

# Invocation

*Savitri*

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B H A V A N

*Study notes No. 36*

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29 February 1956

*During the common meditation on Wednesday*

This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that “*the time has come*”, and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow.

CWM 15:202



A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks  
Empowered to force the door denied and closed  
Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute  
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.

*Savitri* p.21  
Sketch by the Mother

# My Savitri Work with the Mother

## By Huta

*Huta's passing on November 17, 2011 has left a sense of deep loss in those who were close to her and worked with her. Her close association with Savitri Bhavan since the year 2000 has been tremendously enriching and a great blessing to the project. Her graciousness and generosity to all of us can never be forgotten.*

*In tribute to her we are publishing in this issue some extracts from her long essay 'My Savitri Work with the Mother'. This was originally written for inclusion in the second volume of R.Y. Deshpande's compilation Perspectives on Savitri (2002). Later it was serialised in Invocation nos. 12, 13 and 14. At the time of her passing, Huta was working on a much enlarged version of this essay, to be published in book form. This will be brought out by Havyavahana Trust in two volumes before long.*



The work of illustrating the whole of *Savitri* through paintings was given to me by the Divine Mother on 6th October 1961. It was so great, so beyond the capacity of the little instrument she had summoned, that only her Grace working in Sri Aurobindo's Light could have seen me through.

The Mother wrote to me on 12.7.1956:

Bonjour, To my dear little child, To my sweet Huta,  
Indeed I shall show you how to paint and I shall be glad if  
you learn well. One day I shall call you and do a painting  
in front of you.

With my love and blessings always

On 14.12.1956, in the morning, I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs, as previously arranged by the Mother. There she taught me painting right from the very beginning, because I did not know how to draw even a straight line or how to hold a brush, nor did I have any colour sense.

After that the Mother started sending me for painting numerous objects from her rare collections, also many varieties of exquisite flowers, along with her own sketches, in order to show me their right composition and perspective.

I received a letter from the Mother, dated 7.2.57:

Bonjour, To my dear little child, To my sweet Huta,  
I have received your nice letter. Yes, we are going towards a painting that will be able to express the supramental truth of things.  
My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are always with you

That same evening she explained to me:

I want you to do something new. You must try to do the Future Painting in the New Light.

There is a reason why I always ask you to paint mostly on a white background. It is an attempt to express the Divine Light without shadow in the Future Painting. But everything will come in its own time.

In the Future Painting, you must not copy blindly the outer appearance without the inner vision. Never let people's ideas influence your mind and impose their advice about the Future Painting. Do not try to adopt the technique either of modern art or of old classical art. But always try to express the true inner vision of your soul and its deep impression behind everything to bring out the Eternal Truth and to express the glory of the Higher Worlds.

Truth is behind everything. For the Divine dwells in flowers, trees, animals, birds, and rivers as well as human beings – in fact, in every creation of Nature.

You must have the psychic touch to see and feel the vibrations, the sensations and the essence of the Truth in everything and that Truth is to be expressed in the Future Painting.

To paint perfectly is not an easy thing. It certainly takes time. But by the growth of consciousness you can have

inspiration, intense vision, delicacy of colours, harmony and subtlety of true beauty. Then you can surely express wonderful things in painting. Otherwise painting will be a lifeless confusion.

The growth of consciousness is essential for doing marvellous paintings. I shall help you, I shall put my Force into you so that there will be a link between our two consciousnesses.

I asked the Mother: “Without seeing the Divine Light, how can I paint?” She laughed softly and said: ‘Child, it will come.’

Now it was apparent that I had to learn numerous things from various angles in painting in order to step into the unknown domain of the secret and higher worlds where I could release lavishly, freely, my imaginations, reveries and inspirations to express exactly what the Mother wished me to do.

The play of colour, balanced distribution of light and shadow to bring out the perfect harmony of colour, the subtle infusion of light, the transcendent spontaneity, the magical changes of Nature – the supreme Colourist’s realism and visions – all these I had to put on canvases with vibrant, various strokes of brushes.

I was perfectly aware that it was not going to be easy, but life now beckoned me along strange paths which I must tread. There was no turning back since I had committed myself to the spiritual life and the higher artistic sphere.

The Mother has stated:

If you want art to be true and highest art, it must be the expression of a Divine World brought down into this material world.

She valued true feeling and right consciousness more than only precise and decorative work without vibrations and vividness. She put stress on “White Light without shadow”. It is the vibration of Light which alone can give life and colour to every scene painted.

The Mother gave a proper training to my hands. In 1956 she asked me to clean the inside of her two carved cupboards which are in the Meditation Hall upstairs, so that I might learn to hold the most

precious, delicate and fragile objects with steadiness, great care and concentration. She made my hands conscious, receptive and sensitive by putting her Force, Light and Consciousness into them.

She also sent me thousands of the most exquisite picture-cards, so that I might perceive and grasp their beauties and obtain inspiration from Nature: trees, flowers, mountains, rivers, animals and so on. These cards were prepared by Champaklal. He used to paste the pictures on folders, on which the Mother wrote to me.

Surely the Mother did not take up the *Savitri* work abruptly. She educated me both outwardly and inwardly, knowing that these types of paintings were not of the common kind. This training went on for years with patience and perseverance. Nobody knew of it!

On 21.1.57 the Mother revealed to me about her way with paintings:

I enter into their consciousness and find out their meanings, the truth and beauty behind each painting.

Some paintings are indeed very nice to look at – they have pretty and gorgeous colours, but when there are no living vibrations and deep harmony, then obviously the paintings are lifeless and without value. But where there is a combination of the two – outward charm and inner vision – then they are real and can be considered as true art.

In your paintings I have felt the living vibrations and that is very good.

The Mother added:

A true artist never speaks of what he has done: “Oh! I have done a nice painting!” Instead he thinks and says, “Oh, no. I could not do it nicely, it is not what I wanted to do.”

In fact, he is never satisfied with his work and he continues his effort until he paints masterpieces. An artist puts the full power of his aspiration in his work to reach perfection.

Not only was the Mother teaching me painting, but also giving me lessons of life: how to be modest and persistent in my endeavour to reach perfection and develop into a true artist.

None can beat the Mother's vision, conception and knowledge. A pointer to her being and her ways may be found in *Savitri*, Book Four, Canto 1:

And from her eyes she cast another look  
On all around her than man's ignorant view.  
All objects were to her shapes of living selves  
And she perceived a message from her kin  
In each awakening touch of outward things p. 357

The Mother never failed to encourage me. On 19.2.57 she sent me a beautiful card depicting her coloured photograph. Her words were:

Bonjour, To my dear little child, To my sweet Huta,  
This is to say to my sweet child, on the occasion of my birthday, how glad I am of the progress she is making both spiritually and in her painting – and to assure her of my constant and affectionate help so that this progress will increase without stop.

My love and blessings and the presence of the Divine Grace never leave you.

Towards the end of 1958 I went to London according to the Mother's wish. I came back in August 1960.

This was the New Year message of 1961 from the Mother to all:

*This wonderful world of delight waiting at our gates for our call to come down upon earth.*

As always, she gave me diaries in which to write my journal.

On 1st September 1961, my physical birthday, the Mother called me to the Meditation Hall upstairs and gave me a folder. When I opened it, I found my own paintings on either side. One was "Soul of Beauty" and the other was a vision the Mother had seen in my heart and asked me to paint in 1957. Underneath the picture these lines from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* were inscribed:

This golden figure...  
Hid in its breast the key of all his aims,  
A spell to bring the Immortal's bliss on earth. p. 397

The Mother looked at me for a few seconds. Then her eyes closed gradually. She slid into a profound trance which lasted more than ten minutes. On opening her eyes she said:

I achieved in my tender age the highest occult truths. I have realised and seen all the visions set forth in *Savitri*.

Actually I experienced the poem's supramental revelations before I arrived in Pondicherry, and before Sri Aurobindo read out *Savitri* to me early in the morning day after day at a certain period of the Ashram. I never told Sri Aurobindo all that I had seen in my visions beforehand...

She laughed softly, sweetly, and resumed:

I have seen the beauties and wonders of the higher worlds. Now I think of expressing them in painting by various colours – blues, golds, pinks and whites – with certain vibrations of Light – all in harmony forming the New World.

I wish to bring down upon earth this New World. Since I have no time physically, I will paint through you.

The world of Supreme Beauty exists. I shall take you there, you will see the things, remember them and then express them in paintings.

Yes, yes, my will shall be done – the Supreme Beauties exist. I will certainly take you there.

I see the butterfly ready in its cocoon. I do not wish it to come out soon, but gradually. Then after emerging from the chrysalis you will have enough knowledge to reach your goal.

Once again the Mother closed her eyes, a slight smile hovering on her lips. When she awoke, she said:

I realised the Divine in my early twenties, your age!

You see, the Inner Divinity is Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence. This Divinity is constantly with me, guiding and inspiring me.

I held her hands and said eagerly: "Oh, I haven't yet realised the Divine." She smiled and assured me: 'You will.' Further she added:

For occultism one needs a Guru. But spirituality can be transferred (*she made a gesture moving her index finger from the middle of her chest towards my heart*), like this.

On another occasion, the Mother said:

Child, our work is a work of the Future – a work of tomorrow for younger generations who will be the builders of the New World.

She also revealed:

*Savitri* is the prophetic vision of Sri Aurobindo. It will surpass the Gita and the Bible.

Without reading *Savitri* intellectually I could not go any further. So in 1961 the Mother arranged for me to read it with Ambalal Purani. We finished reading Book One. Then in 1963 he went to the U.K. and the United States. After he had returned from abroad he fell ill. In 1965 he passed away. So the Mother arranged for me to read *Savitri* with Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna). Sri Aurobindo first introduced *Savitri* to Amal in private drafts, and wrote to him most of the letters that are now published along with the epic.

Amal and I met for the first time in 1961, upstairs in the passage which connects the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's rooms. I casually asked him about a chess board, because just then the Mother and I were doing something on that theme. He drew one and made me understand it.

When we started our reading of *Savitri* some people warned Amal against me and asked him to discontinue. Amal cut them short, saying: "The Mother has arranged our reading. Besides, I have seen and felt Huta's soul. I cannot back out."

Amal made me understand *Savitri* intellectually and aesthetically. As soon as he would leave my apartment after our study sessions, I used to write down what he had explained to me in detail. I have numerous cherished notebooks which are of great value to me.

It was 7th August 1965 when I finished reading the whole of *Savitri* with Amal. I could not check my tears of joy. He too was moved. We shook hands over the long harmonious collaboration and absorbing discussions.

That day in the afternoon I went to the Mother to inform her about it. She smiled, heaved a sigh of happiness, and said: ‘Ah, one big work is done.’

Meanwhile the month of October 1961 had arrived, slowly, like a benediction: hope and peace diffused in my whole being.

The Mother called me to the Meditation Room upstairs on 6 October 1961 in the morning, to take up the work of *Savitri* painting.

She and I exchanged flowers and smiles. Then I looked at her eagerly to show me how to do the first painting. I felt as if the doors of hidden worlds were going to open before me. From the Mother’s expression I gathered that now I would always be submerged in this wonderful consciousness from where I would never come out. Ah, it is true so far!

The date 6 is auspicious: according to the Mother the number 6 signifies “New Creation”.

She was absolutely indrawn in sheer silence. After her deep meditation she looked at me unblinking. Then there was the sudden flicker of a smile in her eyes when she spoke:

Child, have you thought of painting the jacket of the book which will be published after we have finished some paintings of *Savitri*?

Once more she lapsed into a profound trance. She awoke, took a piece of paper and a pencil and drew a sketch of the cover picture. She explained:

Show the descent of the Supreme Mother. A flash of white Light forming the feet which rest on the globe of the earth. Don’t forget to paint the outline of a lotus, which must be mingled with the white Light.

She also made me understand the colour-scheme. Then she held my hands, and pressed them in order to fill them with her Consciousness. She kissed my forehead.

With a blank mind I reached my apartment, sat on a chair in my studio where the Mother herself had sat when she declared open my apartment on 10th February 1958. There was the jumble of colour-

tubes, brushes, palette knives, distilled turpentine, linseed oil, rags. I put the canvas board on the easel and squeezed liberal quantities of pigments on a palette. The Mother had shown me how to arrange colours on the palette when she started teaching me painting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1956. I finished the painting and sent it to the Mother that very morning. She returned it through Ambu who brought prasad from her at midday along with this note:

There is no need of changing anything. It is excellent.

This was the beginning of our work.

The following name was given by the Mother to this work:

*Meditations on Savitri*

It is impossible for me to give the full description of all the *Savitri* paintings here. But I shall try to convey glimpses of some of them.

The Mother explained to me the sixth picture of Book One Canto One:

All can be done if the God-touch is there.  
A hope stole in that hardly dared to be  
Amid the Night's forlorn indifference...  
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came  
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal...  
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light  
That glowed along a fading moments brink

Child, you must show in your painting the rays of White Light streaming out from all the fingers of "a wandering hand". In reality, from the occult point of view the White Light flowed from the Mother's own fingers.

On 4th November 1961 she made me understand the eighth picture of the same book, the same canto:

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

She went into a deep meditation for quite a long time. When she opened her eyes I felt as if she were still dreaming. The Mother said:

I saw in 1904 the vision of a Spirit when I went into the Inconscient. The form of this Spirit was neither of man nor of woman. Nor was it Vishnu or Shiva or Krishna.

Once again she closed her eyes to recall what she had seen in the fathomless darkness. When she awoke she instructed me:

Child, you must paint a pale gold reclining figure of a God. His right cheek is resting on his right palm. His head with long golden hair is on a white cushion. And in the background you must show a myriad rainbow hues of opals. Also the black colour of the darkness sliding off Him.

It was difficult to paint rainbow colour. I could not finish the painting. That very night I had a vision: The shimmering waves of the divine White Light enveloped me as they turned into brilliant multi-colours. They were in gradations – from pale blue to night sky, from shell-pink to deepest crimson, from pale green to Nile green, and the same with the rest of the hues. Then suddenly they assumed the faces of beautiful beings – but their lower bodies were like trails of different colours. These beings mingled with one another, yet retained their individualities. Their dancing movements were like music: the tinkle, the chime of numerous bells echoing and re-echoing through the sweet silence of eternity. My eyes drank in the melody of the vivid, various colours with as much joy as I would have had hearing an ethereal symphony in perfect harmony in the Divine Light.

This was an ecstasy, an indescribable thrill. I was floating upward into a realm of glory beyond anything I had ever beheld or ever known.

Indeed the *Savitri* paintings were expressed in multi-colours to accord with the twelve dimensions known to occultism.

The next morning I finished the picture, and showed it to the Mother in the afternoon. She clasped my hands, looked into my eyes for a moment or two and gave me a kiss on my forehead. Her gesture conveyed to me everything.

The *Savitri* paintings left me day after day in wonder.

The Mother took me with her to the world of true art, the world of Beauty from which all the inspiration came, a world of ecstatic joy, unbounded happiness, a world of magnificence.

Sri Aurobindo has written:

The Mother believes in beauty as a part of spiritual and divine living.

On 6th November 1961 the Mother met me in the morning in the Meditation Hall upstairs and explained to me the ninth picture:

A glamour from the unreach'd transcendences  
Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,  
A message from the unknown immortal Light  
Ablaze upon creation's quivering edge,  
Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues  
And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours.

She drew a faint line here and there on a piece of paper. I could hardly make out anything. The Mother wished me to use various colours for the painting. She asked me: 'Have you seen the dawn?' I said: "No, Mother. Because I work late at night I cannot get up early to see the dawn. I am sorry." She laughed softly and left me in an ambiguous state.

I was terribly nervous when I reached my apartment. Tears welled up in my eyes and I thought again and again, "Why, oh why did I take up this difficult work?" My anger rose to match the situation. Then at last I dragged myself towards the easel in my studio. I sat on a chair, squeezed out several colours at random on the palette and started blindly giving strokes here and there on a board with a single brush, without thinking, caring, or even trying to sketch the Dawn.

In the afternoon I went to the Mother. She looked at the picture, a meditative gleam in her eyes, and said: 'Oh, it is excellent!' I frowned with perplexity. She laughed and said:

You see, while I was taking my lunch I was thinking, “I did not quite make the girl understand how to paint the Dawn. How is she getting on with it?” Meanwhile, I saw Sri Aurobindo in a vision. He informed me that I should not worry about the girl. She is getting on well with the painting. And now I can see what he meant!

At that very moment I was made to understand that not only did the Mother’s Consciousness help me in this work, but that Sri Aurobindo’s Consciousness too played its role admirably.

On the morning of 8<sup>th</sup> November the Mother instructed me about the tenth picture:

On life’s thin border awhile the Vision stood  
And bent over earth’s pondering forehead curve.

The Mother saw my picture in the afternoon and liked it. I drew her attention to the arms of the Vision, saying, “Mother, aren’t they too long?” She assured me: ‘Never mind. They are impressive and symbolic.’

Then she got up from her high-backed carved chair, came very close to me, looked at my face with her luminous gaze for a few minutes, cupped it in her hands and said firmly: ‘Now, just now, I saw a beautiful brilliant face of an angel. One day it will come out.’ She kissed me on my forehead and bade me “Au revoir.”

The Mother interpreted the sixteenth picture:

All sprang to their unvarying daily acts;  
The thousand peoples of the soil and tree  
Obeyed the unforeseeing instant’s urge,  
And, leader here with his uncertain mind,  
Alone who stares at the future’s covered face,  
Man lifted up the burden of his fate

She remarked:

In this painting there is a purpose behind. One likes to see it over and over again. Man is an ignorant being, and yet he is an exception in Nature.

On 17th November 1961 the Mother explained to me the seventeenth picture:

And Savitri too awoke among these tribes  
That hastened to join the brilliant Summoner's chant ....  
A narrow movement on Time's deep abysm,  
Life's fragile littleness denied the power,  
The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss  
She had brought with her into the human form,  
The calm delight that weds one soul to all,  
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy.

She did the sketch in front of me, and told me about the colour-scheme. She said:

Child, when you paint Savitri's portrait, you must see that throughout you have to paint the same face but with various expressions. Different features will look odd.

I asked her about Savitri's complexion. The Mother said, 'Why, the fair Indian complexion, ivory – a sunny ivory complexion.' I inquired: "Mother what is 'sunny ivory'?" She leaned a little forward from her chair, patted my arm and said with a smile: 'Like your complexion.' I blushed. Yes, at that time I had a very fair complexion. I remember the Mother always admired it. As the years passed, gradually the awful weather, constant psychological struggle, perpetual assaults of the invisible entities, setbacks, sufferings and difficulties spoiled my skin considerably. However the essential thing in life, I believe, is the charm and beauty of the soul.

On 19th November the Mother made me understand the nineteenth picture of Book One, Canto One:

Inflicting on the heights the abysm's law,  
It sullies with its mire heaven's messengers:  
Its thorns of fallen nature are the defence  
It turns against the saviour hands of Grace;  
It meets the sons of God with death and pain.

She did the sketch and asked me to show blood oozing from Savitri's hands and right foot. When the Mother saw the painting she said: 'The expression of Savitri is very good indeed.'

On 24th December the Mother greeted me with three white roses and a charming smile. She read the passage

As in a mystic and dynamic dance  
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies  
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault  
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,  
A heart of silence in the hands of joy  
Inhabited with rich creative beats  
A body like a parable of dawn  
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity  
Or golden temple-door to things beyond.

Instead of explaining to me through a drawing, the Mother gave me a dancing pose: the right foot was lifted, the right hand came down, the left hand went up. She showed me how the priestess should dance.

For several months the Mother and I worked continuously. We were working on Book One, Canto Four, when in May 1962 the Mother was taken seriously ill. She convalesced for quite a long time in her second-floor apartment. She never came down again. After that I went to her for our work on *Savitri* in the music-cum-interview room.

There she explained to me the sixth picture of Book One Canto Four:

Along a path of aeons serpentine  
In the coiled blackness of her nescient course  
The Earth-Goddess toils across the sands of Time.

This expressed the Mother's own struggle, I felt.

Time flew on rapid wings. Our work progressed considerably well. The Mother took my consciousness to other spheres and let me see many extraordinary things in detail. She also made me feel their vibrations and meet numerous strange beings of different types. Without her direct instructions, guidance and constant help nothing could have been achieved.

Some people thought that the paintings of *Savitri* were mere pictures; some even mocked and criticised. Some passed remarks out of sheer jealousy and disdain. They believed the paintings to be my personal

possessions and affair, because I had done them and because the Mother had graciously granted me the copyright of them. But really speaking, the paintings of the whole of *Savitri* are the Mother's own creation, based not only on her series of visions but also on her own guiding sketches: they are a reflection of her own Yoga.

On the morning of 18th December 1964 the Mother explained to me one of the paintings of Book Five, The Book of Love. For Satyavan she drew trousers and said: 'He should wear tight trousers.' I raised my eyebrows and inquired, "Mother, tight trousers? They are modern ... what about a dhoti?" She said: 'Why, but the trousers are all right. I do not like a dhoti here, because it is modern.'

When I showed the painting to the Mother I thought it was awful. Once again I broached the subject of the dhoti. She said firmly:

Ah no, I prefer trousers here. It is better if you change the colour of the trousers to pale greyish-blue instead of brown. Then they will look nice.

Here too some people criticised when they saw the exhibition of the *Savitri* paintings. The Mother once remarked that people do not see beyond their noses. She always reiterated:

All these paintings are paintings of tomorrow – future paintings.

When Book Six, The Book of Fate, was in progress, I did the painting of Savitri's mother. I did not cover her head with the sari, so she lacked the appearance of royalty. The Mother asked me to cover her head. I said: "As I have painted the first picture of her without any covering, how will it look in other pictures if I cover her head?" The Mother smiled and said:

Why, but she can always cover her head when the sari slips. In the first picture the sari had slipped and in another picture she has pulled it up!

I savoured her sense of humour.

I painted the Mother's eyes from the photograph depicting her eyes. She liked the painting very much and asked me to include it in Book Ten, The Book of Double Twilight, picture thirteen:

And Savitri looked on Death and answered not...  
A mighty transformation came on her...  
A curve of the calm hauteur of far heaven  
Descending into earth's humility,  
Her forehead's span vaulted the Omniscient's gaze,  
Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe.

As days, months and years passed, our work approached a close. Each day was a new revelation for me. Each painting had its own story, told and written by the Mother. I am sorry that I cannot give a full account of my work with the Mother. What I am writing here is just a glimpse, an outline.

The Mother saw the last paintings of Book Twelve, Epilogue, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1965 – my birthday. The lines for the last picture run:

Numberless the stars swam on their shadowy field  
Describing in the gloom the ways of light.  
Then while they skirted yet the southward verge,  
Lost in the halo of her musing brows  
Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven  
In silver peace, possessed her luminous region.  
She brooded through her stillness on a thought  
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,  
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn.

When the Mother saw the painting she told me in moving words: “It is beautiful, excellent – full of feeling.” I actually saw her eyes moist with tears of happiness – because indeed she was anxiously waiting for the auspicious day to come: the great Dawn of the Supramental World. Then with a smile she put a garland of jasmines around my neck. This was a reward to me. In my birthday card she wrote:

With my blessings for your whole being to become  
conscious of your soul and to manifest it constantly in your  
thoughts, feelings and actions.

In Eternal Love.

The Mother had the paintings of *Meditations on Savitri*, Book One, Cantos One to Five, published in book form in four volumes from 1962 to 1965. She did not allow me to retouch or repaint the *Savitri* paintings for these books, because, she said:

These volumes are only an experiment. I want to show to the world how the consciousness is developed.

For each volume the Mother gave a message.

While teaching me occultism during our *Savitri* work, the Mother disclosed to me the mysteries of the higher luminous worlds, as well as the horrible nether worlds. In fact she took my consciousness to those worlds in order to give me experiences and make me understand the hidden truth of things.

The Mother did hundreds of *Savitri* sketches along with her explanations. Also she wrote a number of letters in this regard.

I recall one of her letters:

7-4-65 

Dear little child Hute,

The sketches are very good. Especially the 3 heads of *Savitri* are excellent. I have made a little change to the man of power - His hands must be chained separately each one to a machine on both sides of his body, because he does not see the chains and believes he is free

LOVE 

7.4.65

*Dear little child Huta,*

*The sketches are very good. Especially the 3 heads of Savitri are excellent. I have made a little change to the man of power. His hands must be chained separately each one to a machine on both sides of his body, because he does not see the chains and believes he is free.*

*LOVE*

Here the man represented Ego. The lines are from Book Seven, Canto Four:

She spoke and from the lower human world  
An answer, a warped echo met her speech...  
The voice rose up and smote some inner sun:  
“I am the heir of the forces of the earth,  
Slowly I make good my right to my estate...  
When earth is mastered, I shall conquer heaven;  
The gods shall be my aids or menial folk,  
No wish I harbour unfulfilled shall die:  
Omnipotence and omniscience shall be mine.”

The *Savitri* paintings, and other visionary paintings of that time, were done in the midst of hideous difficulties and sufferings. Many a time the Mother was taken suddenly ill: she ran a temperature along with a cold and cough. Despite all this, she never stopped explaining to me about the *Savitri* paintings.

On my side too there were spells of indisposition. But the stress of inspiration was so intense that I could not stop.

The Mother gave certain days in the week for our work. The rest of the days I was so preoccupied with painting that sometimes I found no time even to comb my hair. When my maid-servant was absent, I had no time to go to the Dining Room, and had to make do with bits of bread and water.

Often the electricity failed. The inspiration was so intense that I had to hold a flashlight in one hand and keep on painting with the other – I simply could not halt. During the rains, water would leak in from all sides of the ceiling. I suffered from a severe cold and cough.

I had to clean the rooms before I retired late at night. The Mother had instructed me that I should clean the brushes and the palette as soon as my work was over. Several times I got electric shocks in the water while cleaning the brushes – they were terrifying.

The Mother's Force was working ceaselessly in my whole being to fulfil my soul's aspiration. She believed in killing several birds with one stone. Only the Divine Diplomat can do this.

When I was completely absorbed in painting, I forgot to use my handkerchief on my face; instead I would wipe my face with the rags I used for cleaning the paintbrushes – and wiped the brushes with my handkerchief! After finishing work I went to clean my brushes and glanced at the mirror. I was horrified to see my face. My hair was dishevelled, and several patches of different colours added a rainbow glory to my visage!

Sometimes while painting I started feeling suffocated, owing to some heaviness in my heart. The inner churning was constant. Tears rolled down my cheeks. With one hand I was painting and with the other wiping my eyes.

The Mother's strides were getting longer and quicker. At times it was difficult to keep pace with her. I got exhausted. There were days when nothing existed for me except the mission of finishing the task I carried in my heart.

Throughout the whole year of 1966 the Mother asked me to retouch and repaint many of the Savitri paintings according to her instructions. She had arranged to display 468 Savitri paintings in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Exhibition Hall in February 1967. But before that the Mother expressed her wish to see all the paintings once again in order to fill them with her Force, Light and Consciousness. For she once commented that the Savitri paintings were not mere paintings but living beings full of vibrations. So I took the paintings to the Mother a few at a time. She touched each of them and concentrated on them. Above all, she was extremely happy to see them, and remarked:

People see these types of paintings from the material point of view, while I always see them from the spiritual point of view. They are visions – they are symbolic.

On 16.1.1967 the Mother wrote to me:



16. 1. 67  
My dear little child Huta  
you have worked  
wonderfully! -!  
with all my  
love F-

*My dear little child Huta .  
You have worked wonderfully!  
With all my love*

I was touched by her letter, and wrote to express my aspiration to reach the Divine Goal. Then she replied to me:

As the paintings were  
done, so the Goal  
will be reached.

With all my  
love  
F-

*As the paintings were done, so the Goal will be reached.  
With all my love*

For the exhibition the Mother gave the following message :

## Here is Savitri

The importance of  
Savitri is immense  
Its subject is universal  
Its revelation is prophetic  
The time spent in its  
atmosphere is not wasted.  
Take all the time necessary  
to see this exhibition. It  
will be a happy compensation  
for the feverish haste men  
put now in all they do.

10.2.67.

## Here is Savitri

The importance of Savitri is immense  
Its subject is universal.  
Its revelation is prophetic.  
The time spent in its atmosphere is not wasted.  
Take all the time necessary to see the exhibition.  
It will be a happy compensation  
for the feverish haste men  
put now in all they do.

10.2.1967

I had seen the final arrangements of the paintings. Krishnalal, Jayantilal, Vasudev-bhai and others were there to arrange everything. The Mother asked me not to go to the Exhibition Hall once the exhibition of the *Savitri* paintings was declared open by Amrita. Nolini-da, Dyuman and Udar accompanied him. I obeyed her.

After the exhibition, on 8.3.1967, the paintings were taken to two rooms in Golconde, according to the Mother's wish. Then on the morning of Friday 8.1.99 I brought the *Savitri* paintings and two huge cupboards to my place, because I was asked to do so by Mona L. Pinto. The paintings remained in Golconde for 31 years or so.

Here, I recall the conversation I had with the Mother regarding *Savitri* paintings in 1967:

Mother, Golconde is a Guest House. Savitri cannot stay there indefinitely. Where is Savitri's House? She must have her own house. For in the Savitri paintings dwells her Soul.

The Mother smiled and went into a deep contemplation for ten minutes or so. After opening her eyes, she held my two hands, looked intently into my eyes and said firmly:

It will be.

One day I felt strongly by the Mother's inspiration that the Savitri paintings and other paintings should go to "Savitri Bhavan" – Savitri's House!

"Savitri Bhavan" deserves the Mother's Treasures.

Then Shraddhavan and I wrote letters to the Trustees of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. After their approval, the matter started taking shape in this regard.

On 11.6.2001 Shraddhavan, Helmut – the architect of "Savitri Bhavan" – along with the team of "Savitri Bhavan", came in the morning to receive the Mother's Treasures and many things in connection with the Savitri paintings.

It was a Herculean task for me to part with the Savitri paintings.

The same thing happened to me when I parted with the Mother's Chair. Nevertheless, in my heart of hearts I was glad and satisfied that the

Mother's Treasures went to the right place of which the Mother had visioned! I felt that Shraddhavan and the group of "Savitri Bhavan" would surely fulfil the Mother's Vision in Sri Aurobindo's Light.

During that time too<sup>1</sup>, the Mother's recitations were going on. For the paintings, the Mother had asked me to choose the passages from *Savitri* which could be pictured. I wrote them out with a felt-pen on big sheets of handmade paper, so that she could easily read the selected passages which corresponded to the paintings. As she read, I tape-recorded her recitations. The Mother completed the recitations from the whole of *Savitri* towards the end of 1967. Gradually I gave to Sunil-da copies of all the recordings of the Mother's recitations, so that he could compose the Savitri music, according to the Mother's wish.

The Mother wished slides to be made of the Savitri paintings, so that they could be shown at the Ashram theatre as part of the celebrations during Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary Year, 1972. With the Mother's blessings Richard Eggenberger took up the work of preparing the slides from early 1971 onwards. He and his assistants finished taking slides of all of the *Savitri* paintings on 27.9.1971.

On 26.2.71 the Mother heard her own organ music along with her recitations. She liked it very much and fully approved of it to be used as an accompaniment throughout the slide shows. As for Sunil-da's Savitri music, the Mother arranged for it to be played in the Playground during the meditations on Thursdays and Sundays. In this connection she gave me a special blessings packet for Sunil-da. He was very pleased.

The Mother wished to know the exact date and time for showing in the Ashram theater the slides of the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings along with her own organ music and her recitations, recorded by me, of Savitri passages which corresponded with the paintings, so that she would put her special Force and Light during the programme. The first show was on Friday, 25.2.72 at 8.30 pm. On 21.7.72 was the last one. People enjoyed the shows. The Mother did not want me to attend the shows. I obeyed her.

In 1967, after the display of Savitri paintings in the Ashram Exhibition Hall, when I asked the Mother about making a movie of the paintings,

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1 1965-69

she held my right hand, shook it with abroad smile and said with a face full of enthusiasm: ‘Yes, my child, we shall collaborate!’

Years passed. I was wondering about the movie. Now at last it seemed that the time had come to get the movie of the Savitri paintings made. On 6.2.1973 it was decided by the Mother that the movie would be made by Michel Klostermann of Germany. When he was in charge of film production in Auroville, the Mother gave the name “Filmaur” for his project. The Mother gave Michel and me beautiful leather-bound folders with Sri Aurobindo’s and her own photographs. She wanted her own organ-music to be played as a background during her recitations of the *Savitri* passages corresponding to the paintings. She also wished that the movie should be full of liveliness, vibrations and vividness.

On 19.5.73 I wrote a letter to the Mother.

My dearest Mother

Michel has already started to make the movie of the Savitri paintings with your blessings. According to your instructions he will surely give to the paintings vividness, vibrations and liveliness while filming. Your own organ-music and your recitations of Savitri passages will have stereophonic sound which will give a superb effect to the movie ‘Meditations on Savitri’. I pray you to make everything possible and done by your Force and Grace. Victory to the Supreme!

With love and kisses

Yours ever

Huta

She sent blessings packets through M. Andre.

Michel fulfilled the Mother’s wish by making the movie of all the Savitri paintings from Book One to Book Twelve. Unfortunately after years had passed, I found out that Michel had betrayed my trust, and was using the photographs he had taken of my paintings for his own purposes, violating my copyright. He was no longer respecting the Mother’s wishes about the paintings.

After the Savitri paintings were moved to Savitri Bhavan, I requested Shradhdhavan to find someone to help us make a new set of movies. An Italian Aurovilian Manohar (Luigi Fedele) took up

the work. He advised that new digital photographs should be taken of the paintings. Another Italian, Giorgio Molinari, who is a highly experienced professional photographer, had recently joined Auroville. He set up a studio in Savitri Bhavan and with Manohar's help soon completed the work of photographing all the 472 *Meditations on Savitri* paintings. Then Manohar started to make a new series of films. Eventually there will be 18 DVDs in all. These will be published and distributed through Havyavāhana Trust, as all my books are<sup>1</sup>.

Meanwhile, a new work had started.

On the morning of 20th December 1967, the Mother saw me in her music-cum-interview room. She asked me: 'Have you brought anything to show me?' I said: "Yes, Mother. Here is the file of four hundred and sixty-five passages from *Savitri* which you recited and which were put below the paintings when they were exhibited in February 1967. Mother, will you please explain these passages to me, and allow me to take down your explanations of them on my tape-recorder as I have done with your recitations of the passages? Then surely people will understand the *Savitri* paintings more easily."

She concentrated for a moment or two and then said enthusiastically:

If I have to explain these passages, I would prefer to start from the very beginning and give a full explanation of the whole of *Savitri*.

In fact, this had already been planned in the Mother's Vision long ago before I came to stay near her on 10th February 1955.

Once she revealed to a small group of sadhaks, soon after the first one-volume edition of *Savitri* was published in 1954 by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education:

*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.

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1 These DVDs are now available from Havyavahana Trust and through SABDA.

On 18th January 1968 in the morning the Mother and I commenced our new work on *Savitri*. On 28th January the Mother gave it the name:

## About Savitri

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. Afterwards she saw and corrected my transcriptions.

All the comments by the Mother are wonderful. Here I would like to present one of them, from Book One Canto Three, which appeals to me very much. She recited this passage:

Only a while at first these heavenlier states,  
These large wide-poised upliftings could endure.  
The high and luminous tension breaks too soon,  
The body's stone stillness and the life's hushed trance,  
The breathless might and calm of silent mind;  
Or slowly they fail as sets a golden day.  
The restless nether members tire of peace;  
A nostalgia of old little works and joys,  
A need to call back small familiar selves,  
To tread the accustomed and inferior way,  
The need to rest in a natural poise of fall,  
As a child who learns to walk can walk not long,  
Replace the titan will for ever to climb,  
On the heart's altar dim the sacred fire.  
An old pull of subconscious cords renews;  
It draws the unwilling spirit from the heights,  
Or a dull gravitation drags us down  
To the blind driven inertia of our base.  
This too the supreme Diplomat can use,  
He makes our fall a means for greater rise.

Her comment runs:

This is the great difficulty in the physical life. It is the strength of the old habit that pulls down the body to its old way. Then comes the struggle, and if the faith is sufficient, if the ardour for progress is there, then out of this fall we can rise to a higher receptivity and a better achievement.

In fact, there is nothing in this experimental life that is not meant to push the whole creation towards the luminous marvellous Divine End that is promised to our effort and to our faith.

Never despair. Never lose courage. Never, never lose faith.

The Grace is there and marvellously uses everything to reach, as quickly as possible, the Goal that is promised to our effort.

If we can enlarge our consciousness sufficiently, we see that even the apparent defeats are marvellous steps towards the final Victory.

As we went on, the Mother uncovered Sri Aurobindo's vision and hers of the New World, expressing the Supramental Light, Consciousness, Force and Delight. She disclosed their effect on the cells of the body. She took the theme of *Savitri* only as starting-point and, when the right time came, spoke about the action of the New Consciousness which had been manifesting since the beginning of the year 1969.

On 26th December 1969 I went to the Mother to hear the New Year music. There was also a message given by her:

*The world is preparing for a big change. Will you help?*

That day happened to be one of my days with the Mother. She recited from *Savitri* only one passage, for it was very long. After the work she read my prayer, and on the same sheet of paper she wrote:

*It will be realised by the Supreme Power and Love.*

That night I had a wonderful vision.

I went out of my body. My subtle body was now soaring up and up in an enormous space. There were the moon and stars. The atmosphere was very light, cool and soothing. I felt free like a bird. I did not realise how far I went up but now I could not see the moon and stars. I was beyond the heavenly bodies. There was endless space before me. Suddenly I saw something shining from the far horizon. I headed towards the glow. Now I was not soaring up vertically but my movement was as if I were swimming into a vast space. I was coming closer and closer to my destination. My first glance fell on two huge Suns. The one on the right was golden yellow and the other on the left was golden red. Their edges were touching and mingling with each other. I came still closer by crossing an immense lake which was packed with diamond-like lotuses and emerald leaves. The reflection of the two Suns added glory to the breathtaking beauty of the marvelous scene which was spread out like a panorama before my eyes.

I was now floating a little above the lake. Its coolness enveloped my subtle body.

Here the Divine had strewn lavishly her exquisite Beauty and Wonder and Quietude. The divine vibrations were overwhelming. I was engulfed by the new consciousness.

I reached the Suns. Their Force and Power were absolutely still and calm. Then I saw a narrow passage between the two Suns. I entered it, and on the other side I saw a golden world. There was nothing there except golden Light. I landed slowly on the divine soil, but to my surprise I was a little above the ground. I could not set my feet there. I was not walking but floating in this enchanting atmosphere. I came across a few luminous beings who were active, but their activities were without any sound. Everything was heavenly. There I felt the perfect Consciousness, Harmony, Peace, Beauty and Silence. I was simply bathed in the golden Light, in the soothing vibrations of a quiet joy and happiness.

I roamed here and there freely, and silently communicated with the beings. Nothing was new to me because I identified myself completely with this magnificent World of Golden Light.

I was reluctant to come back to the dark world of falsehood. But alas, the next morning I saw myself lying in my bed. I felt extremely sorry and lost, and shed a few silent tears.

At once I remembered the whole passage from *Savitri* which the Mother had recited the previous morning and on which she had given

her comment. The passage recounts an experience of Aswapati, the Yogi-King, father of Savitri.

A glimpse was caught of things forever unknown;  
The letters stood out of the unmoving Word.  
In the immutable nameless Origin  
Was seen emerging as from fathomless seas  
The trail of the Ideas that made the world,  
And, sown in the black earth of Nature's trance,  
The seed of the Spirit's blind and huge desire  
From which the tree of cosmos was conceived  
And spread its magic arms through a dream of space.  
Immense realities took on a shape:  
There looked out from the shadow of the Unknown  
The bodiless Namelessness that saw God born  
And tries to gain from the mortal's mind and soul  
A deathless body and a divine name.  
The immobile lips, the great surreal wings,  
The visage masked by superconscious Sleep,  
The eyes with their closed lids that see all things,  
Appeared of the Architect who builds in trance.  
The original Desire born in the Void  
Peered out; he saw the hope that never sleeps,  
The feet that run behind a fleeting fate,  
The ineffable meaning of the endless dream.  
As if a torch held by a power of God,  
The radiant world of the everlasting Truth  
Glimmered like a faint star bordering the night  
Above the golden Overmind's shimmering ridge.  
Even were caught as through a cunning veil  
The smile of love that sanctions the long game,  
The calm indulgence and maternal breasts  
Of Wisdom suckling the child-laughter of Chance  
Silence the nurse of the Almighty's power,  
The omniscient hush, womb of the immortal Word,  
And of the Timeless the still brooding face,  
And the creative eye of Eternity.

The Mother's comment ran as follows:

All these images are meant to break the ordinary receptivity of mind and to open it to the conception – vaster, truer, creative – of the Supramental.

It is only in a receptive silence, when the whole inquisitive mind stops moving, that one can feel and understand the images described in these verses.

Also my memory flew back to one of the Mother's letters of the preceding year, when I had expressed to her my wish to go back to my own world of Beauty and Peace. She wrote:

I am leading you to a place much more beautiful than the one from which you came – a place of full and harmonious Consciousness ....

I felt strongly that my vision of the Golden World was a glimpse which the Mother had given me, and that actually she had taken my consciousness there. But according to our human nature, I thought that the vision might be some kind of mental formation by myself; it could be simply a dream. I wrote to the Mother in order to make sure, because what I had seen had the look of a living thing, which I can never forget. She answered:

Happily, the true worlds and the true Consciousness are not a dream, but the only real Reality for those who are sincere and conscious.

Then I did the painting of my vision and showed it to the Mother. It has been published in *About Savitri* Part Three.

Days passed. One day the Mother confirmed:

Now I have caught the exact thing regarding the work – now I know what Sri Aurobindo wants me to do.

On another occasion she said:

You see, *Savitri* is very good for me also, because while I read and recite, I do not think at all. I am only inspired. I need this experience.

I said:

Ah, Mother, you don't need anything, because you are the Divine, aren't you?

She laughed softly and stated:

Yes, that I am, but this is physical (*pointing to her body*). And there is the physical world and it must be perfected. In fact, nothing is enough for me.

Then, on the following session of our *Savitri* work, she revealed:

The work is really very good. I like it. When I concentrate and go back to the Origin of the Creation, I see things as a whole in their reality and then I speak.

You see, each time when I speak, Sri Aurobindo comes here. And I speak exactly what he wants me to speak. It is the inner hidden truth of *Savitri* that he wants me to reveal.

Each time he comes, a wonderful atmosphere is created. I have read *Savitri* before but it was nothing compared to this reading.

*All can be done if the God-touch is there.*

This is what Sri Aurobindo has written in *Savitri*, and how true it has proved! I am really happy to share this splendid gift with everybody, in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Light. My profound gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother for their Grace and Love.

### ***Meditations on Savitri***

18 DVDs

prepared by Manohar at Savitri Bhavan  
from photographs by Giorgio Molinari  
of the paintings created by the Mother with Huta

HAVYAVAHANA TRUST,  
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# The Supermind in *Savitri*

*The Golden Day*

*Henceforth the 29th February will be the day of the Lord.*

The Mother  
MCW 15:188

February 29, 2012 was the 14<sup>th</sup> recurrence of the Golden Day of the Lord, the Supramental Manifestation, which took place in 1956. To mark this significant occasion we have collected some of the references to Supermind, the New Creation, and the Supramental which appear in *Savitri*. Since there is not room to print the full texts in this issue, we are giving the references simply, for the convenience of interested readers.

The first occurs in Book One, Canto Three – ‘The Yoga of the Soul’s Release’ – where Aswapati is granted by the power of Inspiration the vision of many different kinds of spiritual states. One of them is a glimpse of the Supramental World : p. 41, lines 684-87.

In Book Two, Canto Three – ‘The Glory and the Fall of Life’ – Aswapati sees the action of the creative World-Force, ‘*inventing the scene of a concrete universe*’ at the command of the Supreme, guided by the Supermind : p.121. lines 184-91

In Book Two, Canto Six – ‘The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life’ – Aswapati sees many noble and powerful beings, but they are still living in the world of duality and ignorance which is derived but divided from the Supermind : p.187, lines 526-33

In Book Ten, Canto Four – ‘The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real’ – in an answer to Death, Savitri reveals the higher planes our earthly evolution has not yet reached: the higher levels of Mind, then Overmind, and above it the world of Truth : pages 661-63, lines 716-795.

The fulfilment of the divine life on earth is already foretold in Book One, Canto Four – ‘The Secret Knowledge’ – where Sri Aurobindo speaks of the world-creators guiding the world to the fulfilment of its destiny : page 54-55, lines 294-300, 314-341.

In Book Three, Canto Three – ‘The House of the Spirit and the New Creation’ – Aswapati is granted a vision of the New Creation waiting to manifest : pages 323-25, lines 224-299; and pages 326-29, lines 317-446.

Finally, in Book Eleven, The Book of Everlasting Day, towards the end of its single long canto – ‘The Soul’s Choice and the Supreme Consummation’ – Savitri is given the prophecy of how her quest for the liberation of earth and men will be fulfilled ‘*in the march of all-fulfilling Time*’: pages 704-10, lines 1194-1430, ending with the promise :

Thus shall the earth open to divinity  
And common natures feel the wide uplift,  
Illumine common acts with the Spirit’s ray  
And meet the deity in common things.  
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,  
The Spirit shall take up the human play,  
This earthly life become the life divine.

The Mother says :

*To celebrate the birth of a transitory body  
can satisfy some faithful feelings.  
To celebrate the manifestation of the eternal Consciousness  
can be done at every moment of the universal history.  
But to celebrate the advent of a new world,  
the supramental world,  
is a marvellous and exceptional privilege.*

MCW 15:106

All gratitude and reverence to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, who have prepared this great miracle for us!

# The English of *Savitri* (5)

## *Book One, Canto One, lines 253-342*

This first canto of ‘The Book of Beginnings’ is in two sections. The first one describes ‘The Symbol Dawn’, which is both the physical dawn on a particular day, this special day on which the whole of action of the poem takes place, the whole story of Savitri and Satyavan, and it is a symbol : a symbol of psychological happenings, and perhaps even of cosmic happenings – this dawn, this coming of the light into darkness, bringing the message of the supreme Light. We have Sri Aurobindo’s Gayatri mantra, where we welcome the rising sun, the sun that has not yet risen above the horizon, as the expression of the Supreme Light, and we pray to be illumined by the Truth. That is the symbol of the dawn. So in the previous session we have seen the dawn coming and we have seen Savitri waking up. She is in the forest, so there is that lovely dawn chorus of all the birds and animals waking up in the early morning. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that as Savitri wakes up, she doesn’t experience that little happiness that sets off the dawn chorus. She is in a different state altogether. He says that she is in a state of anguish: ‘*the anguish of the gods / Imprisoned in the human mould*’. All those powers that work for the coming of the light, for the progress of evolution, sometimes they feel absolutely imprisoned and hampered by our human limitations. He tells us how Savitri has come down into our world with all her divinity hoping to implant her self, her way of being, here amongst humans, so that it grows here, like a plant of earth. And just at this moment, waking up on this particular day, she is feeling all the resistance, all the impossibility, how difficult it is to get human nature to change. So here she is, as if in a trap. Sri Aurobindo says : ‘*Trapped in the gin of earthly destinies*’ – that terrible trap which holds you tight, won’t let you go, won’t let you move. She is waiting for the hour of the great testing, when she will have to face the death of Satyavan.

*A dark foreknowledge separated her  
From all of whom she was the star and stay;*

*Too great to impart the peril and the pain,  
In her torn depths she kept the grief to come.*

‘Foreknowledge’ – at the very beginning we had that word ‘foreboding’ you remember? – the feeling that something bad is approaching. Here it is not like that; here it is ‘knowing in advance’. Savitri knows, she has been told, that Satyavan must die one year after their marriage. That is the dark foreknowledge – which separates her from all the people around her. She is their star, their guarding light, she is their ‘stay’, their support. An ordinary mortal, if they had that dark foreknowledge of coming tragedy, would not be able to help sharing it around. But she has this greatness, she does not want to share that pain with anybody. ‘Impart’ means to share information with somebody, to communicate your knowledge to someone. She doesn’t want to share that danger and that pain with anyone around her. So all the grief that she knows she is going to feel when Satyavan dies, the grief that she knows others must feel when Satyavan dies, she is holding that in her deeper parts. Sri Aurobindo says that her depths are ‘torn’ – deeply wounded – she is carrying a terrible pain deep within her.

*As one who watching over men left blind  
Takes up the load of an unwitting race,  
Harbouring a foe whom with her heart she must feed,  
Unknown her act, unknown the doom she faced,  
Unhelped she must foresee and dread and dare.*

We don’t know exactly what Sri Aurobindo is referring to here in this very suggestive sentence. He says that Savitri is like somebody who is left as the guardian of a race that has become blind – they have become ignorant, without vision, without knowledge, as King Dyumatsena has lost his vision. It is symbolic. They have lost the knowledge that they should have. So if there is one guardian taking care of people like that, one person who has vision and knowledge, he has to look after a whole race of people who don’t know, who are blind. He has to take up the load, the responsibility, the burden of that race of ‘unwitting’ people – it means people without awareness: they are not aware of their mission, of their danger, they do not even know that someone is looking after

them. She is like that guardian, and at the same time, he says, she is harbouring in her heart a foe – an enemy. ‘To harbour’ means ‘to shelter’. There is an enemy deep within, eating away at her heart. And nobody knows. Her act is unknown, the doom that she is facing, nobody knows it. There is no-one to help. ‘Unhelped’ – alone, she must ‘foresee’ – she alone sees what is coming, she experiences all the ‘dread’ – the fear of that terrible thing that is going to come, and at the same time, she has to have the courage. If you dare something, something very difficult, very dangerous, you need a lot of courage and strength. So all those things: she must foresee, and dread, and dare.

*The long-foreknown and fatal morn was here  
Bringing a noon that seemed like every noon.*

So this is the morning – she has known for a long time that this morning would come, it is ‘long-foreknown’ – known in advance – and it is fatal. A fatal wound is one that kills you. This morning is fatal, because, as she alone knows, this is the morning of death. But she realises that in another way it is going to be a day like any other day. Noon is the middle of the day – this day will have a noon that seems like every other noon, as far as the rest of the world is concerned.

*For Nature walks upon her mighty way  
Unheeding when she breaks a soul, a life;  
Leaving her slain behind she travels on:  
Man only marks and God’s all-seeing eyes.*

Nature just goes on her path – ‘unheeding’: she doesn’t seem to care or even notice if somebody drops by the wayside. It is just natural for her. When the process of nature breaks a soul or a life, Nature doesn’t pay any attention, she just continues on her journey. When I say, ‘Pay heed!’ it means ‘Listen – pay attention to what I’m saying – don’t miss it.’ But nature is heedless, unheeding, she doesn’t pay any attention, when she breaks a soul or a life. Those who have died, those she has ‘slain’, the ones she has killed, she just leaves them behind and moves on her way. Who notices? Human beings notice – *Man only marks* – and God’s all-seeing eyes: God sees everything,

notices everything. Human beings are the ones who notice and who suffer as Nature moves on her way.

*Even in this moment of her soul's despair,  
In its grim rendezvous with death and fear,  
No cry broke from her lips, no call for aid;  
She told the secret of her woe to none:  
Calm was her face and courage kept her mute.*

This is such a beautiful picture of Savitri, isn't it? We can hardly imagine what she had to bear, and yet she doesn't show anything outside. Her face is calm, her courage is great enough that she doesn't break down and share her secret with anyone. Even in this moment when her soul is full of despair, feeling that her birth and her life are in vain, when her soul is meeting death and fear – a 'rendezvous' is an appointment. In French it means literally 'be there' – be at a particular place at a particular time. Savitri knows that she has an appointment to keep with death and fear. But even so, she doesn't utter a cry or a sob, she doesn't call for help, she doesn't tell the secret of her woe – her sorrow – to anyone. We had 'foe' just now – an enemy; here we have 'woe' – sorrow. '*Calm was her face and courage kept her mute*' – silent : mute means silent. She doesn't share her trouble with anyone.

*Yet only her outward self suffered and strove;  
Even her humanity was half divine:  
Her spirit opened to the Spirit in all,  
Her nature felt all Nature as its own.*

So here is this suffering woman, but this is only her outer self, her self turned outward. Even in her humanity the divinity of her inner self is very much apparent. Inwardly, her spirit is open to the one Spirit that pervades all beings, all things, the whole universe; and even her nature, the outward expression of her inner being, felt all Nature, the whole of nature, the whole manifestation, as belonging to it. That cord of sympathy is there not only on the soul-level, not only on the spirit level, but also on the nature level. Much later on in the Book of Yoga we shall come to that wonderful crowning experience that Savitri has in her yoga when she feels herself as one self in all beings, united in the omnipresence of the Divine. That is what prepares her for being able to save Satyavan.

*Apart, living within, all lives she bore;  
Aloof, she carried in herself the world:  
Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,  
Her strength was founded on the cosmic might;  
The universal Mother's love was hers.*

Earlier, Sri Aurobindo told us that Savitri was separated from all those she loved, all those who loved her, by that dark foreknowledge she was carrying within her. But here he tells us that within herself, living within herself, she is connected with all other lives. 'Aloof' – this means 'at a distance': Savitri is living in a remote hermitage in the forest, she doesn't meet many people, but in her consciousness she is carrying the whole world within her. That 'dread', the grief and fear which she is feeling, is not just an individual thing. Sri Aurobindo tells us that '*Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,*' – an individual experience of all the grief and fear that is part of universal existence; whatever that dread represents, she is carrying within herself. And she is able to do that because she also has that immortal universal strength within her. In her sense of oneness with the whole of nature, she shares the cosmic suffering; but she also carries the immortal unlimited strength – her strength is based on, founded on the universal might or powers; and that enables her to bear the *cosmic dread*. And more than all that, she is carrying within her the love of the universal Mother, to help and to save and to transform.

*Against the evil at life's afflicted roots,  
Her own calamity its private sign,  
Of her pangs she made a mystic poignant sword.*

What a wonderful three lines! Out of her pangs, her pain, Savitri creates a weapon, '*a mystic poignant sword*'. 'Poignant' means sharp, pointed, piercing. A sword needs to be sharp to be effective. But this word is more often used in a psychological sense – something that is poignant, is something that makes you feel deeply moved. And she is going to use this sword '*Against the evil at life's afflicted roots*'. Here is the image of life as a great tree, and at the roots of that tree of life there is some kind of destructive worm eating away. If you have a beautiful tree in your garden and it starts to lose its leaves and go brown and bare, if you dig down into the roots you

may find a worm there. So Savitri's own private calamity, her own personal disaster – of a woman whose dearly beloved husband is going to die in the prime of his youth, when they have been together for only one year – that is Savitri's own calamity, tragedy. But her private calamity is a sign of that evil which is at the roots of life, which is causing suffering, perversion, distortion, death at the very roots of life in the material universe. This individual pain which she is experiencing, she is not just going to collapse and weep and wail – she is turning it into a weapon which she is going to use to fight that evil at the roots of life.

*A solitary mind, a world-wide heart,  
To the lone Immortal's unshared work she rose.*

So here she is, this is Savitri. In her mind, in her knowledge, she is 'solitary' – alone – carrying a knowledge that no-one shares; but she is linked to the whole world in her heart, which is 'world-wide' – she is one with all nature, in sympathy with all beings. And as such a great being, an immortal being, she has come into the human form with a mission – she has to do her work. So now, in the early morning, as she starts to awaken and to get up, she faces that work which she alone can do – it is an *unshared work*: only she can do it. That is how she will get up on this particular morning, rising to 'the lone Immortal's unshared work'.

Then comes a wonderful long description of her waking up. It is really very special.

*At first life grieved not in her burdened breast:  
On the lap of earth's original somnolence  
Inert, released into forgetfulness,  
Prone it reposed, unconscious on mind's verge,  
Obtuse and tranquil like the stone and star.*

To start with, at the beginning of the process of waking up, the life part in her is not feeling grief, it is still sleeping, it is inert, lying on the lap of the earth – the lap of matter. The lap – it is the space on your knees and thighs when you are sitting up – it is where the mother holds her child, where you may rest your hands when sitting, and so on. The life-force in Savitri is resting on the lap of the 'original somnolence' – the sleepiness

of earth, the material principle, as if consciousness is sleeping there; and perhaps when we sleep at night, the life in us goes back to that original sleepiness of matter, as if in the lap of a mother, mother earth – but that mother is sleeping, unconscious – matter has not yet woken up, it is still in that sleepy unconscious state it has been in since the very beginning of this creation – and because the life-force is lying in the lap of matter, it is like matter : it is ‘inert’. Inertia is a basic principle of matter – matter doesn’t move until something gives it a push. So the life-force, the life-parts, when we are asleep, share that inertia of matter, they are ‘*released into forgetfulness*’. Surely at no point in her waking day does Savitri forget about the coming loss of Satyavan. But when she falls into deep sleep, the life-parts of the body, the brain, they are set free from that memory, they are able to forget. So the life is resting – ‘repose’ means ‘rest’, either as a verb, or as a noun. Here it is a verb. It is unconscious, on the very edge, the verge of mental consciousness. The life is resting, ‘prone’ – lying flat, as we do when we sleep, and it is just as ‘*obtuse and tranquil*’ as material objects such as stones and stars are. ‘Obtuse’ – we meet this word in mathematics, in geometry : where two lines or planes meet at an angle which is more than 90 degrees it is said to be ‘obtuse’, as opposed to an acute angle, which is less than 90 degrees. The acute angle looks sharp, an obtuse angle looks blunt. We use both of these words psychologically : someone who is acute is considered sharp, bright, intelligent; but if a person has difficulty in understanding things quickly, we may say that they are ‘obtuse’ – stupid. But at the same time, such people are not easily disturbed or upset, so they may seem relatively tranquil, peaceful. A stone may lie peacefully in the same place, unmoving for centuries, the stars always seem the same to us, following their courses unmoved, unchanging.

*In a deep cleft of silence twixt two realms  
She lay remote from grief, unsawn by care,  
Nothing recalling of the sorrow here.*

A cleft is a narrow place. Savitri’s life is lying in a deep cleft, an empty space, between two realms, two kingdoms – perhaps the outer awareness and the inner consciousness. There is a kind of gap between the two, ‘*a deep cleft of silence*’. ‘Twixt’ means ‘between’. Nowadays we use this word only in poetry, not in ordinary speech. In that silent space, the life is lying far away – remote – from grief,

‘*unsawn by care*’. You know what a saw is – when we want to cut a branch from a dead tree we use a saw – a metal blade with teeth. Sometimes when we have troubles and anxieties – cares, worries – it as if something is sawing away at us all the time. But when she is in that deep cleft of silence, there is no sawing going on because there is no memory, no part of her remembers the sorrow that is here in the waking world.

*Then a slow faint remembrance shadowlike moved,  
And sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom  
And recognised the close and lingering ache,  
Deep, quiet, old, made natural to its place,  
But knew not why it was there nor whence it came.*

But then memory starts to return slowly, there is a movement of consciousness; but it is faint, unclear, like a shadow. A lovely picture: she is not fully awake, but something begins to move, and with a sigh ‘*she laid her hand upon her bosom*’ – a hand moves to her heart, because something recognises that there is a pain there – an ache. It is close to her, it is lingering – it remains, it won’t go away, it is hanging close around her like a shadow, it is always there. It is not a very sharp intense pain – it is deep, quiet, old – it is ‘*made natural to its place*’: it has been there such a long time that it seems to belong there, in her bosom, her heart. But because the mind has not woken up yet, the life-force does not know why that pain is there, or where it has come from. ‘Whence’ means ‘from where’.

*The Power that kindles mind was still withdrawn:  
Heavy, unwilling were life’s servitors  
Like workers with no wages of delight;  
Sullen, the torch of sense refused to burn;  
The unassisted brain found not its past.  
Only a vague earth-nature held the frame.*

There is a Power of consciousness that ‘kindles’ mind. ‘To kindle’ means ‘to light a fire’ – here, the little fire of consciousness that is our mind. For Savitri’s body, waking up, that Power is still somewhere else. It hasn’t yet come to light the fire of mental consciousness. The servitors, the instruments of the life-force, are unwilling to start their

work. They too are in a heavy sleep, they don't want to wake up, they are like workers who have 'no wages of delight'. The senses need to have delight in order to feel motivated to work properly. If they don't get any delight, they are unwilling to work. The instruments that he mentions here are the senses and the brain. Since that Power has not yet come to light the fire of consciousness, the senses don't want to start work. Our senses provide us with a kind of light, a torch with which to see in the darkness, but that torch is refusing to light up, it is 'sullen'. A person who is sullen is not happy – they are feeling resentful and angry about something, so they are not willing to do what is expected of them. And this word can be used precisely of a fire that is unwilling to blaze up. (These lines remind me of what life used to be like in England, when the only heating was by coal or wood fires. In many stories from that time, you have the picture of the heroine sleeping, and being woken by the maid who comes to light her fire first thing in the morning. If the servants are lazy, she may sleep a long time. Sometimes the fire will not light easily, because the wood or the kindling is damp; then instead of a bright warm flame, you get a smoky 'sullen' fire that won't blaze up.) Because the senses don't light up, the physical brain has no help, no support, it still cannot remember. So in Savitri's body as she is lying there, there is only this 'vague earth-nature'. He says 'the frame' – the body: the body is the frame, the outer structure to be inhabited and used by the consciousness.

*But now she stirred, her life shared the cosmic load.  
At the summons of her body's voiceless call  
Her strong far-winging spirit travelled back,  
Back to the yoke of ignorance and fate,  
Back to the labour and stress of mortal days,  
Lighting a pathway through strange symbol dreams  
Across the ebbing of the seas of sleep.*

When she moves, when she stirs, her life is part of the universal life, the cosmic movement. And that little movement is like a call, a summons, to her spirit, her consciousness. When the body calls – summons – the consciousness, as if signalling 'Now I am moving, it is time to wake up', then 'her strong far-winging spirit' returns. It has been somewhere else, somewhere high and far away in the subtle worlds. Now it knows that it is time to return to the mortal body, so

it travels back – back to all the loads and limitations of human life. It comes back to this yoke, this load of ignorance and fate, back to the ‘*labour and stress of mortal days*’. You remember this word ‘yoke’? A yoke can be a wooden bar carried across the shoulders, joining two buckets or two baskets, so that they can be carried together. It can be the wooden frame that joins the bullock to the cart that it has to pull. The idea in this word is ‘joining’: a yoke joins two things, holds them together. And in its origin, this old English word is connected with the Sanskrit word ‘yoga’. Yoga links us to the Divine, joins us to the Divine, and eventually is meant to bring us into union with the Divine. In the Bible, we read of Jesus saying ‘My yoke is easy, my yoke is light’ – meaning that his path to the Divine was easier to follow than other paths. But usually a yoke is something heavy; when we wear it we are carrying some kind of heavy load. When Savitri’s spirit rejoins her body, it takes up again that yoke, the yoke of ignorance – of not-knowing, blindness, helplessness – and along with that the load of fate : being subject to the laws of matter, the universal laws, above all the law of death. So it is travelling back to take up that load again, that load of all the hard work, the effort, the tension, the stress, that fill our human days. On its journey back to Savitri’s body where it is waking up in that simple hut in the forest, her conscious spirit lights up a pathway ‘*through strange symbol dreams*’. Usually we remember only the dreams that come to us just before we wake up, don’t we? Perhaps these are the dreams our consciousness, our spirit, has passed through on its way back to our body when it is just waking up. That pathway gets lit up by the consciousness, ‘*across the ebbing of the seas of sleep*’. This word ‘ebbing’ is associated with the sea’s tides. The tides mount, get higher, come further up onto the land – and then the tide turns and starts to ebb: gradually the waters draw back and expose more and more of the shore. Here Sri Aurobindo says that the state of sleep is like an ocean, as if when we sleep we are submerged in an ocean; as our consciousness returns and we begin to wake up, the seas of sleep begin to ebb, and we find ourselves on the shore of another day.

*Her house of Nature felt an unseen sway,  
Illumined swiftly were life’s darkened rooms,  
And memory’s casements opened on the hours  
And the tired feet of thought approached her doors.*

When her spirit comes back, this house of Nature – her human body and the life in it, the frame that belongs to the earth – feels ‘*an unseen sway*’. ‘Sway’ here means ‘rule’ or ‘influence’. We say that a ruler, a king ‘holds sway’ over his country – he commands what happens there. So this body that has been left to itself, now feels that the ruling spirit has returned and is in command. And immediately all the dark rooms in the house light up, and the brain remembers. ‘*Memory’s casements*’ – casements are windows.

In that picture I gave you before, of the maids going around the house in the early morning trying to light the fires, so that the people can wake and get up – the very next thing that they do is to open up the curtains to let the light in, and open the windows. The windows open onto the world outside the house, beyond the body itself – they let it know where it stands in relation to the world around, and to the passing of time. So when we wake up, it may take a few moments for us to remember where we are and why and what day it is and what we have to do. With memory, thought comes back – the mental being also has been wandering while the body and brain slept. But it doesn’t have strong far-flying wings like the spirit, the higher consciousness – it has tired feet, weary feet.

*All came back to her: Earth and Love and Doom,  
The ancient disputants, encircled her  
Like giant figures wrestling in the night:*

When memory’s casements open, everything comes back to her – she remembers where she is, what day it is, what is going to happen. And then she is surrounded by these presences, ‘*Like giant figures wrestling in the night*’. They are struggling and fighting in the darkness, encircling her – she is at the centre of their struggle. Earth : Savitri has come to save the earth and men, but Earth also represents all the resistances of Matter; Love : she has come embodying Divine Love – the love that longs to save; and she is in love with Satyavan, who represents the soul of mankind; but because all this is being acted out in the human world, she and the earth and Satyavan all seem to be threatened by Doom – the law of Death. And this is not just a personal struggle for two human beings – these are great cosmic principles and they are ‘*ancient disputants*’ – they have been wrestling, opposing each other, trying to gain the upper hand, for a very long time.

*The godheads from the dim Inconscient born  
Awoke to struggle and the pang divine,  
And in the shadow of her flaming heart,  
At the sombre centre of the dire debate,  
A guardian of the unconsoled abyss  
Inheriting the long agony of the globe,  
A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain  
Stared into Space with fixed regardless eyes  
That saw grief's timeless depths but not life's goal.*

So these 'giant figures' – Earth and Love and Doom – Sri Aurobindo says, are 'godheads' – individualised aspects of the Supreme – that have been born from the 'dim Inconscient', from the darkness, from the night. Now as Savitri wakes up, they wake up too – to their struggle, and to the 'pang divine' – the divine pain – the pain of divided consciousness, the pain of love in the ignorance. And he speaks of Savitri's heart as 'flaming' – like a fire : full of heat and light and energy and purifying intensity. A fire in the darkness is surrounded by shadows: in the shadow of her heart lies the sombre – dark – centre of that dreadful struggle, that 'dire debate' which is going on and on between those giant figures. At the centre of that darkness and that debate there is another godhead : 'A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain' – like a statue of Pain. There is something noble about it, it is 'high' and 'godlike'. It is a guardian, it is guarding something, keeping something safe – *the unconsoled abyss* : all the deep darkness that has never been touched by light and love and comfort. 'To console' someone means to comfort them, to give them sympathy, help them to bear their troubles; but we can only console someone by taking away their grief. But in the lower depths there is so much suffering, so much grief that is 'unconsoled'. This figure is the guardian and representative of all that. It has inherited 'the long agony of the globe' – all the suffering that has been on our earth since the very beginning. There he is, staring into Space 'with fixed regardless eyes'. It means eyes that are not really looking. Here Sri Aurobindo is using the French sense of the word 'regard' meaning a look, a gaze, a way of seeing. These eyes do not see properly, they can only see the timeless depths of grief. They do not see where life is going to, what is the goal towards which all

this suffering is leading. That might make it all worthwhile, might console him – but he cannot see life’s goal.

*Afflicted by his harsh divinity,  
Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased  
The daily oblation of her unwept tears.*

So he is a divinity, a divine being, this figure of Pain, but it is a harsh, painful divinity, and he suffers from it, he is afflicted by it; and it is as if he is tied or chained to his throne, he cannot escape from it. He is waiting for the ‘*daily oblation*’ – the daily offering or sacrifice of Savitri’s tears – the tears that she will not weep, that she will not let anyone see, the tears that express her suffering – that is the worship, the offering that he is waiting for, ‘*unappeased*’ – unsatisfied. Certain kinds of painful sacrifices are made in the hope of ‘appeasing’ some high being who is displeased with you for some reason. When you have performed your penance long enough, you can be forgiven or spared the results of that displeasure. But here Sri Aurobindo suggests that this guardian of the world’s pain cannot be satisfied – however many unwept tears Savitri suffers or offers, for however many days, it will not be enough to satisfy that being of Pain.

*All the fierce question of man’s hours relived.  
The sacrifice of suffering and desire  
Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy  
Began again beneath the eternal Hand.*

‘*All the fierce question ...*’ – Why are we here? And if we are here, why must it be so painful? When she wakes up, this general riddle of human life is there, this question becomes alive again; and it is a ‘*fierce question*’ – a question that is full of intensity, even of anger : ‘Why? Why? Why must it be like this?’

Then Sri Aurobindo says that all this suffering and desire which human beings experience is a sacrifice – an offering – that ‘*Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy*’ – the immortal Delight, the Ananda of the Supreme. Earth is offering this special kind of delight, of *rasa*, a mixture of suffering and desire, to the infinite ananda which upholds the universe. All that begins again, with everyone waking up in the first

light of day. It is not just all these little lives; embodied in Savitri is the awareness of just where we are in evolution and all the difficulties of this state. And above there is the eternal Hand saying 'Yes' to all this.

*Awake she endured the moments' serried march  
And looked on this green smiling dangerous world,  
And heard the ignorant cry of living things.*

So now she is fully awake. And once she is awake, she is enduring, she has to bear the pain of '*the moments' serried march*'. Once she is in the flow of time, one after another the moments come, with no spaces between them. 'Serried' means 'packed closely together'. So the moments are marching on like an army, in close ranks, and they are moving on and on – towards that terrible moment when Satyavan must die. She has to endure this. She opens her eyes and looks out at the forest around her, the beautiful green smiling world that is also so full of danger. She hears all those animals and birds calling out, acclaiming their portion of ephemeral joy – '*the ignorant cry of living things*.'

*Amid the trivial sounds, the unchanging scene  
Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate.*

There she is, awake, surrounded by all those sounds of the forest in the morning – '*the trivial sounds*' – those sounds are unimportant, not very significant; '*the unchanging scene*' – what she can see is what she sees every day, it is the same as always. But today her soul sits up, stands up erect, '*confronting Time and Fate*'. 'Confronting' means looking something directly in the face, ready to deal with it. Her soul knows that today she will have to face Time – the outcome of the unstoppable passage of time, and Fate – the events that the forward movement of time is inevitably going to bring.

*Immobile in herself, she gathered force.  
This was the day when Satyavan must die.*

She is gathering force, her own strength, her soul-strength, whatever strength she can draw from the universal force – she is immobile, unmoving – because she knows that this is the day. She has been counting the days: this is the day – the day when Satyavan must die. It is fixed, destined, cannot be avoided. This is the Fate, the Doom she must confront in order to fulfil her mission.

# *Savitri* – the legend and the symbol

by *Shraddhavan*

Among other comments on *Savitri* the Mother has noted that Sri Aurobindo's epic contains:

- 1) The daily record of the spiritual experiences of the individual who has written.
- 2) A complete system of yoga which can serve as a guide for those who want to follow the integral sadhana.
- 3) The yoga of the Earth in its ascension towards the Divine.
- 4) The experiences of the Divine Mother in her effort to adapt herself to the body she has taken and the ignorance and the falsity of the earth upon which she has incarnated.

The first of these points obviously refers to the experiences of Sri Aurobindo – 'the individual who has written'. This note from the Mother clearly indicates that *Savitri* is not only '*the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision*'; it is not only a theoretical and imaginative account, but one based on his own experiences and those of the Mother. It is a record of spiritual experience and as such, the Mother has warned, cannot be truly understood by anyone who has not shared these and similar experiences.

At the same time, with the title he has given to his poem – '*Savitri : a legend and a symbol*' – Sri Aurobindo has indicated that there is a connection between it and the well-known legend which he has taken as its suggestive starting point.

In reply to a question of Nirod during a talk of January 3, 1939 Sri Aurobindo stated :

NIRODBARAN : Has your own epic *Savitri* anything to do with the Mahabharata story?

SRI AUROBINDO : Not really. Only the clue is taken from the Mahabharata. My story is symbolic. I believe that originally

the Mahabharata story was also symbolic, but it has been made into a tale of conjugal fidelity.

NIRODBARAN : What is your symbolism?

SRI AUROBINDO : Well, Satyavan, whom Savitri marries, is the symbol of the soul descended into the Kingdom of Death, and Savitri, who is, as you know, the Goddess of Divine Light and Knowledge, comes down to redeem Satyavan from Death's grasp. Aswapati, the father of Savitri, is the Lord of Energy. Dyumatsena is 'one who has the shining hosts.' It is all inner movement, nothing much as regards outward action.

The poem opens with the Dawn. Savitri awakes on the day of destiny, the day when Satyavan has to die. The birth of Savitri is a boon of the Supreme Goddess given to Aswapati. Aswapati is the Yogi who seeks the means to deliver the world out of Ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo has outlined the nature of this relationship between the Mahabharata legend and his own epic again in his 'Author's Note' which prefaces the latest editions of the poem. There he states :

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

This is how the legend is popularly remembered and still celebrated annually in many Indian households : married women fast on the traditional date and offer prayers for the well-being and long life of their husbands. As such, the story has many features of a fairy-tale: the beautiful princess is sent out by her father to find a mate, meets an exiled prince in the forest and chooses him as her husband; but when she returns to inform her parents of her choice, she is told by a wise man that although the prince she has chosen has all the virtues of a future king, he has one terrible defect – he is fated to die in a year's time. The parents try to dissuade their daughter from proceeding with the marriage, but she insists that her choice once given cannot be changed, so she is given to her new parents-in-law and goes to share their exile in the forest. As the day of her

husband's fated death draws near the princess undertakes a vow to pursue a tremendously severe ascetic discipline: for three days and nights she will stand unmoving on one spot, neither sleeping nor taking any food. Though her parents-in-law at first try to dissuade her, she successfully fulfils her vow. On the fated day, she requests permission from her mother-in-law to accompany her husband for the first time when he goes into the forest to do his daily work of collecting wood. When the permission is granted, she seeks blessings from the sages living round about, and they wish her that she may never be a widow. Then princess Savitri and her husband Satyavan go into the forest together. As he is going about his work, at noontime – the hottest time of day on the hottest day of the year – his doom overtakes him: the god of death himself, Lord Yama, comes to separate his soul from his body. But by her great tapasya, Savitri has gained the capacity to follow the soul of her husband as he is led into the subtle worlds by the god. Yama tries to persuade her to return to the earth, but with wise words she wins his approval. Pleased with her conduct and her words he grants her boons, one after the other. But still she does not return. Finally he is won over by her wisdom and her pleasing speech, and allows her to take the soul of Satyavan back to the human world. Among the boons granted by the god is the return of sight and kingdom to Satyavan's blind and exiled father. The story ends with all of them leaving the forest and returning to rule a great kingdom.

Sri Aurobindo saw in this charming legend a much deeper significance. He says :

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

And he gives a key to its symbolism by referring to each of the main characters by name.

Satyavan's name means 'One who possesses the Truth'. Of him, Sri Aurobindo says :

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

Then :

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

In the legend, the princess is born in answer to the prayers of her father the King. Every King has the duty to father as many sons as possible in order to carry on his line and maintain stability in his realm. In the Mahabharata tale, he is described as a righteous ruler who, finding himself without children, undertakes a strenuous discipline of worship to the goddess Savitri, the wife and shakti of Brahma, the Creator. After 18 years, the goddess blesses him with the gift of a daughter – not the many sons he had hoped for; but she tells him that he should accept this gift gratefully, since it is the gift of Brahma himself and will bring him many blessings. When the girl-child is born she is named after the goddess. The King's name is Aswapati, which means 'Horse-Lord'. In the Vedic symbolism the horse stands for life-energy. One who has mastered all his life energies can fitly be called by this name. Sri Aurobindo says :

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

While in the legend he is simply shown as a righteous king, concerned about the welfare of his people, in Sri Aurobindo's epic he is shown in a way that brings out the deeper significance of his name and his symbolic role – as we shall see later.

The name of the other king, Satyavan's father, is also symbolic and deeply suggestive. Sri Aurobindo says of him :

Dyumatsena, 'Lord of the Shining Hosts' [or armies], father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of glory.

(In the legend, through the boons granted to Savitri by Yama, Dyumatsena regains both his sight and his kingdom, while her father Aswapati is blessed with a hundred sons.)

Sri Aurobindo continues:

Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of

living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and an immortal life.

Sri Aurobindo takes the legend as the starting-point and framework of his epic, but has chosen to expand and elaborate it enormously, focussing on its deep underlying mythic symbolism to make it the vehicle of his vision and his message. As he mentioned in reply to Nirodbaran, his poem '*is all inner movement, nothing much as regards outward action.*' Nevertheless, traces of the legendary framework are more or less noticeable in the course of the poem.

In contrast to the 300 spare verses of Vyasa's narration, Sri Aurobindo's epic runs to almost 24,000 lines, divided into 12 Books, comprising 49 Cantos and grouped into three Parts. Part One covers Books One, Two and Three – The Book of Beginnings, The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, and The Book of the Divine Mother. Apart from the first two introductory cantos, from Canto Three of Book One onwards the whole of Part One corresponds to the 18 years of tapasya undertaken by the legendary king in order to gain progeny.

Part Two contains Book Four – the Book of Birth and Quest, Book Five – The Book of Love, Book Six – The Book of Fate, Book Seven – The Book of Yoga, and Book Eight – The Book of Death. It is in this Part that the traditional legend is most prominent, for it tells of the birth and youth of Savitri, of her being sent out by her father in quest of her life partner, of her meeting with Satyavan in the forest, her return to her father's palace where the prophecy of Satyavan's death is given by Narad, her marriage and her self-preparation for the death of Satyavan, and then the meeting with Death in the forest on the destined day. But even in this Part Sri Aurobindo makes considerable departures from the Mahabharata version of the tale.

Part Three consists of a huge expansion of the conversation between Savitri and Death as she follows Satyavan's soul into the other worlds, with Book Nine – The Book of Everlasting Night, Book Ten – The Book of the Double Twilight, and Book Eleven – The Book of Everlasting Day. These are followed by Book Twelve, the Epilogue, a single canto entitled 'The Return to Earth' where Satyavan awakes in the forest, the lovers return to the hermitage, and are met on the

way by Dyumatsena, no longer blind, and a huge retinue who have come to call him back to his kingdom. But even here, Sri Aurobindo does not follow the course of the traditional tale exactly.

A master craftsman making use of the legend as a framework for his own creative purposes, throughout his poem he varies the details of the Mahabharata version, elaborating them in his own way or omitting them entirely when it suits his intention.

In Part One, the framework tale is only alluded to occasionally – Sri Aurobindo takes it for granted that we have it in our minds, and that we do not need to be reminded of the details. He does not begin at the beginning, as Vyasa does with a depiction of the pious King, desirous of children, devotedly performing worship to the Goddess Savitri for 18 years in the hope of gaining progeny. Sri Aurobindo opens his epic with a mighty overture: a powerful symbolic evocation of darkness giving way to dawn – a psychological darkness full of resistance to change, being conquered by a prophetic power of divine light, which gives way in turn to ‘*the common light of earthly day*’. As the earth wakes up to the call of the Sun, Savitri is shown awaking on ‘*the day when Satyavan must die*’. We are right in the middle of the story already, and her awakening is described in deeply suggestive psychological terms that show already her extraordinariness, her divinity. This is elaborated further in the second canto, which reveals in more detail her more-than-human nature and the profound significance of her mission. This is an example of how Sri Aurobindo presents the characters of the traditional tale in ways that bring out the deeper symbolic significances of their names and their roles. For example, in a letter of 1936 he wrote :

Savitri is represented in the poem as an incarnation of the Divine Mother .... This incarnation is supposed to have taken place in far past times when the whole thing had to be opened, so as to “hew the ways of Immortality”. (p.729)

This is the role that he gives to his heroine: his Savitri has all the qualities of the ‘*sukanya*’ – the virtuous princess of the legend – but also much more. In the introductory second canto of his poem he defines her mission :

To wrestle with the Shadow she had come  
And must confront the riddle of man’s birth

And life's brief struggle in dumb Matter's night.  
Whether to bear with Ignorance and death  
Or hew the ways of Immortality,  
To win or lose the godlike game for man,  
Was her soul's issue thrown with Destiny's dice.

This is a very different Savitri from Vyasa's. Sri Aurobindo introduces his Savitri in the first and second cantos of the poem, showing her waking up beside her sleeping husband in the early morning of the day when, as she alone knows, '*Satyavan must die*' – remembering all that has led up to this day of fate, and confronting her mission, knowing what she has to face in the course of the day ahead.

A key memory that comes to her is of her first meeting in the forest with Satyavan – but he is not named at this point. Sri Aurobindo writes:

Here with the suddenness divine advents have,  
Repeating the marvel of the first descent,  
Changing to rapture the dull earthly round,  
Love came to her hiding the shadow, Death.  
Well might he find in her his perfect shrine.

It is often asked 'Who is this 'he'?' Sri Aurobindo's imagery in the following lines makes it clear that this is Love – the god of Love.

Since first the earth-being's heavenward growth began,  
Through all the long ordeal of the race,  
Never a rarer creature bore his shaft,  
That burning test of the godhead in our parts,  
A lightning from the heights on our abyss.

In western art, the god of Love is often shown with a bow and arrow – whoever he strikes with his arrow (his shaft) falls in love. But here Sri Aurobindo is speaking of the original Love, divine Love. At the moment when Savitri sees Satyavan with the eyes of her soul, this power of Love comes into action. And Sri Aurobindo tells us that she is perfectly fitted to house this divine principle, this god: "*Well might he find in her his perfect shrine.*" A shrine is a place where a god can live. Then in one of the best-loved passages of the poem, fifty-seven lines of supreme poetry, he reveals why and how his heroine is the perfect vessel for Divine Love.

All in her pointed to a nobler kind.

Everything about her seems to prefigure a more-than-human perfection, the qualities of a nobler and higher race. There has never been, he says, since the beginning of humanity, '*Since first the earth-being's heavenward growth began,*' or throughout its history, '*Through all the long ordeal of the race,*' 'a rarer creature' than Savitri, one who is most fitted to bear the arrow of Love, which he says is '*A lightning from the heights on our abyss*' and a '*burning test of the godhead in our parts*' – a test of the divinity of our nature, our natural parts.

Sri Aurobindo goes on to describe the 'parts' of Savitri: her spirit, her will, her mind, her heart, her body, her movements and appearance, her behaviour and character.

Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,  
Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit  
Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm  
Overflow the ways of Thought to unborn things.

Ardent was her self-poised un stumbling will;

Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,  
Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.

As in a mystic and dynamic dance  
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies  
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault  
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,  
A heart of silence in the hands of joy  
Inhabited with rich creative beats  
A body like a parable of dawn  
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity  
Or golden temple-door to things beyond.

Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;  
Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense  
Even in earth-stuff, and their intense delight  
Poured a supernal beauty on men's lives.

A wide self-giving was her native act;  
A magnanimity as of sea or sky

Enveloped with its greatness all that came  
And gave a sense as of a greatened world:  
Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun,  
Her high passion a blue heaven's equipose.

As might a soul fly like a hunted bird,  
Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms,  
And a quiet reach like a remembered breast,  
In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose  
One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,  
Recover the lost habit of happiness,  
Feel her bright nature's glorious ambience,  
And preen joy in her warmth and colour's rule.

A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,  
Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven;  
Love in her was wider than the universe,  
The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.

And then Sri Aurobindo returns to the god of Love :

The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell:  
Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air,  
Her mood could harbour his sublimer breath  
Spiritual that can make all things divine.  
For even her gulfs were secrecies of light.  
At once she was the stillness and the word,  
A continent of self-diffusing peace,  
An ocean of untrembling virgin fire;  
The strength, the silence of the gods were hers.  
In her he found a vastness like his own,  
His high warm subtle ether he refound  
And moved in her as in his natural home.  
In her he met his own eternity.

*p.14-15*

Although Sri Aurobindo shows his heroine in all her human loveliness, he also makes it clear that she is much more than a beautiful and well brought-up princess – not simply the '*sukanya*' of Vyasa's tale, but an emanation of the Supreme Mother in her aspect of Love who has

consented to take human birth in order to save the soul of humanity represented by Satyavan<sup>1</sup>.

This is a literal reading of the famous passage. But the great advantage of poetry as a means of expressing psychological depths and subtleties is that it can suggest to us multiple layers of meaning at the same time. Sri Aurobindo, master poet, has taken full advantage of this possibility of poetic expression in his epic, carrying it to a supreme height. In this passage for example, we cannot help reading – along with the literal sense – Sri Aurobindo’s portrait of the Mother, and his own feelings about her and relation to her.

In the closing lines of Canto Two Sri Aurobindo reveals that Savitri will succeed in her mission – the course of the tale is already decided:

The great World-Mother now in her arose:  
A living choice reversed fate’s cold dead turn,  
Affirmed the spirit’s tread on Circumstance,  
Pressed back the senseless dire revolving Wheel  
And stopped the mute march of Necessity.  
A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks  
Empowered to force the door denied and closed  
Smote from Death’s visage its dumb absolute  
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time. p.21

In Sri Aurobindo’s symbolic retelling of the ancient Vedic myth, it is only in the third canto that we are introduced to the one who has brought about the human birth of this incarnation of the Divine Mother. He too is immediately shown to be much more than the pious king of the Mahabharata version. The character of Aswapati in Sri Aurobindo’s poem is shown very differently from the legendary

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1 When, at the very end of the poem, Savitri is asked :  
*“O woman soul, what light, what power revealed,  
Working the rapid marvels of this day,  
Opens for us by thee a happier age?”*  
She answers :  
*“Awakened to the meaning of my heart  
That to feel love and oneness is to live  
And this the magic of our golden change,  
Is all the truth I know or seek, O sage.”* (p. 723-24)

father of princess Savitri as described by Vyasa. This is clear from the first lines where he is introduced to us. After showing the triumph of Savitri as the World-Mother in those resounding lines at the end of Canto Two, in the first line of Canto Three Sri Aurobindo tells us that Savitri has been born in response to the need, the desire, the longing, the aspiration, of the whole world :

A world's desire compelled her mortal birth. p.22

Then follows the description of the one who has represented and embodied this need and aspiration :

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.  
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. p.22

Commenting on these lines and following ones, the Mother has said :

This is the description of the One through whom Savitri was born. Sri Aurobindo says that it is through the intermediary of somebody who did not belong to the earth but came from the higher and freer regions. ... This is the description of one of those who are not purely human, but whose origin is far higher, far greater, and whose 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<sup>1</sup>.

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1 *About Savitri Part Three*

The 18 years of tapasya mentioned in Vyasa's tale are paralleled in Sri Aurobindo's epic by eighteen cantos : Cantos Three, Four and Five of Book One, and the fifteen Cantos of Book Two – The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds; plus the four cantos of Book Three – The Book of the Divine Mother, where Aswapati's yoga crowned by the vision that is granted to him of The House of the Spirit and the New Creation, and finally by the Vision of the Supreme Divine Mother herself, their colloquy, and the granting of the Boon.<sup>1</sup> I suppose that the number 18 must be symbolic. We could see it perhaps as 3 times 6 – 6 being the number of creation – possibly representing 3 levels of siddhi. In a letter to Amal Kiran, Sri Aurobindo has said that in his poem Aswapati's yoga falls into three parts or stages :

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.

*Savitri p.778*

The legendary king's longing for sons to carry on his line and continue his rule has been transmuted, by Sri Aurobindo's symbolic understanding of the myth, into the aspiration of a highly evolved soul who has come on earth for a high purpose: '*to help the whole of humanity to rise towards the highest Consciousness*' as the Mother says. This aspiration is shown as being formed in Canto Five of Book One.

In the same letter to Amal Kiran, Sri Aurobindo says :

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1 It is here in the final canto of Book Three that Aswapati is named for the first time. The name appears just 8 times in the poem. All the other occurrences are in Part Two – the Part where the 'legend' is most prominent: once in Book Four, and the rest in Book Six, in the course of the dramatic exchanges with Narad.

As to the title of the three cantos about the Yoga of the King<sup>1</sup>, 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 ....

With the ‘*soul’s release*’ Aswapati is led to the ‘*secret knowledge*’ described in Canto Four. In the first line of Canto Five we are told :

This knowledge first he had of time-born men.

Of all human beings, he was the first to whom this secret knowledge was revealed – the knowledge which was later expressed by the rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads. We must remember that :

This ... is supposed to have taken place in far past times when the whole thing had to be opened, so as to “hew the ways of Immortality”<sup>2</sup>.

As a result of this secret knowledge, in the second section of Canto Five, King Aswapati – ‘*the Yogi who seeks the means to deliver the world out of ignorance*’ – is shown conceiving the immense aspiration which is the motive for all the rest of his quest, and which leads eventually to his meeting with the Supreme Divine Mother and her granting him the boon of the birth of Savitri.

A Will, a hope immense now seized his heart,  
And to discern the superhuman’s form  
He raised his eyes to unseen spiritual heights,  
Aspiring to bring down a greater world.  
The glory he had glimpsed must be his home.

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1 Book I, Canto 3: The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul’s Release; Canto 4: The Secret Knowledge. Canto 5: The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Spirit’s Freedom and Greatness.

2 *Savitri*, p. 729

A brighter heavenlier sun must soon illumine  
 This dusk room with its dark internal stair,  
 The infant soul in its small nursery school  
 Mid objects meant for a lesson hardly learned  
 Outgrow its early grammar of intellect  
 And its imitation of Earth-Nature's art,  
 Its earthly dialect to God-language change,  
 In living symbols study Reality  
 And learn the logic of the Infinite.  
 The Ideal must be Nature's common truth,  
 The body illumined with the indwelling God,  
 The heart and mind feel one with all that is,  
 A conscious soul live in a conscious world.

p.76-77

Of course this is a formulation of Sri Aurobindo's own aim, and it has become almost a commonplace of *Savitri*-commentary to say that Aswapati's yoga, as it is shown in Part One of the poem – almost a half of the entire epic and the part of it on which Sri Aurobindo is thought to have lavished the most concentrated attention, revising it repeatedly over a period of more than 20 years before its publication in 1950 – can be seen as Sri Aurobindo's spiritual autobiography. And just as devotees and *Savitri*-lovers identify the figure of Savitri with the Mother, Sri Aurobindo is identified with King Aswapati – for what greater embodiment of that concentrated energy, that yogic aspiration to deliver the world, has there ever been than the Master himself?

Nevertheless, I think that we need to be careful to avoid making this identification too literal. Once when I wrote 'Aswapati can be seen as Sri Aurobindo himself' my beloved teacher Amal Kiran corrected me by adding the words 'an aspect of' before Sri Aurobindo's name. Yes, Sri Aurobindo's Aswapati is an embodiment of '*the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes*'. And in the conversation of January 1939 that we saw above<sup>1</sup>, Sri Aurobindo has spoken of him thus:

Aswapati, the father of Savitri, is the Lord of Energy. ...  
 The birth of Savitri is a boon of the Supreme Goddess given

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1 *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, January 3, 1939.

to Aswapati. Aswapati is the Yogi who seeks the means to deliver the world out of ignorance.

As Sri Aurobindo puts it in his Author's Note, the personages of his poem are:

‘incarnations and emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life.’

Undoubtedly the yoga of Aswapati must be based on and authenticated by Sri Aurobindo's own experiences – as also on experiences of the Mother<sup>1</sup>. And we should not forget that the whole poem – and not the description of a particular character only – is an expression of Sri Aurobindo's vision and experience – according to the Mother ‘the supreme revelation’ of his vision and his message. Whatever is contained in this supreme revelation, this supreme achievement of spiritual poetry, is the product of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness.

But so far as we can tell from what Sri Aurobindo has revealed about the course of his own sadhana, it did not follow exactly the orderly scheme he has shown for his Aswapati. Instead, what he has told us about his first – and to him entirely unexpected and unsought-for – major spiritual realisation, is paralleled in the poem in most detail in Cantos Six and Seven of Book Seven, as a stage – and not the first – of Savitri's yoga.

We should note too that in Sri Aurobindo's poem Aswapati's quest is not ultimately fully successful: he does not win from the Mother the boon that is in his heart – of transformation ‘for earth and men’<sup>2</sup> – but instead, the gift of a daughter who will be an emanation of the Mother herself missioned to hasten the fulfilment he longs for. Paralleling the legend, in Sri Aurobindo's poem too it is Savitri who ultimately fulfils the quest of Aswapati. Sri

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1 She has stated to Mona Sarkar and others that she found many of her own experiences, which she had never related to Sri Aurobindo, expressed in *Savitri*.

2 The deeper mythic significance of the ‘100 sons’ wished for by the legendary king.

Aurobindo shows that his role is to represent ‘*a world’s desire*’ – the human world’s need for deliverance from Ignorance and Death – and by the purity, intensity, and sustained determination of his aspiration to compel the mortal birth of the Divine Mother herself, thus helping to lift the whole of humanity towards the higher consciousness.

According to our current understanding, the roles of the joint work of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were not successive in this way, but complementary throughout.

If Aswapati can be seen as ‘an aspect of’ Sri Aurobindo himself, we find another aspect of him portrayed in Satyavan – the lover-poet. In the traditional tale it is mentioned that he was an artist who loved to portray horses. Sri Aurobindo has elaborated on this hint, showing the prince who has been taken at an early age from the palace and brought up in the forest as a young man who is not only outstandingly handsome, but also has deeper than ordinary perceptions which can enable him to say to Savitri:

Long have I travelled with my pilgrim soul  
Moved by the marvel of familiar things.  
Earth could not hide from me the powers she veils:  
Even though moving mid an earthly scene  
And the common surfaces of terrestrial things,  
My vision saw unblinded by her forms;  
The Godhead looked at me from familiar scenes.  
I witnessed the virgin bridals of the dawn  
Behind the glowing curtains of the sky  
Or vying in joy with the bright morning’s steps  
I paced along the slumbrous coasts of noon,  
Or the gold desert of the sunlight crossed  
Traversing great wastes of splendour and of fire,  
Or met the moon gliding amazed through heaven  
In the uncertain wideness of the night,  
Or the stars marched on their long sentinel routes  
Pointing their spears through the infinitudes:  
The day and dusk revealed to me hidden shapes;  
Figures have come to me from secret shores  
And happy faces looked from ray and flame.

I have heard strange voices cross the ether's waves,  
The Centaur's wizard song has thrilled my ear;  
I have glimpsed the Apsaras bathing in the pools,  
I have seen the wood-nymphs peering through the leaves;  
The winds have shown to me their trampling lords,  
I have beheld the princes of the Sun  
Burning in thousand-pillared homes of light.

*p.400*

The neighing pride of rapid life that roams  
Wind-maned through our pastures, on my seeing mood  
Cast shapes of swiftmess; trooping spotted deer  
Against the vesper sky became a song  
Of evening to the silence of my soul.  
I caught for some eternal eye the sudden  
King-fisher flashing to a darkling pool;  
A slow swan silvering the azure lake,  
A shape of magic whiteness, sailed through dream;  
Leaves trembling with the passion of the wind,  
Pranked butterflies, the conscious flowers of air,  
And wandering wings in blue infinity  
Lived on the tablets of my inner sight;

Mountains and trees stood there like thoughts from God.  
The brilliant long-bills in their vivid dress,  
The peacock scattering on the breeze his moons  
Painted my memory like a frescoed wall.  
I carved my vision out of wood and stone;  
I caught the echoes of a word supreme  
And metred the rhythm-beats of infinity  
And listened through music for the eternal Voice.

*p.404-05*

And :

“I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs  
And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice.  
The child of the Void shall be reborn in God,  
My Matter shall evade the Inconscient's trance.  
My body like my spirit shall be free.  
It shall escape from Death and Ignorance.”

*p.406*

In superb lyrical poetry, Sri Aurobindo has brought out much that was hardly even hinted at in Vyasa's version. He has seen the full potential of the Vedic myth that lay behind the Mahabharata tale and expressed it with epic fullness. There is also the long description given by Narad in Book Six<sup>1</sup> of all the outstanding virtues and qualities of Satyavan – one which in a way parallels that of Savitri in Book One Canto Two.

But Satyavan is much more than this. This is simply his '*human outside*'. It is in the later books of the poem that his full significance is brought out more completely. Here, in Book Five – The Book of Love, it is only hinted at in two lines at the end of Canto Three:

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

p.411

The coming together of Satyavan – '*the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance*', '*the symbol of the soul descended into the Kingdom of Death*' and Savitri – '*the incarnate Light, the Sun Goddess*', '*the Goddess of Divine Light and Knowledge*', '*the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save*' – marks the beginning of '*a greater age*'. Here we cannot help seeing '*the united Two*' as representing Sri Aurobindo and the Mother themselves and their joint mission.

This identification becomes yet clearer and more striking in Part Three. There Satyavan is first repeatedly referred to as '*luminous Satyavan*'. Then Savitri tells Death :

O Death, not for my heart's sweet poignancy  
Nor for my happy body's bliss alone  
I have claimed from thee the living Satyavan,  
But for his work and mine, our sacred charge.  
Our lives are God's messengers beneath the stars;  
To dwell under death's shadow they have come  
Tempting God's light to earth for the ignorant race,  
His love to fill the hollow in men's hearts,

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1 Pages 429-31

His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world.  
For I, the woman, am the force of God,  
He the Eternal's delegate soul in man.

p.633

and :

Release the soul of the world called Satyavan  
Freed from thy clutch of pain and ignorance  
That he may stand master of life and fate,  
Man's representative in the house of God,  
The mate of Wisdom and the spouse of Light,  
The eternal bridegroom of the eternal bride.

p. 666

In Book Eleven we read Savitri speaking to the Supreme:

I know that I can lift man's soul to God,  
I know that he can bring the Immortal down.

p.687

And finally comes the great Sanction :

Descend to life with him thy heart desires.  
O Satyavan, O luminous Savitri,  
I sent you forth of old beneath the stars,  
A dual power of God in an ignorant world,  
In a hedged creation shut from limitless self,  
Bringing down God to the insentient globe,  
Lifting earth-beings to immortality.

p.702

He is my soul that climbs from nescient Night  
Through life and mind and supernature's Vast  
To the supernal light of Timelessness  
And my eternity hid in moving Time  
And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space. ...  
He is my soul that gropes out of the beast  
To reach humanity's heights of lucent thought  
And the vicinity of Truth's sublime.  
He is the godhead growing in human lives  
And in the body of earth-being's forms:  
He is the soul of man climbing to God  
In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance.

p.702-03

This is followed by the prophecy of how, '*in the march of all-fulfilling Time*', the promised fulfilment will come about '*for earth and men*' :

But when the hour of the Divine draws near  
The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time  
And God be born into the human clay  
In forms made ready by your human lives.

Then shall the Truth supreme be given to men:  
There is a being beyond the being of mind,  
An Immeasurable cast into many forms,  
A miracle of the multitudinous One,  
There is a consciousness mind cannot touch,  
Its speech cannot utter nor its thought reveal.  
It has no home on earth, no centre in man,  
Yet is the source of all things thought and done,  
The fount of the creation and its works,  
It is the origin of all truth here, ...

The incarnate dual Power shall open God's door,  
Eternal supermind touch earthly Time.

p.705

If Savitri is the embodiment of the Divine Mother and thus to be identified with our beloved Mother, who is her partner and companion, the other half of '*the incarnate dual Power*', but Sri Aurobindo himself?

In Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, the other king, Dyumatsena, Satyavan's father, appears only in the 'legend' sections of the poem: in Canto One of Book Seven, and in the Epilogue, where the traditional tale takes prominence over the symbol aspect. So we do not see this character developed symbolically by Sri Aurobindo to the same extent as those of Savitri, Aswapati, Satyavan, and even Narad have been.

But one crucial character from the tale is shown more differently in the epic than all the rest, and that is the character of Death. This will be taken up and explored in our next issue.

(to be concluded)



*Mudra-chi is a combination of movements and mantras invoking The Mother and Sri Aurobindo developed by Anandi Fernandes from Argentina. In the background can be seen a glimpse of 'Presence', an exceptionally beautiful exhibition of paintings and collages made by Jyoti Khare, using pieces of dresses worn by the Mother.*



*On February 25, 2012, Richard Pearson from the Ashram, gave a talk on 'The Mother and Flowers'.*

# News of Savitri Bhavan

## *Calendar of Events* November 2011 – March 2012

### **Current weekly schedule of Regular Activities**

- Sundays 10.30-12 noon Savitri Study Circle  
5-6 pm *The Practice of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga – Human Unity*, led by Professor Kittu Reddy
- Mondays 4.30-5.45 pm *Spoken English Practice* with texts of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, led by Patricia  
5-6 pm On *The Mother*, led by Dr. Ananda Reddy
- Tuesdays 9-10.30 am '*Sounds of Savitri*' practice for pronunciation and rhythm, led by Patricia  
4-5 pm *L'Agenda de Mère* – listening to recordings with Gangalakshmi  
4.30-5.45 pm *Spoken English Practice* with texts of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, led by Patricia  
5-6 pm *Savitri* study in Tamil led by Sudarsan  
5.45-7.15 pm *OM Choir*
- Wednesdays : 3-4.30 pm *Sanskrit Grammar*, led by Nishtha (*by appointment*)  
4.15-5.15 pm *Mudra Chi* led by Anandi  
5.30-6.30 pm Reading *The Life Divine*, led by Shraddhavan
- Thursdays : 4-5 pm *The English of Savitri*, led by Shraddhavan
- Fridays : 5-7 pm *The Synthesis of Yoga*, led by Sraddhalu
- Saturdays : 4-5 pm *Learning French with Words of the Mother* (beginners)  
5.15-6.15 pm *Learning French with Words of the Mother* (advanced)

### **Monthly event**

Full Moon day 7.15-8.15pm **Full Moon Gathering** in front of Sri Aurobindo's statue with a message of the Mother, *Savitri* reading, silent concentration and Sunil's music

## Special Events

### November

1-30 : Exhibition – *Sri Aurobindo : a Life-Sketch in Photographs* till December end.

*From September 14 to December 19 Savitri Bhavan hosted three weekly courses presented by the University of Human Unity, as follows :*

- 1) Mondays 4.00-5.00 pm ***Technology and Evolution***, led by Daniel Goldsmith, Professor of Philosophy, Dawson College, Quebec
- 2) Mondays 5.15-6.15 pm ***An Introduction to Metaphysics: Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo***, led by Rod Hemsell
- 3) Wednesdays 5.00-6.00 pm ***Studies of the Bhagavad Gita: Karma Yoga***, by Vladimir Yatsenko
- 5: Talk by Georges van Vrekhem : ***Present and future science: unending paradigms***
- 7: Film – *Meditations on Savitri* Book 2 – ***The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds*** Cantos 7-15
- 11-13 : Inner Healing Retreat by JV Avadhanalu
- 12: Talk by Georges van Vrekhem – ***A Gaping Oversight: Overman***
- 14: Film – ***Building Matrimandir : Labour of Love*** (English version)  
A documentary on the construction of Matrimandir, the soul of Auroville, from 1971-2008
- 16: ***Introducing Savitri*** – talk in Tamil by Buvana
- 19: Film – ***Building Matrimandir: Labour of Love*** (Tamil version)  
on behalf of the Auroville Women’s Group
- 27: 2pm – Afternoon session of Auroville-Tamilnadu Seminar by Varadharajan and Syamala  
6pm – ‘11<sup>th</sup> day’ meditation for Huta in the Savitri Bhavan Hall in grateful remembrance of this very special child of the Mother
- 28: 2 Films – “***The Mother: Glimpses of Her Life***” and “***The Mother on Sri Aurobindo***”

***The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother*** – weekly workshops led by Ashesh Joshi on Wednesdays 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>

## December

Dr. Jai Singh resumed his class ‘*Cultivating Concentration, in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga*’ from December.

- 5: Film – *Paintings inspired by Sri Aurobindo’s poems* Part One: Manohar’s latest film, of paintings by Huta with verses recited by herself.
- 8: Orientation programme for Volunteers of Auroville.
- 12: Film – *Meditations on Savitri* Book Three : *The Book of the Divine Mother*, film by Manohar of Huta’s paintings, illustrating passages from *Savitri*, read by The Mother and accompanied by her own organ music (preceded by Huta’s introduction to the series)
- 19: Film – *Journey to the Life Divine* Part One : This film, the first of two-part series created in the Ashram, covers the lives and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from childhood up to November 24, 1926.
- 25: Christmas celebrations at Savitri Bhavan
- 26: Film – *Journey to the Life Divine* Part Two  
*The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother* – Workshops by Ashesh Joshi were held on 7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>.

**After cyclone Thane some evening activities were cancelled in the first week of January 2012 due to disruption of power supply.**

## January 2012

- 1<sup>st</sup> to-31<sup>st</sup> : Exhibition in the Picture Gallery – *Meditations on Savitri: Book One, The Book of Beginnings* – paintings by Huta
- 4-8: *Well Being* (Pranayama) Workshop of 5 sessions led by JV Avadhanalu
  - 7: Musical Offering – solo violin recital by Ladislav Brozman (as part of the final session of the International Seminar held by University of Human Unity)
  - 9: Film – *An Interview with Serge : 18 February 2008* – Film made by Doris and Francis, just a few months before Aurovilian Serge Brelin left his body.
  - 9-22: Exhibition – *The Journey of a Soul* – paintings by Monique Patenaude
  - 16: Film – *Shraddhavan, an interview : 18 August 2008* – Another filmed interview by Doris and Francis.

- 21: Exhibition – ***Presence*** – exquisite paintings & collages by Jyoti Khare using pieces of dresses of the Mother – to February 4th
- 23: Film – ***The Message of Water*** – Film made by Aurovilians from a slide show based on the book by Dr.Masaru Emoto
- 20-21 and 27-28: – Two-day workshops on the Integral Yoga by Ashesh Joshi
- 30: Film – ***Building Matrimandir : Labour of Love 1971-2008*** – a documentary on the construction of Matrimandir, the soul of Auroville, from 1971-2008

### **February 2012**

- 06 : Film – ***Meditations on Savitri*** Book Four – ***The Book of Birth and Quest.***
- 13: Film – ***“The Mother” by Sri Aurobindo, read by The Mother*** – Part One. In this film the Mother reads from Chapter I to Chapter V – a film from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- 14 Exhibition – ***The Teachings of Flowers : the Life and Work of the Mother*** – exhibition arranged by Loretta
- 20: Film – ***The One we Adore as the Mother*** – a film prepared by the Sri Aurobindo Archives.
- 22: Film – ***Paintings inspired by poems of Sri Aurobindo*** (Part Two) Paintings and recitations by Huta, music by Sunil, film created by Manohar from photos by Giorgio M.
- 23: Musical Offering – ***Savitri Solar Song*** by Aurelio and Nadaprem
- 25: Guest Speaker – ***The Mother and Flowers*** by Richard Pearson
- 26: Guest Speaker – ***The Mother’s Work and the Divine Event*** by Ananda Reddy
- 27: Film – ***“The Mother” by Sri Aurobindo, read by The Mother*** – Part Two. In this film the Mother reads from Chapter VI: The Four Powers and the Great Aspects, Maheswari and Mahakali – film from Sri Aurobindo Ashram.  
Two-day workshops by Ashesh Joshi on the Integral Yoga were held on 3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> , 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> , 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>

### **March 2012**

- 03 : Guest Speaker – ***True philosophy: the philosopher and the yogi*** by Georges van Vrekhem
- 05 : Film – ***The Teachings of Flowers : the Life and Work of the Mother*** – the film accompanying Loretta’s exhibition of the

- same name : the story of the Mother's life and work is set in a framework of her teachings about the true essences of flowers
- 10 : Guest Speaker – *The walls of reality: shedding our evolutionary impediments* by Georges van Vrekhem
  - 12 : Film – *Meditations on Savitri Book 5 – The Book of Love*
  - 17 : Guest Speaker – *Aswapati and Sri Aurobindo in Savitri* by Georges van Vrekhem
  - 19 : Film – *Savitri : the Way of Love* – The first Dr.M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture given by Narad in March 2010
  - 26 : Film – *The City of Dawn-* a film by Frances Rothluebber, of interviews with Aurovilians about their experiences.
  - 29 : Film – *Darshan* – a film made by Tatiana Tasheva from photographs of the Mother by Ashram photographer Sudha Sundaram, selected by the Mother. This premiere celebrates the 98<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mother's arrival in Pondicherry.



*One of the Dutch translators of Savitri, Hans Vas, composes 'Songs from Savitri' using lines from the poem which he sings to the accompaniment of his own guitar. On a visit to Auroville in early 2012, we offered him the opportunity to share some of the songs at Sri Aurobindo's feet. These songs can be heard and downloaded from the Auroville Radio website [www.aurovillerradio.org](http://www.aurovillerradio.org).*

# Savitri Bhavan Hostel

By the Grace and Blessing of the Mother, and with the support of many generous well-wishers, the Savitri Bhavan construction has now been completed, by our target-date of April 24, 2012, at a cost so far of Rs. 90 lakhs, well within the original budget estimated in April 2010, of Rs. 1.10 crore.

This has been made possible through the great efforts and good will of the architect, who has waived all fees for design and supervision work, and of the contractor, who has worked with great sincerity and attention to detail. We are grateful to all those who have helped in whatever way, and above all to the Mother for her Sanction and Blessings.

Now we are aiming for an inauguration on August 8, 2012 – the thirteenth anniversary of the inauguration of our First Phase Building by our beloved elder brother and patron, Dr. Nirodbaran, on August 8, 1999 – after which the Hostel should be open to receive guests in time for Sri Aurobindo's Birthday on the 15th.

For that to be possible, there are still many major expenses to be met, for all the furniture and equipment required to make the Hostel fully functional, such as : For the rooms – beds and bedding, cupboards, tables and chairs; For the reception area – a desk and storage space; a water filter; For the kitchen : fridges, a stove, sinks, storage fittings, vessels and utensils; For the dining area : tables and seating, plates, glasses and cutlery; For the utility room : a washing machine and dryer, iron and ironing board, storage shelves and cupboards, etc. There is also a lot of landscaping and gardening work to be done in and around the building. For this, we estimate, a minimum of Rs. 25 lakhs will be required.

**We appeal to all readers and friends to help complete this new step in the Dream of Savitri Bhavan, to make it fully functional by August 2012.**

**For details on how to help, please see the inside back cover**



*The west front from outside – the windows on the left belong to the kitchen and those in the centre to the reception area.*



*Outside view of the rooms.*



*Interior view, showing the entrances to the rooms.*



*Interior view, with rooms on the left and the dining area in the foreground.*

## *The Dream of Savitri Bhavan*

We dream of an environment in Auroville

that will breathe the atmosphere of Savitri

that will welcome Savitri lovers from every corner  
of the world

that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

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

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

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

## HOW TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF SAVITRI BHAVAN

Savitri Bhavan is mainly dependent on donations, and all financial help from well-wishers is most welcome. Please consider in what way you can help the Dream of Savitri Bhavan to become a reality.

Savitri Bhavan is a project of SAIIER  
(Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research)  
100% exemption is now again available for offerings from Indian  
tax-payers under section 35 (i) (iii) of the IT Act.

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

- **If you live in India**

If you would like to send your offering through Internet Banking or direct transfer, it should be sent to **State Bank of India : Branch code No. 03160 : Account No. 10237876031 ; or (if you wish to avail of tax exemption for Social Sciences Research) to account no. 31612623238**. If you do send an offering in this way, please inform us at the time of sending, so that we can check up with the bank and acknowledge receipt as soon as possible.

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

- **If you live Abroad**

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

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

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[www.auroville.org/education/edu\\_centres/savitribhavan\\_main.htm](http://www.auroville.org/education/edu_centres/savitribhavan_main.htm)

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

The Mother