukta Prakashan, E 102, Chandranagar Colony,  
Nr. Suvarna Laxmi Appts. Waghodia Road, Vadodara 390019, Gujarat,  
Mobile: 9427540195, e-mail: [kirityukta@yahoo.co.in](mailto:kirityukta@yahoo.co.in)

Also from Savitri Bhavan; SABDA; and Sri Aurobindo Memorial Trust,  
Sri Aurobindo Nivas, Vadodara 1, Phone (0265) 2418978 as well as at  
all leading Sri Aurobindo Centres in Gujarat

# Calendar of Events

*March to October 2017*

## Regular weekly activities:

- Sundays** 10.30 am-12 noon: *Savitri Study Circle*
- Mondays** 7-8 am: *Chanting Sanskrit Hymns*  
3-4 pm: *Yoga and the Evolution of Man*, led by Dr. Jai Singh  
5-6 pm: *Understanding the Myths of Ancient Greece in relation to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, led by Claude de Warren
- Tuesdays** 9 am-12.00 noon: *Introduction to Integral Yoga*, led by Ashesh Joshi  
3-4 pm: *Yoga and the Evolution of Man*, led by Dr. Jai Singh  
4-5 pm: *L' Agenda de Mère – The Mother's recorded talks with Gangalakshmi*  
5-6 pm: *Let us learn Savitri together*, in Tamil, led by Buvana  
5-6 pm: *Mudra Chi - A body prayer in Tai-chi form based on the Mother's Mudras*, led by Anandi  
5.45-7.15 pm: *OM Choir*
- Wednesdays** 7-8 am: *Chanting Sanskrit Hymns*  
5.30-6.30 pm: *Reading The Life Divine*, led by Shraddhavan
- Thursdays** 4-5 pm: *The English of Savitri*, led by Shraddhavan  
5.15-6.45pm: *Exploring Death and Beyond: our journey to immortality*, a presentation led by Muriel Ghion
- Fridays** 7-8 am: *Chanting Sanskrit Hymns*  
3-4 pm: *Exploring the Bhagavad Gita*, led by Dr. Jai Singh  
4-5 pm: *L' Agenda de Mère – The Mother's recorded talks with Gangalakshmi*  
5.30-7.00 pm: *Meditation with Hymns of the Rig Veda*, led by Nishtha
- Saturdays** 4-5 pm: *L' Agenda de Mère – The Mother's recorded talks with Gangalakshmi*  
5-6.30 pm: *Satsang* led by Ashesh Joshi

From 14 August 2017, on Mondays & Fridays from 11 am-12 noon a new class was started, entitled *Introduction to Sri Aurobindo's World Vision: a series of illustrated presentations* by Muriel.

## Monthly Activity:

Full Moon Gatherings in front of Sri Aurobindo's statue

## Special Events:

### March:

- 1-July 31 **Exhibitions:** *Meditations on Savitri, Books Four to Seven* in the Picture Gallery, *Sri Aurobindo: a life-sketch in photographs* in the upper corridor and *Glimpses of the Mother: Photographs and texts* in the Square Hall.
- 6 **Film:** *The Path of Later On* – This story was written by The Mother when she was 12 years old. Cristof reads the text; the illustrations in black and white are by Sushanto.
- 13 **Film:** *The Soul of India* – In an interview with Narad, Dr. Alok Pandey speaks about India – the age old laboratory of evolution.
- 20 **Film:** *Journey to the Life Divine* – This film, created in the Ashram, shows the lives of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother from childhood on and their joint work for a new step in evolution towards a divine life for mankind and the earth.
- 27 **Film:** *Meditations on Savitri, Book Two, The Traveller of the Worlds Cantos 1-4* – Film by Manohar of Huta's paintings illustrating passages from *Savitri* read by The Mother accompanied by her own organ music.

### April:

- 3 **Film:** *The Integral Yoga and Other Paths – Part 1* - Dr.Alok Pandey speaks about the essence of spirituality and the need for the feminine, the dynamic side of the Divine, to step into the forefront.
- 10 **Film:** *The Integral Yoga and Other Paths – Part 2* – Dr.Alok Pandey speaks about the Integral Yoga, 'The Synthesis of Yoga' and the future Yoga, the Supramental Yoga where soul and nature are in union.
- 17 **Film:** *Meditations on Savitri – Book Two Cantos 5-6* – Film by Manohar of Huta's paintings illustrating passages from *Savitri* read by the Mother and accompanied by her own organ music.

24 **Film:** *The Four Aspects of The Mother – Maheswari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati* – 24 April 1920 was the day of the Mother’s final arrival in Pondicherry to work with Sri Aurobindo towards a Life Divine on Earth.

**May:**

13-17 Savitri Study Camp in Tamil led by Buvana on Book One Canto 1. About 25 participants from various Centres of Tamilnadu attended the camp.

**June:**

20 On the eve of International Yoga Day *Introduction to Integral Yoga* – a 3D animation film produced by Sopanam, Auroville was shown.

21 International Yoga Day was celebrated at Savitri Bhavan from morning to evening with a series of events: 7-8 am Sanskrit Mantras Chanting with Dakshina Chanting Group 8.30 am: Exhibition & Book Release: *An Introduction to the Integral Yoga*

9.00 am-12 noon: Inner-Work workshop led by Ashesh Joshi: *Introduction to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo* 12:00 noon - 3.45 pm: *Listening to Savitri Readings by the Mother with music by Sunil-da.*

4-6 pm *The Newness of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga and its connection to Auroville* – an informal sharing amongst Aurovilians

7-30 pm **Film:** *The Yoga of the Earth* – comments by the Mother on lines from *Savitri* with paintings by Huta.

**July:**

17 **Film:** *The Teachings of Flowers – The Life and Work of the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.* Produced and directed by Loretta Shartasis, Cinematography by Caren Lindfield, Music by Jean-Christophe Bonnafous in 2011.

24 **Film:** *Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga – Evolution Fast-Forward-Psychology, Cosmology, Transformational Practice.* A film in 3D motion graphics by Sopanam, Auroville.

31 **Film:** *Meditations on Savitri – Book 2: The Traveller of the Worlds – Cantos 11-14.* Film by Manohar of Huta’s

Paintings illustrating passages from *Savitri* read by The Mother and accompanied by her own organ music.

### August:

- 1 onwards **Exhibitions:** *Meditations on Savitri, Books Eight to Twelve*, in the Picture Gallery, *Sri Aurobindo : a life-sketch in photographs*, in the upper corridor and *Glimpses of the Mother: Photographs and texts*, in the Square Hall.
- 7 **Film:** *On Health and Psychology* – Video of Dr. Alok Pandey's interview by Narad (Richard Eggenberger)
- 14 **Film:** *The Day of the Lord* – Video of a talk given by Dr. Alok Pandey at Savitri Bhavan on 28 February 2016.
- 21 **Film:** *Nirod da: An inspiration – Honouring the memory of Nirodbaran*. Nirodbaran (1903-2006) was one of the close disciples of Sri Aurobindo and had a special relationship with the Lord; Film by The Gnostic Centre, New Delhi, in 2007.
- 22 **Talk:** Dr. Alok Pandey gave a talk on *Savitri – Book Seven – The Book of Yoga* as the concluding session of his *Savitri* Study Camp at Sri Aurobindo Society, Beach Office, Pondicherry.
- 28 **Film:** *Meditations on Savitri – Book Three: Book of the Divine Mother – Cantos 1-4*. Film by Manohar of Huta's Paintings illustrating passages from *Savitri* read by The Mother and accompanied by her own organ music.

### September

- 4 **Film:** *Evolution Fast Forward Part 3 –Parts of the Being & Planes of Consciousness mapped by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother; a new film by Sapanam, Auroville.*
- 8 **Talk** on *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sraddhalu
- 11 **Film:** *Interview with Kireet Joshi* In this special interview of 2013, Kireet Joshi shares his experiences of regular meetings with Mother and Her way of action and Grace.
- 18 **Film:** *Let Us Work to Restore the Veda Part 1* Kireet Joshi speaks about Sri Aurobindo and how he discovered the work and experiences of the Rishis and the truth of the Veda.

## October:

- 2 **Film:** *Evolution Fast Forward, Part 1 - the vision & work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and the vast Truth that is the next step in earth's evolution.* A film by Sopanam, Auroville.
- 9 **Film:** *Kireet Joshi: Let Us Work to Restore the Veda, Part 3 – Agni and the Truth*
- 11 New study group started on Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*
- 16 **Film:** *Kireet Joshi: Let us work to restore The Veda, Part 4 – The Seven Rivers (1)*
- 23 **Film:** *The Vision and the Boon – Savitri and Katha Upanishad*, the 7th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture by Dr. Ananda Reddy 19-02-2017.
- 30 **Film:** *Meditations on Savitri – Book 4: The Book of Birth and Quest* - Film by Manohar of Huta's paintings illustrating passages from *Savitri* read by the Mother.

### Visit the Savitri Bhavan Website [www.savitribhavan.org](http://www.savitribhavan.org)

#### To find:

- Monthly Programme of Activities
- '*Flower of the Month*' pages with photos from Savitri Bhavan garden with their spiritual significances, the Mother's comments, etc.
- Videos of Shradhdhavan's *English of Savitri* sessions from Book Three onwards.
- Videos of Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lectures nos. 1-6 and other Guest Lectures and presentations at Savitri Bhavan
- Shradhdhavan's complete reading of *Savitri* with accompanying text
- Chapter-wise readings of *The Life Divine* with accompanying text
- Digital copies of all issues of *Invocation* and much more.

## *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

Support is welcome 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. 100% exemption is available for offerings from Indian tax-payers under section 35 (i) (iii) of the IT act.

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

### **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 live in India**

Through Internet Banking or direct transfer, your offering should be sent to **State Bank of India : Branch code No. 03160 : Current account no. 10237876031 ;**

**For 100% tax exemption use Current account no. 31612623238.**

If you send an offering in this way, please inform us at the time of sending, so that we can check up with the bank and acknowledge receipt as soon as possible.

### **If you 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"**

### **By Credit/Debit card transfer**

Access [www.auroville.com/donations](http://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.

For all correspondence and queries, please contact

Savitri Bhavan

Auroville 605101

Tamil Nadu, INDIA

Phone : +91 (0)413 262 2922

e-mail : [savitribhavan@auroville.org.in](mailto:savitribhavan@auroville.org.in)

[www.savitribhavan.org](http://www.savitribhavan.org)

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

The Mother