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*The Mother made this drawing of her own foot
for Champaklal on his birthday in 1934.*

21.02.2001

*All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.*

Savitri Book III, Canto 2

From Sri Aurobindo's letters:

I have not anywhere in *Savitri* written anything for the sake of mere picturesqueness or merely to produce a rhetorical effect; what I am trying to do everywhere in the poem is to express exactly something seen, something felt or experienced When the expression has been found, I have to judge, not by the intellect or by any set poetical rule, but by an intuitive feeling, whether it is entirely the right expression and, if it is not, I have to change and go on changing until I have received the absolutely right inspiration and the right transcription of it and must never be satisfied with any *à peu près* or imperfect transcription even if that makes good poetry of one kind or another. This is what I have tried to do. The critic or reader will judge for himself whether I have succeeded or failed; but if he has seen nothing and understood nothing, it does not follow that his adverse judgement is sure to be the right and true one, there is at least a chance that he may so conclude, not because there is nothing to see and nothing to understand, only poor pseudo-stuff or a rhetorical emptiness, but because he was not equipped for the vision or the understanding. *Savitri* is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences. You must not expect appreciation or understanding from the general public or even from many at the first touch.

1947 (p.800)

As to the title of the three cantos about the Yoga of the King, I intended the repetition of the word 'Yoga' to bring out and emphasise the fact that this part of Aswapati's spiritual development consisted of two Yogic movements, one a psycho-spiritual transformation and the other a greater spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power. ... In the second of these three cantos there is a pause between the two movements and a description of the secret knowledge to which he is led and of which the results are described in the last canto, but there is no description of the Yoga itself or of the steps by which this knowledge came. That is only indicated, not narrated; so, to bring in "The Yoga of the King" as the title of this canto would not be very apposite. Aswapati's Yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as the individual and this is described as the Yoga of the King. Next, he makes the ascent as a typical representative of the race to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness and this is described in the Second Book: but this too is as yet only an individual victory. Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realisation and new creation. That is described in the Book of the Divine Mother.

1946 (*p.778*)

About Savitri

Introduction by Huta *

In 1954, the Mother revealed to a small group of sadhaks:

“Savitri is occult knowledge and spiritual experience. Some part of it can be understood mentally, but much of it needs the same knowledge and experience for understanding it. Nobody here except myself can explain Savitri. One day I hope to explain it in its true sense.”

On the morning of January 18, 1968 the Mother started to explain *Savitri* to me, and on January 28 she gave the name “*About Savitri*” to this work. I may indicate how we proceeded. The Mother read out the passages from *Savitri* and then after a deep contemplation gave her comments, which I tape-recorded and later transcribed. I also prepared paintings inspired by the passages, according to her instructions.

Our work continued up to 9 August 1970, when the Mother had to suspend it on account of her health. The last passage she could comment on is halfway through Book One, Canto Four.

The Mother arranged for her explanations of Book One Canto One to be published in February 1972, along with the paintings corresponding to each passage which I had made according to her guidance and inspiration. Three more volumes of “*About Savitri*”, containing the Mother’s explanations of Canto 2, Canto 3 and the first half of Canto 4 are in preparation and awaiting publication.

The Mother’s wonderful comments give a unique insight into Sri Aurobindo’s masterpiece, in the light of her own experiences during the time when our work was going on. My profound gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother for their Grace and Love.

Huta

* For a more detailed account by Huta, see *Invocation* 7 pp. 5 - 6

Savitri

The supreme revelation of
Sri Aurobindo's
vision.



[The Mother gave this message for "About Savitri" – her explanations of Savitri, illustrated by paintings done according to her instructions by Huta.]

About Savitri

Book One, Canto Three - part 1

Canto Three

The Yoga of the King:

The Yoga of the Soul's Release

*A world's desire compelled her mortal birth,
....One in the front of the immemorial quest,
Protagonist of the mysterious play
In which the Unknown pursues himself through forms
And limits his eternity by the hours
And the blind Void struggles to live and see,
A thinker and toiler in the ideal's air,
Brought down to earth's dumb need her radiant power.
His was a spirit that stooped from larger spheres
Into our province of ephemeral sight,
A colonist from immortality.*

This is the description of the one through whom Savitri was born. Sri Aurobindo says that it was through the intermediary of somebody who did not belong to the earth but came from the higher and freer regions. The description of that being is given here.

*

*A pointing beam on earth's uncertain roads,
His birth held up a symbol and a sign;
His human self like a translucent cloak
Covered the All-Wise who leads the unseeing world.
Affiliated to cosmic Space and Time
And paying here God's debt to earth and man*

*A greater sonship was his divine right.
Although consenting to mortal ignorance,
His knowledge shared the Light ineffable.
A strength of the original Permanence
Entangled in the moment and its flow,
He kept the vision of the Vasts behind:
A power was in him from the Unknowable.*

Sri Aurobindo says here that all the world is governed by what he defines as the “All-Wise”. And this king, who became the father of Savitri, was sufficiently transparent and conscious so that the wisdom from above could, through his consciousness, touch the Inconscient world.

It is because, in spite of his incarnation in this world of ignorance, he has kept sufficient consciousness of his Origin that he could not only aspire to bring down the Divine upon earth, but have the power to realise it.

*

*An archivist of the symbols of the Beyond,
A treasurer of superhuman dreams,
He bore the stamp of mighty memories
And shed their grandiose ray on human life.
His days were a long growth to the Supreme.
A skyward being nourishing its roots
On sustenance from occult spiritual founts
Climbed through white rays to meet an unseen Sun.
His soul lived as eternity's delegate,
His mind was like a fire assailing heaven,
His will a hunter in the trails of light.
An ocean impulse lifted every breath;
Each action left the footprints of a God,
Each moment was a beat of puissant wings.
The little plot of our mortality
Touched by this tenant from the heights became
A playground of the living Infinite.*

Invocation

This is the description of one of those who are not purely human but whose origin is far higher, far greater, and their existence is much longer than the existence of the earth. When these come upon earth, it is to help the whole of humanity to rise towards the Highest Consciousness.

*

*This bodily appearance is not all;
The form deceives, the person is a mask;
Hid deep in man celestial powers can dwell.
His fragile ship conveys through the sea of years
An incognito of the Imperishable.
A spirit that is a flame of God abides,
A fiery portion of the Wonderful,
Artist of his own beauty and delight,
Immortal in our mortal poverty.
This sculptor of the forms of the Infinite,
This screened unrecognised Inhabitant,
Initiate of his own veiled mysteries,
Hides in a small dumb seed his cosmic thought.
In the mute strength of the occult Idea
Determining predestined shape and act,
Passenger from life to life, from scale to scale,
Changing his imaged self from form to form,
He regards the icon growing by his gaze
And in the worm foresees the coming god.*

Those who come from Above and know the Divine Plan, know also that this present existence of man is only a transition between the animal and the Superman, more perfect, more developed, more conscious, more divine.

He can bear the limitations because he knows that they will pass away and be replaced by capacities more apt to express the Divine in life.

*

*At last the traveller in the paths of Time
Arrives on the frontiers of eternity.
In the transient symbol of humanity draped,
He feels his substance of undying self
And loses his kinship to mortality.
A beam of the Eternal smites his heart,
His thought stretches into infinitude:
All in him turns to spirit vastnesses.
His soul breaks out to join the Oversoul,
His life is oceaned by that superlife.
He has drunk from the breasts of the Mother of the worlds;
A topless supernature fills his frame:
She adopts his spirit's everlasting ground
As the security of her changing world
And shapes the figure of her unborn might.
Immortally she conceives herself in him,
In the creature the unveiled creatrix works:
Her face is seen through his face, her eyes through his eyes;
Her being is his through a vast identity.
Then is revealed in man the overt Divine.*

You see, in these first lines what is described is a transition - the opening to the new reality and the transition in man.

Now here is the description of what happened.

*

*A static Oneness and dynamic Power
Descend in him, the integral Godhead's seals;
His soul and body take that splendid stamp.
A long dim preparation is man's life,
A circle of toil and hope and war and peace
Tracked out by Life on Matter's obscure ground.
In his climb to a peak no feet have ever trod,
He seeks through a penumbra shot with flame
A veiled reality half-known, ever missed,*

Invocation

*A search for something or someone never found,
Cult of an ideal never made real here,
An endless spiral of ascent and fall
Until at last is reached the giant point
Through which his Glory shines for whom we were made
And we break into the infinity of God.
Across our nature's borderline we escape
Into supernature's arc of living light.
This now was witnessed in that son of Force,
In him that high transition laid its base.*

This is the prophetic announcement of the transition from man to Superman.
It is what will happen and what is being prepared now.

*

*Original and supernal Immanence
Of which all Nature's process is the art,
The cosmic Worker set his secret hand
To turn this frail mud-engine to heaven-use.
A Presence wrought behind the ambiguous screen:
It beat his soil to bear a Titan's weight,
Refining half-hewn blocks of natural strength
It built his soul into a statued God.
The Craftsman of the magic stuff of self
Who labours at his high and difficult plan
In the wide workshop of the wonderful world,
Modelled in inward Time his rhythmic parts.
Then came the abrupt transcendent miracle:
The masked immaculate Grandeur could outline,
At travail in the occult womb of life,
His dreamed magnificence of things to be.
A crown of the architecture of the worlds,
A mystery of married Earth and Heaven
Annexed divinity to the mortal scheme.*

Out of Divinity the creation seemed to have gone towards a complete oblivion of Divinity. But at one moment, the possibility of manifesting this Divinity had been foreseen and the conditions created for it to be possible - for the Divinity to manifest into creation.

*

*A Seer was born, a shining Guest of Time.
For him mind's limiting firmament ceased above,
In the griffin forefront of the Night and Day
A gap was rent in the all-concealing vault;
The conscious ends of being went rolling back:
The landmarks of the little person fell,
The island ego joined its continent:
Overpassed was this world of rigid limiting forms:
Life's barriers opened into the Unknown.
Abolished were conception's covenants
And, striking off subjection's rigorous clause,
Annulled the soul's treaty with Nature's nescience.
All the grey inhibitions were torn off
And broken the intellect's hard and lustrous lid;
Truth unpartitioned found immense sky-room;
An empyrean vision saw and knew;
The bounded mind became a boundless light,
The finite self mated with Infinity.
His march now soared into an eagle's flight.
Out of apprenticeship to Ignorance
Wisdom upraised him to her master craft
And made him an arch-mason of the soul,
A builder of the Immortal's secret house,
An aspirant to supernal Timelessness:
Freedom and empire called to him from on high;
Above mind's twilight and life's star-led night
There gleamed the dawn of a spiritual day.*

Invocation

He is describing the first descent of an Avatar upon the earth and the stupendous change that it made in the atmosphere.

Instead of this slow endless course of the Divinity that is buried in Matter and has to slowly wake up and rebuild the conscious Being, instead of this endless process, a sudden descent of a supernal Consciousness, from the Supreme into a being of the manifestation, made possible a hastened growth and almost a sudden change in the evolution.

*

*As so he grew into his larger self,
Humanity framed his movements less and less,
A greater being saw a greater world.
A fearless will for knowledge dared to erase
The lines of safety reason draws that bar
Mind's soar, soul's dive into the Infinite.
Even his first steps broke our small earth-bounds
And loitered in a vaster freer air.
In hands sustained by a transfiguring Might
He caught up lightly like a giant's bow
Left slumbering in a sealed and secret cave
The powers that sleep unused in man within.
He made of miracle a normal act
And turned to a common part of divine works,
Magnificently natural at this height,
Efforts that would shatter the strength of mortal hearts,
Pursued in a royalty of mighty ease
Aims too sublime for Nature's daily will:
The gifts of the spirit crowding came to him;
They were his life's pattern and his privilege.*

This is the continuation of what the life of man can become, if he consents to be divinised.

*

*A pure perception lent its lucent joy:
Its intimate vision waited not to think;
It enveloped all Nature in a single glance,
It looked into the very self of things;
Deceived no more by form he saw the soul.
In beings it knew what lurked to them unknown;
It seized the idea in mind, the wish in the heart;
It plucked out from grey folds of secrecy
The motives which from their own sight men hide.
He felt the beating life in other men
Invade him with their happiness and their grief;
Their love, their anger, their unspoken hopes
Entered in currents or in pouring waves
Into the immobile ocean of his calm.
He heard the inspired sound of his own thoughts
Re-echoed in the vault of other minds;
The world's thought-streams travelled into his ken;
His inner self grew near to others' selves
And bore a kinship's weight, a common tie,
Yet stood untouched, king of itself, alone.*

This is a very exact description of what happens when a human body is receiving the superhuman consciousness for its transformation.

It is described in all details with an e-x-t-r-e-m-e exactness. This is a very accurate description of the working of the New Consciousness* - this New Consciousness that has come upon earth and is working in all those who are receptive and ready to listen.

*

*A magical accord quickened and attuned
To ethereal symphonies the old earthy strings;
It raised the servitors of mind and life
To be happy partners in the soul's response,*

* See page 19

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*Tissue and nerve were turned to sensitive chords,
Records of lustre and ecstasy; it made
The body's means the spirit's acolytes.
A heavenlier function with a finer mode
Lit with its grace man's outward earthliness;
The soul's experience of its deeper sheaths
No more slept drugged by Matter's dominance.
In the dead wall closing us from wider self,
Into a secrecy of apparent sleep,
The mystic tract beyond our waking thoughts,
A door parted, built in by Matter's force,
Releasing things unseized by earthly sense:
A world unseen, unknown by outward mind
Appeared in the silent spaces of the soul.*

Again, it is the very exact and correct description of what happens when the consciousness is united with the Higher Consciousness, when man is no longer limited to just his vital-mental self.

The inner opening puts you in connection with all the inner worlds, and then the knowledge becomes quite different and changes into a direct vision of everything.

*

*He sat in secret chambers looking out
Into the luminous countries of the unborn
Where all things dreamed by the mind are seen and true
And all that the life longs for is drawn close.
He saw the Perfect in their starry homes
Wearing the glory of a deathless form
Lain in the arms of the Eternal's peace,
Rapt in the heart-beats of God-ecstasy.
He lived in the mystic space where thought is born
And will is nursed by an ethereal Power
And fed on the white milk of the Eternal's strengths
Till it grows into the likeness of a god.*

This is the promised successor of man upon earth - the being that will be to man what man is to the animal; the successor humanity has hoped for, which is the expression of all the aspirations of humanity; a being that can grow out of suffering and limitation and unconsciousness, and can rise into Light and Knowledge and Power; the creature that will be the *raison d'être* of the creation, the justification of the creation; the being that will be the Consciousness of the Divine, coming back towards the Divine.

All the sufferings, all the hardships, all the miseries of humanity will be effaced, annulled, conquered by the conquest of a true and powerful Consciousness: the next step that is to be made, the expression of all our aspirations.

*

*In the Witness's occult rooms with mind-built walls
On hidden interiors, lurking passages
Opened the windows of the inner sight.
He owned the house of undivided Time.
Lifting the heavy curtain of the flesh
He stood upon a threshold serpent-watched,
And peered into gleaming endless corridors,
Silent and listening in the silent heart
For the coming of the new and the unknown.
He gazed across the empty stillnesses
And heard the footsteps of the undreamed Idea
In the far avenues of the Beyond.
He heard the secret Voice, the Word that knows,
And saw the secret face that is our own.*

It is the imaged description of the inner vision and the inner life - what is seen when we are no longer tied by the physical consciousness. This is a necessary development for the advent and the growth of the New Race.

*

*The inner planes uncovered their crystal doors;
Strange powers and influences touched his life.
A vision came of higher realms than ours,
A consciousness of brighter fields and skies,
Of beings less circumscribed than brief-lived men
And subtler bodies than these passing frames,
Objects too fine for our material grasp,
Acts vibrant with a superhuman light
And movements pushed by a superconscient force,
And joys that never flowed through mortal limbs,
And lovelier scenes than earth's and happier lives.
A consciousness of beauty and of bliss,
A knowledge which became what it perceived,
Replaced the separated sense and heart
And drew all Nature into its embrace.*

This is a very exact, complete and poetic description of what happens under the influence of the New Consciousness - the consciousness that has the mission of bringing the Superman down upon earth.

All that was seen and felt by Sri Aurobindo and described in *Savitri* in a poetic form, long before this New Consciousness had touched the world. And now, this Consciousness is here and beginning to spread the new way of living, preparing the earth for the advent of the New Race.

(to be continued)

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[We are thankful to Huta for permission to present this uniquely valuable material recorded by her, in serial form in our journal. Please note that for this work, the Mother made use of the first one-volume edition of Savitri which appeared in 1954.]

"The New Consciousness"

This refers to the Consciousness which manifested in the earth's atmosphere on January 1, 1969. The Mother has published several statements about this New Consciousness in the *Bulletin* of April 1969 under the title "Descent of the Superman Consciousness". On page 77 we read :

*It is the descent of the superman consciousness. ...
... It was the first of January after midnight. I woke up
at two in the morning, surrounded by a consciousness,
so concrete and new, in the sense that I had never felt it
before. And it lasted, absolutely concrete, present during
two or three hours, and afterwards it spread out and
went about to find out people who could receive ... And
I knew that it was the consciousness of the superman,
that is to say, the intermediary between man and the
supramental being.*

These explanations about Canto Three of *Savitri* were being given to Huta in the early months of 1969. Huta reports:

On 21st March 1969, after our *Savitri* work, the Mother said :

*Child, do you know, from the beginning of this year the
New Consciousness has been coming down upon earth,
which tells everything – what to do and what not to do
– to people who are conscious and want to change.*

*This Consciousness is gradually and gently
organising everything.*

*When you are withdrawn quietly and silently, and
listen to it, it will tell you what you should do and what
you should not.*

*This Consciousness does not do anything violently
and forcibly but gently and gradually. It does not work
only in the mind and the vital being but also in the body.
It takes great care of the body and everything else.*

I am putting this Consciousness around you. You will

see it and feel it. It will tell you everything.

It is always smiling – it never gets angry, it never scolds, but is very gentle and very sweet, you'll see!

The Mother always kept her promise. I became more and more aware of the New Consciousness and its action.

The Mother's message of 1st April 1969 to all, in connection with the talk she gave me, runs :

Since the beginning of this year a New Consciousness is at work upon earth to prepare men for a New Creation, the Superman. For this creation to be possible the substance that constitutes man's body must undergo a big change, it must become more receptive to the Consciousness and more plastic under its working.

These are just the qualities that one can acquire through physical education.

So, if we follow this discipline with such a result in view, we are sure to obtain the most interesting result.

My blessings to all for progress and achievement.

News of Savitri Bhavan

On December 17, Georges van Vrekhem, author of *Beyond Man: the Life and Work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, gave a talk entitled “Overman - the transitional being between Man and Superman” to an audience of about 200 people from Auroville and Pondicherry, under the trees in the garden at Savitri Bhavan. Georges, who has recently completed a biography of the Mother which will be appearing shortly, is currently working on a new book with the same title as that of his talk. This topic, which is of interest to every student and devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, was of special relevance to us for two reasons.

First, because in the Mother’s explanations to Huta about Canto Three of *Savitri*, (published in this issue of INVOCATION p. 8 - 18), she has mentioned that King Aswapati, who by his tapasya brings Savitri down into the world as an embodiment of the Grace of the Divine Mother, represents this transitional being between humanity and the new Race, and that this section of *Savitri* describes the characteristics brought by this New Consciousness. These explanations were given in early 1969, after the manifestation on January 1st 1969 of what Mother calls “the New Consciousness - the consciousness that has the mission of bringing the Superman down on earth.”

It was in March 1969 too, that the Mother revealed that this event had brought her a new understanding of the mission of Auroville, and led her to give the message:

Auroville wishes to be the cradle of supermen.

She explained that Auroville was meant to provide the opportunity for those who could receive and embody this New Consciousness to find the way to fulfil the conditions necessary for allowing the new Supramental Race to take birth. As Georges reminded us, since this descent on January 1st 1969 the New Consciousness is available to all sincere aspirants, and all of us, wherever we may be on earth, now have the opportunity to be what he calls “apprentice Overmen”.

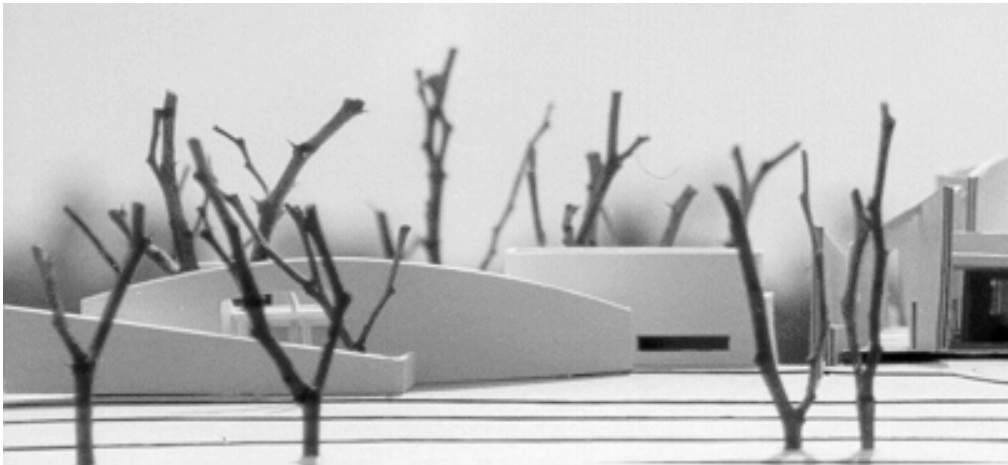
On December 31st we were happy to receive a visit from Dr. Debashish Banerji, coordinator of the East West Cultural Centre in Los Angeles. He gave a talk focussing on Canto Two of Book Two, and entitled “Shilpa-Yoga

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and the Kingdom of Subtle Matter”. Dr. Banerji showed how in this canto Sri Aurobindo has referred to and shown the true origin of all the main disciplines of art and aesthetics in both West and East, representing different steps in the quest for divine Beauty through artistic creativity. Dr. Banerji’s essay on this theme will appear in the second volume of *Perspectives of Savitri*, currently being prepared by R.Y. Deshpande for publication later this year.

In addition to regular on-going courses and study-groups, other activities this quarter included hosting one session of the Second International Conference on Integral Psychology, which took place at Bureau Central in Pondicherry from January 4th to 7th. On the afternoon of January 6th the participants came out to Auroville for presentations by Shraddhavan of Savitri Bhavan, Dr. Ananda Reddy, and Don Salmon of New York. It had been intended to hold this session under the trees at Savitri Bhavan, but unexpected heavy showers made us move inside to the Sri Aurobindo World Centre for Human Unity building at the entrance to the Bharat Nivas.

On January 21st the weather was finer when we received a group of local teenagers and their mentors who were participating in a “Consecration Camp”, to heighten awareness of the inner being and the constant Presence of the Mother.



Proposed Hostel

The following Sunday, January 28th, Savitri Bhavan hosted a programme called “Remembering the Mother”, when Aurovilians and others associated with Auroville in the early days shared remembrances of their personal contacts with Her, in the presence of present-day Auroville residents and guests.

During this period, two exhibitions were presented in the Hall: “Portraits of the Mother”, a collection of photographs selected and arranged by Amar, mounted on beautiful marbled papers; and “Aurovilians”, a series of concentrated and revealing black and white photo-portraits by Ireno.

Construction Plans

Eighteen months have passed since we occupied the first permanent building on the Savitri Bhavan site, inaugurated by Dr. Nirodbaran on August 8, 1999 as the first phase of our envisioned complex. This building, comprising a small reading-room, a multi-purpose hall, and an archive cum working space for our growing team, has provided a wonderful base for the further development of our activities. In addition to the guest-speakers programmes, regular study-groups and courses, exhibitions and video or slide-shows, these



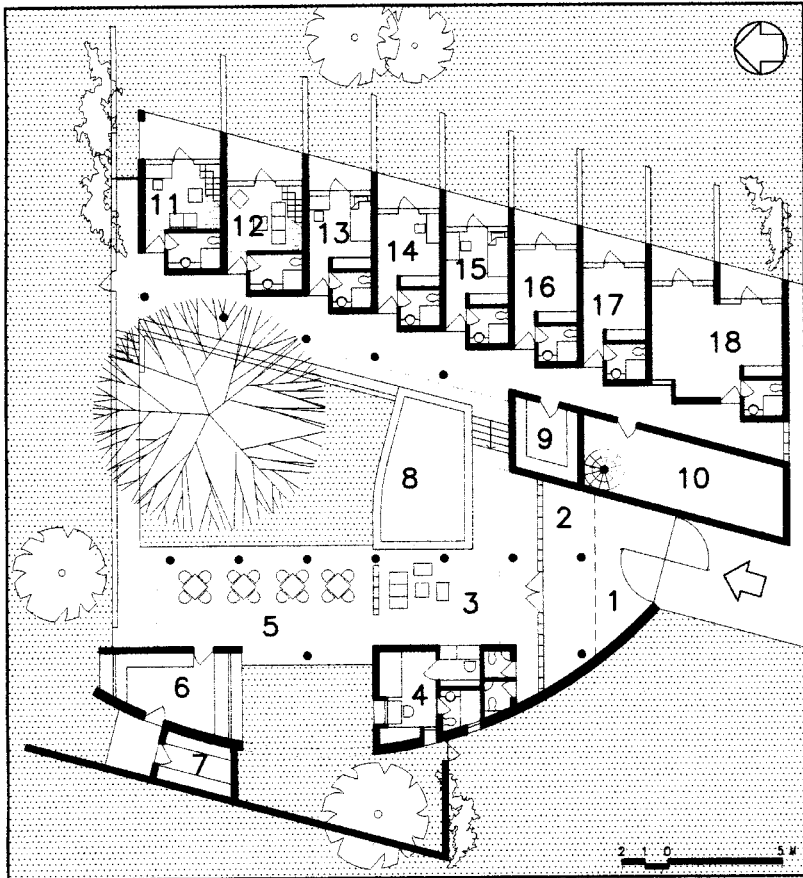
Main Complex (Entrance)

Existing Building

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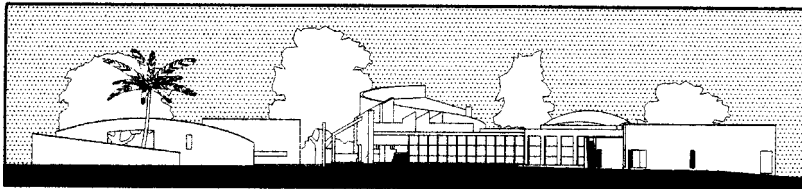
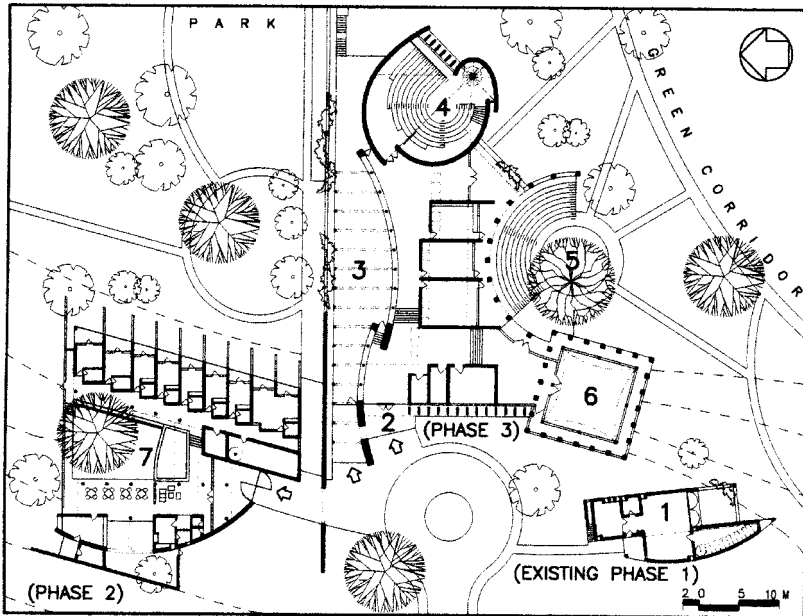
Hostel

- 1. Entrance
- 2. Cycles
- 3. Reception, Lobby
- 4. Manager's Room
- 5. Dining Hall
- 6. Kitchen
- 7. Store
- 8. Lotus Pond
- 9. Store
- 10. Utility
- 11-12. Double Rooms
- 13-17. Single Rooms
- 18. Provisional Library



Site Plan

1. Existing Building
2. Entrance
3. Art Gallery
4. Hall
5. Amphitheatre
6. Library
7. Proposed Hostel



Proposed Hostel

Main Complex

Existing Building

include assistance of many kinds to students, translators, researchers and *Savitri* lovers. In our next issue we plan to publish a comprehensive list of study aids collected or prepared by our team so far for the enhancement of our understanding and enjoyment of Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic.

The experience of the last two years has led us now to propose a next step in the growth of the Savitri Bhavan complex: a hostel, to provide accommodation for visiting speakers, researchers, students or voluntary workers; as well as a larger reading-room, in which the future Library of the Bhavan can gradually be built up, so that by the time its permanent quarters are ready, we have a mature, well-organised collection ready to move into it.

Our aspiration is to be able to lay the first brick of this new structure on the 6th anniversary of the Savitri Bhavan project, November 24, 2001, and to complete construction by the Mother's 125th Birthday, February 21, 2003. An estimated Rs. 35 lakh is required to fulfil this aim. We have a fund of Rs. 5 lakh in hand as a start. Everyone who appreciates the work being done here, and who shares in the dream of Savitri Bhavan, is invited to contribute generously over the coming months to help realise this second phase of the project.

In the griffin forefront of the Night and Day

A mysterious line in Book One Canto Three

This line was pointed out to me many years ago by Amal Kiran. He regretted that he had not noticed it in time to ask Sri Aurobindo about it. So far I have come across no fully satisfactory elucidation of it, although its general tenor is clear from the context in which it occurs. What is being described here is the stage of King Aswapti's development which the Mother has called the "reversal of consciousness": the decisive coming forward of the inner being which marks the beginning of a conscious spiritual life. The passage runs from the line:

Then came the abrupt transcendent miracle:

to the end of the section, which closes:

*Above mind's twilight and life's star-led night
There gleamed the dawn of a spiritual day.*

The immediate context of our mysterious line runs:

*For him mind's limiting firmament ceased above.
In the griffin forefront of the Night and Day
A gap was rent in the all-concealing vault;
The conscious ends of being went rolling back:
The landmarks of the little person fell,
The island ego joined its continent.*

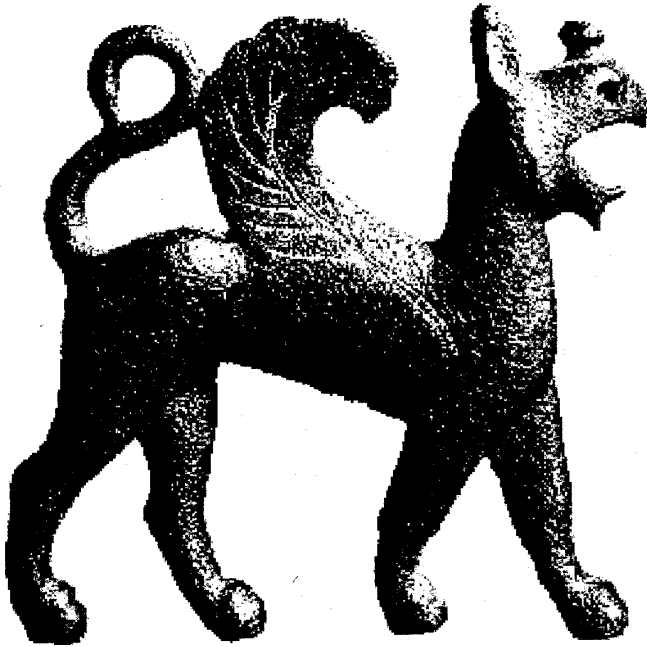
Mind's limiting firmament is obviously parallel to *the all-concealing vault*. 'Firmament', and 'vault' are both words often used poetically for 'sky'. The limiting sky of mind now no longer marks the limit of Aswapati's conscious being. A few lines further on this is echoed and confirmed:

*All the grey inhibitions were torn off
And broken the intellect's hard and lustrous lid;
Truth unpartitioned found immense sky-room;
An empyrean vision saw and knew;
The bounded mind became a boundless light,
The finite self mated with infinity.*

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This event, the first spiritual liberation of Aswapati as an individual, apparently takes place in the *'forefront of the Night and Day'*. The word *'forefront'* could suggest either a vanguard or a facade. In numerous places elsewhere in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo uses the phrase "the Night and Day" almost as a composite noun indicating the duality aspect of the Manifestation. Here it seems that this Duality has a *'forefront'*, which has the characteristics of a griffin.

The griffin (also sometimes spelt *'griffon'*, *'gryfon'* or *'gryphon'*) is a creature from Greek mythology, with the body of a lion, the wings and beak of a powerful bird. Its name is derived from *'gryps'*, the Greek word for a huge bird of prey, usually identified with the lammergeier, which is actually a kind of vulture. This creature obviously combines the attributes of great strength and of access to both the earth and higher regions. It also seems to have some connection with cosmic order. A griffin carries the Sun-God



A griffin : bronze votive image from Olympia

Apollo back every year from the dark Hyperborean regions of the far north (beyond the origin of the North Wind) where he is hidden during the Winter. More sinisterly, griffins also draw the chariots of the dreaded faceless goddesses Ananke (Necessity) and Nemesis (Retribution), who seem to embody some of the universe-regulating functions of the Indian god Yama.

I can visualise an immense griffin, its wing-span covering the sky, its powerful beak like the prow of a great ship, carrying on its back the dark-and-bright 'Night-and-Day', and representing the limiting, regulating, cyclic aspect of the natural world, which Aswapati now breaks out of. The word '*forefront*' adds the suggestion of a forward movement, as if perhaps Aswapati's liberation takes place at the vanguard of the evolutionary upward movement of the whole manifestation. In that case the idea of the great bird carrying the Sun-God of Consciousness back out of his hiding place in the darkness of the Inconscient acquires an added resonance.

But although this image casts some light, I feel sure that Sri Aurobindo, with his profound knowledge of classical literature and mythology, was making a characteristically precise and accurate allusion here, which, if we could locate it, would bring an added touch of illuminating 'inevitability' to our understanding of this mysteriously suggestive line.

Shraddhavan

Savitri's Debate with Death: *Book Ten, Cantos 1 – 3*

Talk by Dr. Nadkarni

at Savitri Bhavan August 26th 2000

I am sure we are all very happy to be here once again, all of us children of the Mother — from the Ashram, from Sri Aurobindo Society, from the various settlements of Auroville, from different centres all over the country, and friends coming from distant places where there are no centres. We have all gathered here, conscious of the fact that we are doing something in gathering here — trying to get as close as we physically can to the Mother's own consciousness. And for making this opportunity available to all of us, on behalf of all of us, I would like to say thank you very much to all the workers of the Sri Aurobindo Society and of Savitri Bhavan, as also to Prabhaven who has worked very hard to make this gathering possible in collaboration with the Savitri Bhavan team.

This time we had as usual a ten-day *Savitri* Study Camp. We met every day from 9 to 11.30 am in the Beach Office of the Sri Aurobindo Society, and this time we took up the first three Cantos of Book Ten. Last time we took up Books Eight and Nine and tried to understand, among other things, in what respects Sri Aurobindo's notion of Death, or of the god of death, is different from the notion normally associated with him in our scriptures, in our Puranas. We found that Sri Aurobindo had added a new dimension not generally found in the Puranic literature. The god of death is normally addressed as Yama, but this is a term which Sri Aurobindo does not use anywhere in *Savitri*. He uses different words, different phrases. He calls him 'Death', he calls him 'the dire god', he calls him 'the contemptuous nihil', he calls him 'the vague god', 'the dark power', 'the dreadful lord', 'the shade' and 'the shadow'.

The reason for this is that in Sri Aurobindo's view Death does not stand merely for the physical disintegration of any human or other life form;

Death is a shadow which casts its veil on human consciousness in many forms, in many ways, and its primary function is to veil the face of Reality. True Reality is always the integral reality, and the negative force which Death represents tries to rivet our the attention on the surface reality. Over the last two hundred years, Reason has been the primary instrument of Death. It has tried to convince us that there is nothing except what we see on the surface. And the same thing is happening here in *Savitri*: the god of Death tries to persuade Savitri to the belief that only that which we see on the surface is real.

He is very skilled in argument, and he presents various kinds of philosophical arguments, trying to persuade Savitri that she should not peep beyond the veil, the surface veil. That is the drama we are going to see in Book Ten, of which this time we have studied only three cantos. And since the time at our disposal is fairly limited, I would like now to review very briefly some of the main things in these three cantos.

The first thing I would like to mention is that when the god of death presents an argument, when the god of death presents facts, he is never dealing in falsehood. The god of death always presents a truth, but it is always an incomplete truth. Savitri confronts him, but she does not cancel the truth which the god of death presents, she completes it with the higher and wider truth which she presents. Generally, Savitri really does not bother to answer the barbed irony of the god of death; instead she takes a much larger perspective. So every time we find that Savitri is as it were enabling the god of death to discover himself and to discover his limitations. For Savitri, the god of death is not her enemy. This appearance is only a play. Ultimately we shall find, when Savitri shows who she really is - the Supreme Divine Mother come down as Grace to help mankind to grow beyond the present level of mental consciousness - at that time we shall see that Death has been an effective evolutionary agent. He is not an adversary in that sense. Death has always been an instrument of evolution, so from that perspective there is no underlying hostility between these beings. In participating in this debate Savitri's intention is to make Death understand that he is limited, that the time is going to come very soon when he may no longer be needed as an evolutionary agent. So it is an education of Death that Savitri attempts here.

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The first canto of Book Ten is called *The Dream Twilight of the Ideal*. Here Savitri is being taken through a world of darkness. Death, Savitri and Satyavan are moving in a kind of procession, with Satyavan in the front. He is not fully living, his body is dead, it is his soul that is going in front; then comes the god of death, and the god of death feels that he is controlling and guiding Satyavan; but behind them both is Savitri, and at the end everybody will realise that the god of death is not guiding anybody. Finally we will see that it is Savitri who is guiding the god of death as well, and teaching him how to guide the soul of Satyavan. So this is only the surface appearance. We may feel now that Death is controlling everything. But the final say is not with Death, the final say is with the Divine Grace, and the Divine Grace is behind even the god of death.

This is how these three are moving. As I said, they pass through many areas of darkness, and one of the things that the god of death wants to do is to impress Savitri with his great might, which casts terror on the entire living world. We are all afraid of Death. One of the great secrets that Death has, is its capacity of casting its terror over us. We are all afraid of death and that is what he does. The poet says that Savitri is being made to atone, to pay the price. What is the price that Savitri has to pay, what is the sin she has committed? He says:

*This most she must absolve with endless pangs,
Her deep original sin, the will to be
And sin last, greatest, the spiritual pride,
That, made of dust, equalled itself with heaven,
Its scorn of the worm writhing in the mud,
Condemned ephemeral, born from Nature's dream,
Refusal of the transient creature's role,
The claim to be a living fire of God,
The will to be immortal and divine.* (p. 599)

What the god of death does not tolerate is this attempt of consciousness to rise constantly to a higher and a higher level. To begin with, the god of death thinks it is a joke, that this creation will last only for a short while. But it doesn't, it grows, it grows gradually from Matter to Life and then it acquires a mind as well. Not only does it acquire a mind, it even starts having dreams,

dreams of becoming the divine: *'The will to be immortal and divine'*. It is for harbouring this will, for encouraging this effort, that Savitri is being punished. That is what the god of death feels: that she must be punished, because Savitri in fact is a leader, the leader of a rebellion, a rebellion against the Inconscient. In fact Death looks upon this entire creation as a rebellion against the Inconscient. The Inconscient is the final reality and the world must lapse back into the Inconscient. Savitri represents this rebellion, basically she is the leader of this revolt. That is why she is being taken through this darkness, this is the punishment given to her. But Savitri, being Savitri, is not terrorised. She can see through the veil of death, and she sees that:

The Inconscient is the Superconscient's sleep. (p. 600)

The Inconscient is nothing but another form, another manifestation of the Superconscient. It is not really the origin of anything: it is a form of the Superconscient. This whole world is baffling because it is a paradox:

*All here is a mystery of contraries:
Darkness a magic of self-hidden Light,
Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life. (p. 600)*

In this creation, in this world in which man lives, it is death that constantly prods him on, constantly challenges him. He says, "Can you understand me, can you meet my challenge?" So it is because of death that we are obliged to ask "What does life mean? Where are we going, why have we come here?" If it were not for death I think we would remain wallowing in our present consciousness like a pig that wallows in the mud. It is death that prompts us. So Sri Aurobindo tells us that in the real sense, Death is no enemy:

*Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face:
Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride ... (p.600)*

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'Death' he says, 'is ... a stumbling stride': death is also a pace, death is also a step forward, but it is not an ordinary stride, it is a *stumbling stride*, you feel that you have stumbled. But when you rise, you have risen into another life, into another adventure of consciousness. So that is Death.

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

Now this is basically the first part of this canto, Canto One of Book Ten. In the second part of the canto the darkness gradually lifts and these three, Satyavan's soul, the God of Death, and Savitri, enter into a land of twilight. Now what exactly this land of twilight is about we are told later, and why the god of death takes Savitri to this land of twilight is also explained a little later, but this land is described like this :

*Vague fields were there, vague pastures gleamed, vague trees,
Vague scenes dim-hearted in a drifting haze;
Vague cattle white roamed glimmering through the mist;
Vague spirits wandered with a bodiless cry,
Vague melodies touched the soul and fled pursued
Into harmonious distances unseized; ...* (p. 602)

Everything there was vague and hazy. There were beautiful shapes, but if you stared at them, you found their outline was all hazy. Things look very close as if within your very grasp, you extend your hand, you want to seize them, and you can't catch them. This is a vague kind of world and it is through this world that the god of death takes them. At the end of Canto One there is a long description of this world, but we don't have time for all this just now.

Now we come to Canto Two, *The Gospel of Death and Vanity of the Ideal* where we have three basic things. We saw at the end of Canto Two of Book Nine that the god of death tries to size-up Savitri. He fires a rapid volley of questions at her, short questions, just to see whether Savitri can

stand that sort of pressure, and Savitri proves more than his match. So he doesn't want to do that now, he changes his strategy. He has tried to terrorise her, and has not succeeded in that either. Now he tries another strategy, he becomes a sophisticated professor, from I don't know where, you have your own pet-places, Stamford, Harvard, Benares or JNU, you just pick and choose whatever you want, a professor of philosophy from anywhere. First he says, "Savitri, you are pursuing an ideal. Ideals are all insubstantial things. You are not the first idealist, the world has always pursued ideals and always failed to achieve them. Ideals are nothing but vague imaginations, prompted by some physical reasons, some physical causes." And he tells her:

This is the stuff from which the ideal is formed ...
(p.607)

"You see, we have just come through this vague unsubstantial world ... why did I bring you through this? Because I wanted to show you that all ideals come from this insubstantial world, and by their very nature they will never be realised. Human beings merely waste their time pursuing ideals."

This is the stuff from which the ideal is formed:
Its builder is thought, its base the hearts' desire, ...

"You have some desires, some worldly desires, you are the same as the animal. The animal doesn't have any imagination, the animal doesn't have the kind of mind you have, so you take the animal desires, do embroidery around them, paint them in beautiful colours and that becomes an ideal. And you say you want to realise this ideal, but you know ideals are all false" he says. The god of death is absolutely superb when it comes to finding the right words, phrases and images - because he is using Sri Aurobindo's language. He has no lack of effective language. This is what he says:

Thy vision's error builds the azure skies, (p. 607)

Look at the sky: everybody says the sky is blue. What makes the sky blue? Not any inherent blueness of the sky, but the error of your vision. The sky

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does not have any colour - we see the blue because of an error in our sight.

Thy visions's error drew the rainbow's arch;

I have read in the Encyclopedia Britannica that there is no arch in the rainbow: it is the vision's error in our perception that erects this arch. We see this arch because of our vision's error.

Thy mortal longing made for thee a soul. (p. 607)

Soul is also like that, soul also is like a rainbow, it is a mortal longing that makes the soul.

And then he says,

The ideal never yet was real made.

Nobody has yet realised this, why should you?

*The Avatars have lived and died in vain,
Vain was the sage's thought, the prophet's voice;
In vain is seen the shining upward Way. (p. 609 -10)*

All the saints come, they bring the highest light from the divine, they make it available for mankind - but who wants the light? People build a temple for the saint, they erect his statues in prominent sites, put a garland on him once a year and having done this, they just forget about him. What about you Savitri, how can anybody take you seriously when even all the Avatars have come and gone in vain? They have all failed, because they were all idealists: they wanted to bring down to earth some modicum of peace, some modicum of harmony, some modicum of love. Where is love? In the land where Christ was born, at the present day hand grenades are being thrown from one neighbourhood to the next. This is not Christ's fault, this is human nature. Everywhere it is the same: look at this country India, we all talked about everybody being "bhai-bhai" but there is no bhaichara left, anybody can be anybody's enemy. These are all stupid things. There is nobody for anybody here, everyone lives just for themselves like animals, there are no ideals worth pursuing. And you, Savitri, you should know better. You have been

pursuing me, you have come so far, where nobody else has come - but for what? You want love. Do you know what love is? Love is also an ideal.

*What is this love thy thought has deified,
This sacred legend and immortal myth?
It is a conscious yearning of thy flesh,
It is a glorious burning of thy nerves,
A rose of dream-splendour petalling thy mind,
A great red rapture and torture of thy heart. (p. 610)*

And how fragile, how precarious is this thing called love, how quickly it dies, even a strong breeze can sever the connection of love, and love can just disappear. This happens again and again, it is the nature of love to last for a short while, love always disappears.

Death is such a sophist. He says to Savitri, “By taking away Satyavan I have done you a great kindness.” How?

*If Satyavan had lived, love would have died;
But Satyavan is dead and love shall live ... (p. 610)*

Now that I have taken away Satyavan, your love will be able to live.

English is a beautiful language, and Sri Aurobindo is a master of the English language; and if you read with proper pausing, you don't need any comment on *Savitri*. Just the lines themselves are sufficient. See these lines for example:

*If Satyavan had lived, love would have died,
But Satyavan is dead and love shall live ...*

Wait, it is not the end of the sentence ...

*A little while in thy sad breast, until
His face and body fade on memory's wall
Where other bodies, other faces come.*

This is the story of love. If the one you love lives long enough, then the love

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you feel for him will die. If he dies, the screen of your imagination will then reflect another face, another set of lips, another nose. So Satyavan is just one symbol, one passing thing, it doesn't last forever. Love, you know this, is an ideal which has a precarious existence and sooner or later it always disappears.

Now is the god of death telling a lie? Is this not the nature of human love we see around us? How many of us can really say, "Oh no, love is eternal, I have experienced it." The god of death is not exaggerating, he is not telling a lie. He is telling the truth. But later on, when Savitri begins to speak, we shall see that he is only telling an incomplete truth. Sri Aurobindo himself has said this in another context. In a beautiful letter he says:

It is the ordinary nature of vital love not to last, or if it tries to last, not to satisfy, because it is a passion which Nature has thrown in in order to serve a temporary purpose; it is good enough therefore for a temporary purpose and its normal tendency is to wane when it has sufficiently served Nature's purpose. ...

Nature wants human beings to come together to perpetuate the species, so Nature catches you in its trap - and when you have served its purpose, Nature couldn't care less, and the love disappears. So **you** do not love, love does not belong to you: you just come into that charmed belt as it were, it comes from Nature. He continues:

In mankind, as man is a more complex being, she calls in the aid of imagination and idealism to help her push, gives a sense of ardour, of beauty and fire and glory, but all that wanes after a time. It cannot last, because it is all a borrowed light and power, borrowed in the sense of being a reflection caught from something beyond and not native to the reflecting vital medium which imagination uses for the purpose. Moreover, nothing lasts in the mind and the vital, all is a flux there. ...

But Sri Aurobindo does not deny the possibility of real and everlasting

love. If he did, he would not have written *Savitri* at all. In this letter he goes on to say:

*The one thing that endures is the soul, the spirit.
Therefore love can last and satisfy only if it bases itself
on the soul and spirit, if it has its roots there. But that
means living no longer in the vital, but in the soul and
spirit.* (SABCL 23:761)

This is the truth that the God of Death does not understand, and therefore he pooh-poohs the whole idea. Love, he says, is an evanescent thing, a transient thing, it is a kind of a fever that comes and goes. He continues in this vein and gives a small picture, the cameo of a novel, where two youngsters meet and fall in love and write each other wonderful love poems and so on, and then they get married and slowly the marriage becomes a habit, becomes a convenience, so they gradually grow apart until one day, he says, the marriage becomes:

Two egos straining in a single leash. (p. 611)

Have you ever tried tying two dogs to a single leash? Very often marriages end up in such a situation, two human beings tied to a single leash, each trying to pull in his own direction: he is trying to pull this way, she is trying to pull that way.

The reason I am presenting all this, is to show how almost Shakespearean Sri Aurobindo's imagination is. Even when it comes to depicting anything about the vital world, Sri Aurobindo is very very powerful. And one of the great things about Shakespeare is his power to reflect the vital and present it powerfully. But Sri Aurobindo's excellence is not limited to the vital. There are other spheres beyond the reach of Shakespeare, which Sri Aurobindo can handle with equal efficiency, as we shall see later on.

What is Savitri's reply? She says exactly what Sri Aurobindo says in the last line of his letter: Love originates from the Divine. It is a mighty vibration coming straight from the Divine. And it is in itself a manifestation of the divine light and power. Because where there is love, there is hope for mankind.

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No matter how evil mankind may look today, no matter how evil the whole surroundings may look, love is the only power that has the capacity to save mankind. That is how Savitri replies to the god of death. She says:

*My love is not a hunger of the heart,
My love is not a craving of the flesh;
It came to me from God, to God returns.* (p. 612)

She says, you have not seen this love, you have not experienced this love, so what do you know of love?

And then there is an intense lyrical celebration of love. Sri Aurobindo can write wonderful lyrics, great words that lift your entire spirit. Savitri says, “It is not the first time that Satyavan and I have met. It is not just a chance meeting, it is not one of those ‘love at first sight and hate the next’ affairs. It is not the first time we have met, we have met several times, and not on this earth alone, we have met in several stars before.” In a great outburst of poetry, she says:

*For we were man and woman from the first,
The twin souls born from one undying fire.
Did he not dawn on me in other stars?
How has he through the thickets of the world
Pursued me like a lion in the night
And come upon me suddenly in the ways,
And seized me with his glorious golden leap!*

I wonder if there is any equivalent to this, in any poetry in the world, this ecstatic celebration of Love in its reality. “He comes upon me like a lion, leaping on me from the thickets, seizing me in his golden grasp and carrying me away. My love is like that.”

*Unsatisfied, he yearned for me through time,
Sometimes with wrath and sometimes with sweet peace
Desiring me since first the world began.
He rose like a wild wave out of the floods*

And dragged me helpless into seas of bliss. (p. 614)

This is Savitri's understanding of Satyavan, this is the Satyavan she is pursuing. And finally she says:

I cherish God the Fire, not God the Dream."

The love I cherish, she says, is this Fire - of aspiration, of renunciation, of tapasya. My love is not the love of a phantom, it is not just a dream.

Now this is one argument. I have presented it in some detail to give substance to my claim that the god of death also expresses a truth, but it is always an incomplete truth; while Savitri counters it by giving an integral truth, the whole truth. And when you have the whole truth, the partial truth looks like falsehood. To that extent the god of death deals in falsehood, not otherwise. He too is presenting a truth, but his truths are limited.

Then he presents another set of arguments. This time he argues on the basis of the fundamental reality of Matter. He becomes a Materialist and says, "The only reality about this world is matter. And that is best seen if you look at the beginning of this creation: before anything was created in this world, there was matter; and when everything, all the civilisation and all the cultures, have come to an end, everything will finally one day relapse into matter. So in the beginning you have matter, in the middle you have matter, in the end you have matter, matter is the only reality." And he presents everything else from this standpoint. Life, he says, is nothing but "*a lapsing wave in Matter's sea.*" You know, on the sea you see so many waves coming and breaking, then merging again with the sea. Life is like that, life is like a temporary wave that rises on the breast of this ocean that is Matter, and then it disintegrates back into the ocean. So life is not permanent, mind is not permanent, only Matter is permanent.

The God of Death presents this gospel of Matter to Savitri, saying:

*All thy high dreams were made by Matter's mind
To solace its dull work in Matter's jail,
Its only house where it alone seems true.*

...

It is the first-born of created things, ...

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*It stands the last when mind and life are slain,
And if it ended, all would cease to be.
All else is only its outcome or its phase.* (p. 615)

This is a typical materialistic argument: life is nothing but complex matter, mind is nothing but complex life, so everything is matter. This position is called Reductionism, and it was a great favourite of scientists and rationalists until the middle of the century. Now fortunately a wider wisdom has dawned on these people and they find that you can't explain life just as a function of matter. There is something else, there is a mystery about life which nobody knows much about, there is a mystery about mind which nobody knows much about, so there is a mystery in this creation - nowadays they accept this much. But this is the basic argument of the Materialists, this is the gospel of Matter:

All upon Matter stands as on a rock. (p. 616)

The god of death has many intuitive perceptions, he is a very wise person. Look at this statement: he says,

*Immortality thou claimest for thy spirit,
But immortality for imperfect man,
A god who hurts himself at every step,
Would be a cycle of eternal pain.* (p.618)

This is really very well said. We all want immortality, but immortality would be a curse to us, if we do not realise our soul or our spirit. Material immortality is not anybody's goal. If man were to be given immortality now, the poet says, it would be a punishment.

Later on, at the end of Canto Four, there is long passage where Savitri says to the god of death, "Move aside, let me take back Satyavan. After I have done that, you can go back to your original position; you are still needed for some time more, your work is still necessary. Man has not yet reached the stage where you have become redundant. That time will come, but it has not yet come." There Savitri asks the god of death to resume his work for a while. Here the god of death perceives this truth and says, "For imperfect

man, immortality would be a curse”.

Then we have a reply from Savitri to this materialistic philosophy. In the third Canto, *The Debate of Love and Death*, Savitri gives the god of death a systematic lesson in integral philosophy. She says, “Look, you say that everything has arisen from the Inconscient, and that since everything has arisen from the Inconscient, the Inconscient is the primary reality of this world. The first thing I would like to tell you is that you are slightly off the mark. This world is an adventure of consciousness; but before the adventure of consciousness could begin there had to be an adventure of ignorance. That has also taken place.” God has taken a plunge into the Inconscient and Sri Aurobindo has written about this gloriously in many parts of *Savitri*, telling us that the One Supreme, the Sachchidananda, the deathless Immortal whose very nature is Bliss, decided to take a plunge and become the exact opposite of his real nature. When he decided to become many, he decided to become many in terms of his exact opposite, to begin with. And in many of his letters Sri Aurobindo says, “I know you can’t understand why God had to do it, but these matters you will be able to understand only if your consciousness comes at least somewhere near the infinite consciousness who created this world. Your consciousness is finite, and from this finite consciousness, you keep asking why, why? Why did God do this?” In one of his letters to Nirod-da, Sri Aurobindo says. “Look, before God created the world, he was looking for wise people like you to help him, but you were not around, so he had to use whatever best he could and create the world.”

So, these are all questions you can understand the answers to only when your consciousness has become something like the consciousness of the infinite - then only will you be able to understand why and how. But the story is that the Supreme Divine took a plunge into the Inconscient, and from there slowly the adventure of consciousness began. This is the lesson we have from *The Life Divine*.

And here in Canto Three of Book Ten Savitri says, “There have been many retardations, many horrible things, there have been Hitlers, Genghis Khans, there have been terrible things that men have done to other men. Man has his ugly moments. But do not exaggerate and concentrate your attention only on these things; look at the whole creation and then see whether there has been any progress at all.” Of course the progress is tardy, the progress is slow. God is not like a guru who wants to save all his disciples in

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one life. It has to go slowly, tardily. So she says:

*“O Death, thou lookst on an unfinished world
Assailed by thee and of its road unsure,
Peopled by imperfect minds and ignorant lives,
And sayest God is not and all is vain. (p.623)*

You are only looking at a small part of this world-creation, and just because you don't see any sign of intelligence coming through all this, you come to the conclusion that there is no God, there is no intelligence behind it.

*How shall the child already be the man?
Because he is infant, shall he never grow?
Because he is ignorant, shall he never learn?
In a small fragile seed a great tree lurks,
In a tiny gene a thinking being is shut,
A little element in a little sperm, ...*

If the doctor were asked, “Here is this sperm, what is the sperm going to be when it becomes an infant and grows up into a young man?” the scientist would have no idea.

It grows and is a conqueror and a sage.

He could be an Alexander or he could be a Yagnavalkya, who knows? But what is their origin? Their origin is the most insignificant thing like a sperm. From there it grows.

*Then wilt thou spew out, Death, God's mystic truth,
Deny the occult spiritual miracle?
Still wilt thou say there is no spirit, no God?
A mute material Nature wakes and sees;
She has invented speech, unveiled a will. (p. 623)*

Can't you see what has already manifested ? In a handful of dust, Nature has fabricated man, and this man has a mind, this mind has invented all this science and technology. And one of the most wonderful things is language.

No chimpanzee can ever learn a language, only human beings can learn languages because a language is a function of a new facet of consciousness which has blossomed in man. This consciousness has already come. No chimpanzee has ever done any induction, any deduction, created any technology. So notice all that has happened so far - would you still say that Nature's inventiveness has come to an end and will stop here?

*A mute material nature wakes and sees;
She has invented speech, unveiled a will.
Something there waits beyond towards which she strives,
Something surrounds her into which she grows:
To uncover the spirit, to change back into God,
To exceed herself is her transcendent task.*

And then she says,

In God concealed the world began to be, ...

God was totally hidden, in Matter. In Matter, God has gone as if into a coma. And gradually and slowly, lo and behold, when you have given up all hope, God slowly begins to stir in the heart of the atom. And then Life comes up.

*In God concealed the world began to be,
Tardily it travels towards manifest God:*

More and more of consciousness comes out: a plant or a tree is more like a god than mere matter. An animal is more godlike than a tree. Human beings are much more godlike than animals. This consciousness will grow, will acquire further glories, and the freedom from dependence on circumstances, freedom of consciousness from all contingencies, freedom of spirit will grow, will continue to grow.

*Our imperfection towards perfection toils,
The body is the chrysalis of a soul:
The infinite holds the finite in its arms,
Time travels towards revealed eternity. (p.623)*

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And then she says further on,

This world is God fulfilled in outwardness. (p.624)

We have to see God not only in his Being; this world is the becoming of God, and God grows in such a way that at every moment he challenges our reason.

*His ways challenge our reason and our sense;
By blind brute movements of an ignorant Force,
By means we slight as small, obscure, or base
A greatness founded upon little things,
He has built a world in the unknowing Void. (p.624)*

She is saying, “I don’t deny that from time to time human minds get crippled, human vision gets blurred, and it looks as if man is probably going back into nature”:

*If mind is crippled, life untaught and crude,
If brutal masks are there and evil acts,
They are incidents of his vast and varied plot, ...
His great and dangerous drama’s needed steps;*

But look at the whole, and you will find that god is certainly growing, although slowly and with great effort, tardily. Don’t look merely at the Veerappans (the dreaded forest brigand). There is a reality even behind these Veerappans. This is a deceptive world, so don’t be shaken by what you see: God is growing up. All these happenings are the needed steps of his great and dangerous drama.

I have always felt that the experiment of Communism was very much needed, and now that we have gone through this experiment, humanity is chastened, humanity is ready for the next thing. Indeed Communism has done some very wonderful things. For one thing, from the old former Communist countries the whole load of religiosity has just simply been removed, and these people are now hungry for spiritual truth. I have seen people from Kazakhstan, people with names like Hyderali and Razia etc.,

reading books of Sri Aurobindo and being thrilled by them. They have come to Sri Aurobindo centres in Hyderabad and elsewhere, and sat there meditating and very greatly moved. But where Communism has not come, it would be hard to find any Razias or Hyderalis who are moved by these things. One great service that Communism has done, is that by banishing formal religion, it has completely washed off all religiosity, so that all these people are now ready for a new spiritual leap. Is that not a wonderful spiritual service, on the road to God?

Or look at the Hippie movement in America. When the Hippie movement was at its height I was a student, watching, wondering, wondering at everything. And now I am told that the Hippie movement has failed, people have come back to three-piece suits and so on. But the Hippie movement changed the soul of America for ever. The America you see now is a different America, inside the three-piece suit you have an altered American.

So there are exaggerations, there are things that look like flaws, but God is working through what you and I very often mistake for flaws. We have short sight, we don't have understanding. Through all these people, God works; and this is something we have to see, that:

*They are incidents of his vast and varied plot,
His great and dangerous drama's needed steps,
He makes with these and all his passion-play,
A play and yet no play but the deep scheme
Of a transcendent Wisdom finding ways
To meet her Lord in the shadow and the Night: ... (p. 624)*

So this is a small lesson that Savitri gives to the god of Death in what I call integral truth. The truth is integral. Here matter, life, mind and other levels of consciousness are manifested, and all of them are manifestations of the same supreme reality.

And then she points out that at a certain stage, death became necessary, pain became necessary, suffering became necessary, and therefore they have been allowed to operate. And the day they prove unnecessary, the day human consciousness has been chastened and refined enough, when human consciousness rises beyond this necessity, these limitations will automatically

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fall off. So therefore Death need not pride himself on being a permanent feature of this world. She tells him, “You are not a permanent feature of this creation.”

And then she says, “No matter what you or anyone says about life, this whole world came out of God’s ecstasy of bliss, and in this world, every contact is supposed to give bliss.” Unfortunately, since we do not know how to react to the world, this bliss gets transformed into pleasure, pain and indifference. That is all we can experience, because we only pursue the finite, we do not pursue the infinite. When we begin to pursue the infinite, when we begin to see a beautiful thing as a manifestation of God’s consciousness, and no longer egoistically try to possess it - this is how we spoil the whole charm of this world, we want to possess everything, we want to pocket everything, we want the ego to take hold of things - when that has gone, if we know how to respond to the world with the right consciousness, then everything, every touch in this world, will be the touch of the Lover. God is the Lover, and he gives us these various touches of the world. So here Sri Aurobindo gives a wonderful description, of how a mute Delight, a hidden Bliss, is inherent in the root of things and manifests everywhere.

Savitri summarises by saying:

All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky, ... (p.632)

So don’t keep looking at the mud - try to see where it is going.

Love has many forms, many masks, many formations. It can be physical love, it can be emotional love, it can be mental love, but love does not originate anywhere here, love originates at the level of the soul. It is an attempt to find the oneness we have lost. And it is in that attempt that we try to grab things for our own. We want to make them our own, we want to aggrandise ourselves, we want to take the whole world into ourselves. That is the wrong way. When you go about it the right way, you will find love is this great thing. Of course, this great thing is reflected imperfectly by the mind, by the emotions, the vital, and by the body, and that is why the loves we experience are imperfect. They are imperfect manifestations of something which in itself is pure and perfect. Therefore Savitri says:

*And Love that was once an animals' desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.
A lonely soul passions for the Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God, ... (p. 632)*

At least try to love one human being to perfection - just one. If you can do that, if you pass that acid test of loving one human being entirely, completely, you are a candidate for the love of the divine.

*A lonely soul passions for the Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God,
A body is a chamber and his shrine.
Then is our being rescued from separateness;
All is itself, all is new-felt in God:
A Lover leaning from his cloister's door
Gathers the whole world into his single breast.
Then shall the business fail of Night and Death:
When unity is won, when strife is lost
And all is known and all is clasped by Love
Who would turn back to ignorance and pain? (p. 632 - 633)*

There are many, many other things, even in this section, but just now I am summarising briefly.

After this, the debate becomes quite rapid. The god of death feels that he has now done enough of western philosophy, why not give Savitri a dose of eastern philosophy. So he begins to be a Vedantin. He says "Wait, Savitri! Where are you going? You are saying that you want Satyavan, that you want to be Savitri, but you want things between you and Satyavan to be eternal. How is that possible? Don't you know that you can choose either Matter or Spirit? Matter is one thing, Spirit is another. If one is true, the other has to be false. I am not deciding for you which is false and which is true, but you cannot have both. Either choose Satyavan, choose material life, then forget about eternity. Or choose eternity, choose Spirit. If you

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choose the Spirit, in the Alone there is no two, there is no love, there is no Satyavan.”

The eternal is the truth, it is Brahman, it is Satya. If That is true, *jagat* must be *mithya*. Haven't you read all the Upanishads and the Vedas and the Puranas? The whole of this country India has been reverberating for many centuries now with this message. Haven't you heard any of these things?

*Where Matter is all, there Spirit is a dream:
If all are the Spirit, Matter is a lie,
And who was the liar who forged the universe?
The Real with the unreal cannot mate.
He who would turn to God, must leave the world;
He would live in the Spirit, must give up life;
He who has met the Self, renounces self.* (p. 235)

“You are trying to do the impossible,” the god of death says. “There are two kinds of nirvana. One is the nirvana of the body, the other is the nirvana of your individuality. You merge with the eternal. I am the President of the Nirvana Society. I free you from all bondage. I can give you either the nirvana of the soul or the nirvana of the body.” So, he says:

In me all take refuge, for I, Death, am God.” (p.235)

So this is a little lesson in Advaita, that Savitri has to learn from him. There is a great deal of truth here. He says, “If you are interested in the spirit, naturally the world will lose all attraction for you. Spiritual people are supposed to be totally uninterested in this world. Or if you are interested in the world, you have to lose Spirit.”

Savitri replies, “My spirituality is not the spirituality of the tired and the defeated. I want god because I find the world attractive, enticing and challenging. I want my God to perfect the world. I am not running away from the world. I want to bring God to make the world more perfect. I am enticed by the world, I am enchanted by the world, I am in love with this world. But to make this world perfect, I need the Spirit. So don't think that I am a tired exhausted person looking for religious pieties in the evening of

my life. I am not one of those. God has to come to perfect the world, not as an escape from the world. This is my spirituality, O god of death. You have not heard about this until now. This is a new spirituality that I am representing. There is no longer a choice between this world and the next. There is only one choice, and that is to make this world perfect with the power of the spirit. I represent that spirituality.”

The god of death does not give up. He goes on arguing. What his other arguments are, we shall see in February 2001.

About Savitri Bhavan

We dream of an environment in Auroville

that will breathe the atmosphere of Savitri

that will welcome Savitri lovers from every corner of the world

that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

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

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

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