

Invocation

Savitri

B H A V A N

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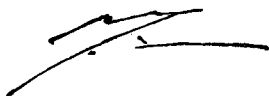
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28 February 1968

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Greetings from Auroville
to all men of good will
Are invited to Auroville all
those who thirst for progress
and aspire to a higher
and truer life.



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THE MOTHER
CWM 13 : 193



Readings in *Savitri*

by *Nolini Kanta Gupta*

A guardian of the unconsolated 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.
Afflicted by his harsh divinity,
Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased
The daily oblation of her unwept tears.¹

The deepest and the most fundamental mystery of the human consciousness (and in fact of the earth consciousness) is not that there is an unregenerate aboriginal being there as its bed-rock, a being made of the very stuff of ignorance and inconscience and inertia that is Matter. It is this: that the submerged being is not merely dead matter, but a concentrated, a solidified flame, as it were, a suppressed aspiration that burns inwardly, all the more violent because it is not articulate and in the open. The aboriginal is that which harbours in its womb the original being. That is the Inconscient Godhead, the Divinity in pain – *Mater Dolorosa* – the Divine Being who lost himself totally when transmuted into Matter and yet is harassed always by the oestrus of a secret flame driving it to know itself, to find itself, to be itself again. It is Rudra, the Energy coiled up in Matter and forging ahead towards a progressive evolution in light and consciousness. That is what Savitri, the universal Divine Grace become material and human, finds at the core of her being, the field and centre of concentrated struggle, a millennial aspiration petrified, a grief of ages congealed, a divinity lone and benumbed in a trance. This divinity has to awake and

1. *Savitri* p.10

labour. The god has to be cruel to himself, for his divinity demands that he must surpass himself, he cannot abdicate, let Nature go her own way, the inferior path of ease and escape. The godhead must exercise its full authority, exert all its pressure upon itself – *tapas taptva* – and by this heat of incubation release the energy that leads towards the light and the high fulfilment. In the meanwhile, the task is not easy. The divine sweetness and solicitude lights upon this hardened divinity: but the inertia of the Inconscient, the ‘Pani’, hides still the light within its rocky cave and would not deliver it. The Divine Grace, mellow with all the tears of love and sympathy and tenderness she has gathered for the labouring godhead, has pity for the hard lot of a humanity stone-bound to the material life, yet yearning and surging towards freedom. The godhead is not consoled or appeased until that freedom is achieved and light and immortality released. The Grace is working slowly, laboriously perhaps but surely to that end: the stone will wear down and melt one day. Is that fateful day come?

That is the meaning of human life, the significance of even the very ordinary human life. It is the field of a ‘*dire debate*’, a ‘*fierce question*’, a constant struggle between the two opposing or rather polar forces, the will or aspiration ‘to be’ and the will of inertia ‘not to be’ – the friction, to use a Vedic image, of the two batons of the holy sacrificial wood, *arani*, out of which the flame is to leap forth. The pain and suffering men are subject to in this unhappy vale of tears – physical illness and incapacity, vital frustration or mental confusion – are symbols and expressions of a deeper fundamental Pain. That pain is the pain of labour, the travail for the birth and incarnation of a godhead asleep or dead. Indeed, the sufferings and ills of life are themselves powerful instruments. They inevitably lead to the Bliss, they are the fuel that kindles, quickens and increases the Fire of Ecstasy that is to blaze up on the day of victory in the full and integral spiritual consciousness. The round of ordinary life is not vain or meaningless: its petty innocent-looking moments and events are the steps of the marching Divinity. Even the commonest life is the holy sacrificial rite progressing through the oblations of our experiences, bitter or sweet, towards the revelation and establishment of the immortal godhead in man.

The Book of Yoga

*Based on the talk given at Savitri Bhavan
on 22 August 2017
by Dr. Alok Pandey*

This summary talk formed the concluding session of Dr. Alok Pandey's Study Camp on Book Seven of Savitri conducted at the Beach Office of the Sri Aurobindo Society in Pondicherry from 16 to 21 August 2017.

Long back a very instructive story used to do the rounds in the Ashram. According to the tale, when newcomers come to the Ashram they ask “Who are the yogis doing sadhana here?” Somehow we have a penchant for meeting yogis. It is more important to engage in yoga than to meet yogis, but nevertheless the story goes that when this question was put to an old-time member of the Ashram, he replied, “Only two people are doing yoga here.” – “So who are those two?” – “Sri Aurobindo and the Mother” – “So what about the others?” – “Well, they are receiving the fruits of Their yoga.” Of course this was not part of the story but it stands as a corollary.

This statement continues to be true even though nowadays there are many integral yogis, even integral yoga gurus. But the statement stands true. It is an eternal truth, a truth which is hinted at in the Bible, a truth which is brought out forcefully in the Gita, and a truth which is revealed to us in great perfection of detail in *Savitri*: that it is the Divine who does the yoga. No one else does yoga. And from time to time, from age to age, whenever there are crucial junctures, critical moments in the evolutionary history of yoga or life upon earth – which are two ways of seeing the same thing – the Divine who has been doing yoga secretly, hidden behind the earthly appearances, comes down in the front so to say, to intervene openly and carry the yoga still further. Indeed what we call yoga is, when seen from the Divine ‘perspective’, a progressive manifestation of the Spirit concealed in matter. Yoga is merely a means through

which the individual can consciously participate and thereby collaborate in the process.

We may ask “Why does the Divine need to do yoga?” This question was once put to the Mother. In the 1960s a lady came to take leave of the Mother when she was returning home, and said, “I hope you are keeping well.” She had heard that the Mother was unwell and felt that she should give her good wishes. The Mother replied “No, it’s not that, it’s the yoga.” Then, with the effervescence of an ignorant child: “Yoga! But you shouldn’t be doing yoga! You shouldn’t be...” The Mother only laughed and touched her cheek; but she has related that it was Sri Aurobindo who came and replied: “Little children don’t know what they are talking about.”

This is the truth: that the Divine does the yoga. It is not man or anyone else who does the yoga. In *Savitri* also we see this great truth brought out. Very often people turn to *Savitri* because they want to know what they should do. I think it is beautifully summarised by Satyavan, the soul in man which alone knows this simplest and yet most profound truth, in Book Twelve:

Lay all on her; she is the cause of all.

But there is a whole background to this. One of the great beauties of *Savitri* is that it is the story of the Divine Mother. There are different ways of approaching it, but personally I find it very fascinating because it is the story of the Divine Mother. Sri Aurobindo tells us about her origin, her source, and how she has been bringing out various things in the course of the earth’s evolution by the power of yoga. The Divine does the yoga for earth. The earth is a spiritual formation meant for this purpose. To be born on earth means by default programming that we cannot really be satisfied unless we engage with yoga. Of course, some people are wary of the term, so they use the word ‘education’ instead. But education is nothing but one of the means that humanity uses for yoga. It is simply conscious evolution. We are trying to evolve, to grow. No wonder that one book by the Mother is appropriately titled *On Education*. It is a collection of essays which she says are meant for those who are lone wayfarers on the path of yoga, perhaps without knowing it. The yoga is going on but we are not consciously aware of it.

Humanity has been created as one of the means by which this yoga can become a conscious and concentrated process.

In *Savitri* too we see this great truth. There are two yogis in *Savitri*: one is the Lord who becomes Aswapati and the second is the Divine Mother who incarnates as Savitri. Although they are engaged in much the same thing there is a difference. Aswapati is a forerunner of the human race. He begins his experience from a very high starting point. The starting point of Aswapati's yoga is summarised in about one page, where Sri Aurobindo describes the whole development possible for the psychic spark to a fully developed psychic being, from the state of a worm and then to higher and higher forms until it is able to escape across the border line of Ignorance to stand on the frontiers of Supernature. Then he says:

Across our nature's border line we escape
Into Supernature's arc of living light.
This now was witnessed in that son of Force;
In him that high transition laid its base.

p.24

We are not told what Aswapati did to bring about this great change. We are shown that he begins to receive powers and experiences which are new to earth, he develops new faculties and there is birth of new possibilities of thought and sense and feeling and action. When the Mother speaks about 'The Yoga of the King', (which is the yoga of Aswapati in two parts and then 'The Secret Knowledge'), she says that these are experiences of the new consciousness, which the higher being will find coming about in him very naturally.

We have also seen in Sri Aurobindo's own life that it is as if he was suddenly drawn into yoga. And what a yoga! Three days for silencing of the mind, then suddenly in the jail '*Vasudevam sarvam iti*', and then he starts experiencing contact with God, the cosmic consciousness and all kinds of realisations that come to him very naturally. We see something very similar in the case of Aswapati, whose experiences are indeed Sri Aurobindo's own: we are taken on a journey through his inner world and at some points the possibilities shown are completely mind-blowing: we can't help asking, "Is this really possible?" And quite naturally another question comes to us, "But how can we do it, how can we realise this state?" Aswapati

himself asks the same question: “I am experiencing these things, but how can other human beings experience them, how can earth receive these gifts?” That is what we see him asking when he stands at the doors of the Eternal where he has the vision of the Divine Mother. His yoga has not been undertaken for his personal salvation but for the good of the earth. He also knows that it is not possible for man to engage in the Herculean labour, the tremendous and constant tapasya needed for the full emergence of these possibilities. So he asks for and on behalf of man to grant this boon for earth and humanity.

Boons indeed! For every time the Divine comes He brings certain gifts. He brings these gifts to Earth because Earth is his chosen daughter and it is a tradition in India that when fathers visit their children they should bring gifts. So He brings gifts. Sri Aurobindo has brought many gifts – one of them is the revelation of this yoga in *Savitri*. Aswapati asks the same question: “Can humanity in general ascend to this level that I have been given glimpses of? Can humanity as a whole be freed from ignorance and error, falsehood and sin? Can human beings escape completely from this zone of unconsciousness in which they are labouring and struggling?” Seeking an answer to this question he climbs to the very apex of creation, right up to the topmost level of the manifestation, looking for that key: what can he give to earth and men? He knows that not everyone can engage in this kind of tapasya, otherwise it would have been very simple. We see this in Sri Aurobindo’s words again and again, and when he was asked about the Mother’s coming he has very candidly said that before she came he could help himself but he could not help others. He could realise, he was realising already. But it is very strange and very interesting that he said, “I could not help others.” In the poem Aswapati too sees this great truth: that only if the Divine Mother herself comes down can these possibilities be manifested on earth. Why? Because she can take up the yoga of earth. What is Aswapati experiencing? – Our future possibilities. He is a Being of the future. In a certain sense he realises some of those possibilities already, but there is a big gap. He is the forerunner but he is running far ahead of the rest of the creation. The rest have to catch up. So he stops. He stops at the

threshold of his own ultimate realisation because he wants all the rest to catch up, as we see in these lines from *Savitri*:

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart: p. 649

He realises that only the Divine Mother can really fulfil this yoga of transformation. Only if She comes down and takes up this yoga will it be possible.

We may wonder “Why the Divine Mother? After all isn’t it the same Divine? Why couldn’t Sri Aurobindo do it? Why does the Divine Mother have to come down?” There are many ways of looking at it, but I have a very simple way to understand it. It is because only the Divine Mother can so completely identify herself with her children, with the creation, with all the chaos and confusion. Only the Eternal Feminine can really take up the burden of the whole yoga. She is the one who has gone out in the very beginning. The same story is being repeated again and again, since creation fell into chaos and there came a cry from all the energies which had deviated, turned away from their purpose by declaring their individual freedom. Nowadays also we have yoga for freedom, but true freedom can only come through union with the Divine; any other freedom is either illusory or an asuric illusion. Trying to be free from the Lord, those beings turned away from him and fell into darkness; then hearing their cry the Divine Mother plunged into the darkness and since then incessantly she has been engaged in this yoga.

What power of hers makes this yoga possible? We are told and we can see it, we can experience it, we can know it, enter into touch with it: it is the power of Love, the divine Love which has entered into matter and is constantly at work there. No other power can labour for aeons like that. It is really a most thankless work if you look at it. Only Love can labour like that to pull creation out of its inertia, its darkness, its unconsciousness and bring it to its present state of ‘*seeking ignorance*’¹. Only Love will take it further to manifest the Divine Life upon Earth.

1. *Savitri* p. 321, 618

At first the Divine Mother tells Aswapati that she cannot give him the boon that he really wants – a divine life upon earth for all men – because the earth is not ready and man is not ready. And I fancy how Sri Aurobindo would have told the Divine Mother, “You have to make it ready, you have to fulfil his aspiration.” Even as He did indeed ask Her to stay while He was preparing to go behind the veil for the Work, “You will have to fulfil our yoga of transformation.” And so She comes, impelled by divine Love. This is the mystery and the secret of Her birth, to do the yoga for man, nay to fulfil it, to take it to its grand fulfilment.

* * *

We know that when the Mother came to Pondicherry, for a long time she would not meet anybody, she lived just like everyone else; she showed the disciples the way of modesty, how to be before the Master, the way of humility, of seeking. Once Amrita-da asked Sri Aurobindo, “Isn’t Mother a great yogi?” Sri Aurobindo said “Yes.” Then Amrita said “But she doesn’t give meditations.” Sri Aurobindo replied “Yes, just now she doesn’t; but one day, impelled by the divine love, she will come out and that will indeed be a great day.” So we see that the Divine Mother steps into the forefront of the quest. Many avatars have come, every millennium or two there has been a divine advent, and always the Divine Mother has been quietly coming and remaining in the background. But now for the first time she comes into the forefront and takes up the human play. That is what we see revealed in *The Book of Yoga*: the yoga undertaken by the Divine Mother; and although it is shown to us primarily as the yoga which she has followed, it is also the path that she has opened to humanity.

If we see the path which Sri Aurobindo took – stilling the brain, silencing the mind, rejecting all thoughts – and some people also read the *Record of Yoga* and want to practice it, going straight into the yoga of the cells – really speaking, if we ask ourselves honestly, is it simple? But we have another record, the record of the Mother’s yoga, fortunately kept for us in the form of her *Prayers and Meditations*. When we see that path, we may feel “Yes, this is something we can follow: a path full of love, surrender, faith; a path

which starts by just being who we are, a path of simple gratitude, of thanksgiving; a path which is like a hymn of adoration climbing to the Divine; a path where every event and circumstance can take us closer to the Divine – although in a certain sense everything eventually takes us towards Him because there is no other way. We are all on a journey where we can go slower or faster, but we are all moving towards one and the same destination. This is the great truth of the Vedanta: we may take a twisted turn or we may take a straight route, but we are all going towards that one goal. It cannot be otherwise. In the Mother's yoga we see a path which is more tangible, one which a human being can, if he likes, take. That is what we see revealed in The Book of Yoga. It is the Path taken by the Divine Mother to fulfil the yoga of the Earth, yet it is a Path that leaves a trail which we as human beings can follow.

Very interestingly this Book opens with a canto where we see the Divine experiencing human suffering. We may wonder why the Book of Yoga starts like this, with 'The Joy of Union; the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death and the Heart's Grief and Pain'. Where is the yoga in this? We should remember the Gita, which starts with Arjuna's *vishaad*, his state of dejection encountered by the possibility of death of his loved ones. Very appropriately, very beautifully, the Mother's yoga starts from human suffering too. I love this canto for the simple fact that it reveals to us the Divine becoming human. Here in the first canto of The Book of Yoga we see the Divine Mother becoming completely human. Her heart is torn by grief. She is moved by the passion of love. She wants to be close to somebody whom she loves. We are shown all these movements which are characteristically human, the joy and the grief which she experiences. Her yoga begins from here because that is what we all experience in life: a little joy and a little grief – although we always feel that there is more grief than joy because joy is and should be our natural state, so when suffering comes we spontaneously feel "Oh, it should not be!" Grief, pain and suffering strike us as an anomaly.

What we see in the first canto of The Book of Yoga is a description of the Divine Mother becoming human. Often people say that Sri Aurobindo is a human being who has become divine; but what I

see and understand is very different: the Divine Mother is born as an avatar just as Sri Aurobindo is, but there comes a time when she completely veils her divinity and starts the whole process as a human being, because she has to do the yoga for earth and man. Like Sri Aurobindo she too brings the new consciousness with her. But here we have these lines on page 472 where Savitri is experiencing the grief that human beings undergo:

Thus in the silent chamber of her soul
Cloistering her love to live with secret grief
She dwelt like a dumb priest with hidden gods

Just like us, the priest in us, the psychic being, does not know: it is still asleep. The gods which the great Upanishad says are dwelling hidden within the human body are all asleep. It is a moment of utter darkness which we all experience. That is where yoga begins:

Unappeased by the wordless offering of her days,
Lifting to them her sorrow like frankincense,
Her life the altar, herself the sacrifice.

What marvellous lines! After all, if we have nothing else to offer, there is always something which we can give: if nothing else our state of consciousness is always there with us to give her, offering her our sorrow like frankincense. Only yesterday I was reminded of John Milton's line where he says, "Lord, I come to you with only one talent called death, there is nothing else I can give you." And then he hears the reply, assuring him that "They also serve who only stand and wait." The path begins from there: when we find ourselves in a state of darkness where '*nothing we can see but drift and bale*'¹, the yoga begins from there; and Savitri shows us the way.

Very often we question fate and wonder why life is the way it is. And we should wonder after all! It is not good to be satisfied with things as they are, because in humanity dissatisfaction is one of the forms taken by the urge towards yoga. If we are too satisfied we remain like a clod, a lump of earth. And very often we do just accept life as it is: "Things are the way they are; we have no control

1. *Savitri* p. 59

over it.” Savitri too goes through this process. But then, even as she sits brooding by the side of her ‘doomed husband’, she hears a command, a voice from her own higher Self. The voice commands her, “You have not come on earth to nurse grief and pain. You are here to vanquish time and death.” What a strong command! We are again reminded of the Gita when Arjuna is so stricken with sorrow at the ghastly prospect and he is told “Are you here for grief, for depression, for despair? Pick up your bow; fight the great battle of life!” Savitri too is told that here is a great battle of life: “Pick up the bow, be ready, vanquish time and death”, and she is given the programme, a very interesting one.

In our few moments of silent concentration at the beginning of this gathering we were blessed to hear four lines from the poem read by the Mother. Those four lines alone provide a complete programme of yoga. I think that if we can practice even just half of one of those lines it will take us a long way. At least these lines are very important to me personally. So many things come and distract us, take us away from the straight path; at times when we are disoriented and do not know how to navigate through the journey of this life, half a line of *Savitri* can come and save us. Like that, Savitri hears a Voice from above telling her:

Remember why thou cam'st:

These words are like a mantra. If we can inscribe them in our hearts – ‘*Remember why thou cam'st*’ – nothing else is required: just to remember why we have come. Have I come for this? Have I come to enjoy these things? Have I come just to fulfil my ambition? Have I come just for the lure of money and to fulfil my family obligations and this and that? Those things are there in life, but is that why I am here? Have I come only for that?

Remember why thou cam'st:

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,

As the Mother says, the only tragedy in life is to die without realising your soul. But most people, Sri Aurobindo tells us, do not recognise it as a tragedy. They are pretty cool about it. In fact the rationalists, the new elite who don't believe in soul, take great pride in not

believing in it. We can leave them at their point, wherever they are. They will still benefit, because the yoga is done for everyone.

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,

So many moments of silence are given to us, plenty of them, but how often we pass them in contemplating our own life, its pettiness, its miseries, its sorrows, its sufferings – how to come out of it? Here we are shown such a beautiful way to spend time in silence:

In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,

“What does the Divine want of me?” The Mother says that this is a question we must raise every day. “What does the Divine intend for me and in me?” What my parents intend for me, what society expects of me, what my religion proscribes or prescribes for me, what everybody expects from me is a different story altogether. “What does God want from me? Is there a divine purpose for me?” To spend time on that is one of the ways that we can get in touch with our soul. And the next thing is:

Then mortal nature change to the divine.

This is the key, the first key. The first key is that whenever we have a free moment, we should engage in discovering this hidden soul and finding God's meaning in our depths. And in fact there are plenty of such free moments – it is up to us to use them wisely. Look at these lines:

Open God's door, enter into his trance.

But how to open the door? We try, we analyse, we think, we rationalise – that is not the way. There is another way:

Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:

If we think that we can open the door by any kind of analysis, we are mistaken; we cannot, because analysis doesn't have the key. In fact the more we quieten the analysing mind, the more the door opens. Because the greatest truth, as *Savitri* will reveal to us, is that He is everywhere. Only we are not looking that way, we are choosing the wrong key. The Mother tells us that the key is given

to us, but we have grown up not believing in this key: we believe in everything else instead. We always think that our key is with somebody else; or if it is with us it is in our brain power. But now we are told:

Cast thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:

She is not asking us to become irrational creatures. She is simply saying “Know the relative value of thought, know its place. Put it in its place, and practice inner quietude.”

In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see.

When Sri Aurobindo was asked how to quieten the mind and the brain, he said “You can do it in other ways but the simplest way is to call the Silence from above, to call the Mother’s Grace, Her Force, Her Peace. That will do it for us.” If we try the other way, rejecting thoughts and trying to fight with them, some people who are predisposed by nature may succeed, but for most it will be a very difficult process. And there is something else:

Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit’s sight:

We are taught from childhood that what we see is real, what we hear is real; we are told to believe in what we see – and now we also have this new thing: to believe in what we hear. Nowadays, Information Technology has caught hold of this falsehood, so all the time we keep hearing everything from Whatsapp to News channels, none of which is the real truth. The senses also have to be quietened. The more we quieten them the more we will engage with yoga.

Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit’s sight:

God is present everywhere, but we can’t see Him, we can’t hear Him because the senses are weaving a dance of vibrations around us. We call it ‘form and name’. It is nothing but a dance of vibrations. Our senses cut up this integral reality into bits and pieces and present it to us in a certain way and we are glued to that and believe it to be Reality. The thing to do is to disengage from it. If we do so, we are promised that:

Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,

How beautiful this is! If only, as I said, we could practice one line: '*Know him in every voice ...*': it is there in the babble of a child if we can hear it, Sri Aurobindo says.

We have this strange conditioning of the mind. In one of his aphorisms Sri Aurobindo says, "I went to a place full of holy men and I got bored there. Then God took me to a prison and he made it his trysting ground."¹ If we are open and receptive, the Divine will speak to us in countless ways including, very often, through those who criticise us. Unfortunately we think that our critics are our greatest enemies, but actually they do a very good job. In fact they do a double job: one, they chip our ego and second, they increase their own and take our burden onto themselves. Guru Nanak, the great mystic, once said that one who criticises us is always a great friend of ours. Why? Because he cleanses us of our sins and himself goes into the hell where we would have gone. God can speak to us in many ways. When we look at a flower, when we look at a river, we can decipher that language. There is a message there – in a tree, in people, in everything. We can discover it if we are quiet within, if we are not full of preconceived ideas and notions and conditioning.

Often when people ask, "How to hear God's voice?" they are expecting a thunder inside: "God has given me this command!" But even when he gives us a command he is so sweet. When I hear the Mother's voice I feel there is a difference between reading her words and hearing them, because when we read we add something of our own. For instance today I was reading Sri Aurobindo's words: "Do not imagine that Truth and Falsehood can live together." Reading those words we may imagine a stern judge thundering out this warning to us. But that is not how Sri Aurobindo would speak those words. He would say them with all the beauty and charm and sweetness of the Divine, gently awakening us, reminding us

1. When I was asleep in the Ignorance, I came to a place of meditation full of holy men and I found their company wearisome and the place a prison; when I awoke, God took me to a prison and turned it into a place of meditation and His trysting-ground. (*Thoughts and Aphorisms* no. 47 in CWSA 12 : 428)

of something which we have perhaps forgotten, as we might tell our beloved child, “Child, you have forgotten something, you know what? Do not think that these two can go together” – which is very different from when we hear it with that thunder added from our side. How beautiful was Sri Aurobindo’s voice! Those who have heard his voice are the most fortunate of the fortunate. It was so soft, so gentlemanly, almost like the sound of a sweet gurgling stream flowing by.

God’s voice can speak to us through anyone. There is a story about the famous yogi Dattatreya. Somebody asked him, “How many masters have you had?” He replied “I have had twenty four Masters.” – “Twenty four Masters? Who were they all?” He gave the names of many people including a harlot. He said “The Master spoke to me through her. She taught me something.” So one who is vigilant – this is one sense of the word vigilant – can hear in many ways the divine voice which whispers inside.

In the world’s contacts meet his single touch;
All things shall fold thee into his embrace.

Today we experienced a wonderful embrace as we entered Savitri Bhavan, such a lovely welcome of grace. We could have said, “Oh my God it’s raining!” But the other response is, “Wow! What a welcome shower!” It is a divine embrace, the divine touch. Everything can fold us into his embrace.

Conquer thy heart’s throbs, let thy heart beat in God:
Thy nature shall be the engine of his works,
Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word:
Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death.

This is the program given to Savitri. This is the program given to all of us.

Then Savitri embarks on her wonderful journey. We are also told that she undertakes this journey for man, for the whole of humanity. She asks, “Why should I make this effort?” and she is told ‘*For man thou seekest ... Man, human, follows in God’s human steps.*’¹

1. *Savitri* p. 488

Therefore she undertakes the journey. But what I find exceptionally beautiful is the state in which she undertakes the journey.

What should be the state of a seeker? We have been told that we should sit in a particular way: some people say cross-legged, others prescribe sitting in an easy chair; or they say “Take a light cushion, and the back should be bolt upright, maybe ninety degrees. God is happier to see you sitting upright!” Or “Probably He likes us to be little more relaxed; he doesn’t like us to be so tense.” But what is the real inner state of a true seeker? On page 487 we see Savitri responding to the command that she has been given. So what is her state? It is described in just a few lines:

Obedient to a high command she sat:
Time, life and death were passing incidents
Obstructing with their transient view her sight,
Her sight that must break through and liberate the god
Imprisoned in the visionless mortal man.

Marvellous lines! Powerful lines! Time and all the play of time and all the news and all the information, life and death, all are nothing but ‘*passing incidents*’. If we can take that attitude, what does it matter? Some people ask “Oh, how many years must one practice yoga? Maybe many lives, maybe a thousand years, maybe ten thousand years!” But what does it matter? If this is the thing to be done, then this is the thing to be done. If it takes ten thousand years then we shall have ten thousand years of service to the Lord, ten thousand years of the joy of the journey.

At one Auroville International meeting in South Africa when somebody said, “Oh, Auroville is a very difficult place: this difficulty! that problem!” I was very happy to hear someone from Auroville remark very beautifully “Well, it is difficult and that’s why it’s worth living in.” I loved that statement. What is the use of doing easy things? Why should we want to do only things which are easy and simple? Man’s manhood lies in engaging with things which are challenging. That is what we are meant for. We are programmed for that. We cannot live without self-transcendence. That is why whatever we may have, we want more – because ultimately we are on a journey towards self-transcendence. We cannot be satisfied

with anything less than the divinisation of matter. So let us embark on that journey. What does it matter – life, death, another life? In one of his poems, Sri Aurobindo says: “I have a thirst and the thirst means that there is water somewhere. But old nature sits phantom on the way. The past returns. So many obstacles are in the way. But Have I not a hundred lives before me? I shall not faint, O God.” He says “I’ll continue”.¹ This is the spirit; this is the attitude with which Savitri starts her search.

* * *

But the journey is not easy. It is a real adventure undertaken in real time. Plenty of obstacles lie in wait to block the way. The first obstacle comes from material nature. It has an iron grip. Very often people say “I can’t meditate.” So you ask them, “Why? What happens when you meditate?” “Well I tried; but I couldn’t, so I stopped.” “How long did you try?” “Two months”. Material nature! – It has an iron grip. Sri Aurobindo says that at least twelve years are needed – after that perhaps one can think about genuine experiences. Two months, three months, one year, two years – it is nothing when we look at the landscape of eternity. Let us sit and sit and sit and sit and sit and push against the closed door.

Mother says that we need to push against the bronze door. That is what Savitri does. Material nature says: “*Back, creature of earth*”. That is what Savitri hears – all the powers, the elemental energies, saying “Go back, go back!” But she persists by the force of her will. “I will, I will, I will. The more you obstruct the more I will.” And then one day the door opens and she enters into an inner world. There too she has to face another kind of struggle, another kind of force, another kind of energy. It is a long journey. Another serious difficulty comes. She lands up, as all of us do when we try to enter into the inner worlds,

1. I will not faint, O God. There is this thirst,
And thirst supposes water somewhere. Yes,
But in this life we may not ever find;
Old nature sits a phantom by the way,
Old passions may forbid, old doubts return.
Then are there other lives here or beyond
To satisfy us. I will persist, O Lord. (*Meditations of Mandavya* 3, CWSA 2 : 512)

in a zone which Sri Aurobindo cautions us against: the intermediate zone. That world asks you “What do you want? Yoga? I will create it for you.” It can create every experience possible including calm, including ananda. Of course these are imitative experiences, not the real one. The problem is that we don’t know how to recognise the real stuff. It is like going into a shop wanting to buy some gold jewellery or a diamond without knowing what a real diamond looks like: the person comes and tells us, “This is a diamond. Please take it” and we are very happy. But if somebody who is a bit intelligent and has some common sense comes, he may ask “But your neighbour is selling it for twenty thousand. How come you are giving it to me for one thousand rupees?” And the reply comes “That is the speciality of our shop!” Be very careful. Now-a-days there are fake diamonds around. Just two days back I was reading someone claiming that “Sri Aurobindo has gone away. I am now carrying on the legacy of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga. Come here and I’ll make you into a superman! Through me your yoga chakras will open and you will be able to fly in the air and get supernatural powers.”

To start with, yoga is not meant for this. Savitri is not undertaking yoga to become a superman or a supramental being. She is undertaking the yoga for earth and men. Sri Aurobindo makes it very clear: as long as there is any personal desire, even the desire for personal Mukti or salvation let alone ambition for occult powers, we cannot touch the Absolute. We have to get rid of all desires including the desire for salvation or Mukti, including the desire for personal transformation, which again is an egoistic impulse masquerading as the will for yoga. Yoga can be either to serve the Divine, to love the Divine which is the simpler way, or to live in the Divine, live by the Divine, for the Divine; and the Divine is doing it for the sake of earth. The need of transformation is only so that in our entire being we become what the Divine wants us to become. It is not a stamp of any personal greatness but a deep spiritual necessity of creation, to become what it inwardly is.

So when Savitri enters the inner worlds, a powerful life-force comes and offers her a lot of impressive experiences. That description comes on page 493. On page 494 Sri Aurobindo warns us about this zone where the power of life meets Savitri offering its gifts:

Its puissance dangerous and absolute
Could mingle poison with the wine of God.
On these high shining backs falsehood could ride;
Truth lay with delight in error's passionate arms
Gliding downstream in a blithe gilded barge:
Here in Life's nether realms all contraries meet;
Truth stares and does her works with bandaged eyes
And Ignorance is Wisdom's patron here:

Caution, caution, caution against over-enthusiasm: "I want yoga in one year, two years." Mother would say, "My child, be patient!" This is the secret. A great edifice has to be built up, an edifice of Calm, Peace, Equanimity, a strong and stable floor of devotion, humility and surrender. The new creation doesn't hang in a vacuum.

Those galloping hooves in their enthusiast speed
Could bear to a dangerous intermediate zone
Where Death walks wearing a robe of deathless Life.

This is another of the great dangers.

Then comes the third one, and that comes from the mind. The mind is the big difficulty of those who read a lot, and especially those who not only read, but give talks. It's a big danger, in the sense that one can easily confuse mental understanding with the real thing: "Yes, I have read it. I have understood everything. Therefore I have already arrived." There is a big difference. To arrive takes a very long time. Reading may give us a kind of road map and that is good, but it is not indispensable, and by itself it does not take us to the goal. Only two things are indispensable for yoga as far as knowledge is concerned: that there is a soul within and a Grace above.

Often people ask "How to engage with this yoga? Sri Aurobindo is so difficult." Who is asking us to read Sri Aurobindo and engage with yoga? He does not tell us that we must read his books in order to do yoga. He simply says "Open to the Mother." That is the real issue: we may not be able to do that even though it sounds the simplest of things. The mind will step in with its doubts and surround us with all kinds of questioning ignorance mistaken for knowledge.

Mind brings another kind of false certitude. There is a lot of humour in *Savitri*. Here Sri Aurobindo with his characteristic sense of humour points out how the mind can pick up or make up a belief system and we can get trapped in belief systems, dogmas gleaned from writings here and there, and then we believe we are engaged in yoga. So on page 497 we have these lines:

Even meditation mused on a narrow seat;

Very often we would like someone to tell us the way of meditation in Integral Yoga. The absurdity is that there are indeed people teaching the way of meditation in Integral Yoga. But by its very nature Integral Yoga is integral. So Sri Aurobindo warns us against meditating on a narrow seat and taking this or that limited aspect of God as the whole.

Even meditation mused on a narrow seat;
And worship turned to an exclusive God,
To the Universal in a chapel prayed
Whose doors were shut against the universe;
Or kneeled to the bodiless Impersonal
A mind shut to the cry and fire of love:
A rational religion dried the heart.

We are not supposed to become irrational. Yoga is done by keeping the rational mind intact. Rational mind has a place in dealing with infrarational urges, in dealing with our vital impulses – there it has tremendous power. But if we start using it to deal with the Divine and what is beyond, then it is like a tiny hammer striking against a mountain and believing that by doing so it can pierce a hole through it. So in this section Sri Aurobindo shows us different kinds of beings of the mental world who come and call Savitri, but she refuses all of them.

Then again comes one of the *mahavakyas*, the great phrases that *Savitri* offers us in abundance. Savitri sees some gods emerging from her inmost being. And on page 501 Sri Aurobindo points out something which we need to remember always:

In contrary sense she faced life's riddling truth:
They carrying the light to suffering men

Hurried with eager feet to the outer world;
Her eyes were turned towards the eternal source.

If we have not understood this passage, we may tend to rush eagerly to help everyone. Helping humanity! It is one of the greatest *sattvik* illusions. Who can help? You think that you can teach yoga? Who can teach? We have to live in the consciousness of Oneness where there is nothing but the Divine. But that road is long. Mother tells us that first we have to go from a state of scattered wideness which is pulled in every direction by all kinds of forces of ignorance, through a narrow passage, touch the very core and then spread into the universal consciousness. Otherwise it's not possible. So Savitri keeps her eyes turned towards her eternal source.

Then Savitri following the great winding road
Came where it dwindled into a narrow path
Trode only by rare wounded pilgrim feet.

This is the image of going through the pilgrim cave of Amarnath, you know. At the end, even in our Ashram, ultimately you are alone. You have to leave behind the chappals and everything else: all our identities. We are alone. We may have gone there together holding hands, but in front of the Divine we are alone. And that is why when we go to Mother's room we feel that it's such a narrow passage. I feel it is a very symbolic thing, this very narrow passage. Though you may have come with the world, now leave it behind. You are face to face with the Divine Mother, on a road '*Trode only by rare wounded pilgrim feet*'. None reaches the goal who has not passed through this fire with feet on burning stones. '*None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell.*' So this is a path that is '*Trode only by rare wounded pilgrim feet.*' There at last:

One felt the silent nearness of the soul.

* * *

But now Savitri meets the three Madonnas, powers which have emerged from her soul. They are the threefold Soul-powers. I am not going into the different ways of explaining them as *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, the *prakriti* or the godhead behind them or their relations to Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati. A simpler

way is to look at them as the feminine counterparts of the three Purushas – the mental, vital and physical Purusha or beings put forth by the soul as godheads for the corresponding planes. In Savitri, who is the incarnate Divine Mother, these three Powers are found in their divine fullness. However let us keep our busy minds aside and just know that the inner truth presents itself to us as Wisdom or as Force and Might, as Love, or as the Power that endures this whole journey of life. This makes it so simple. The Divine is both name and nameless. I love these words – Madonna of Light, Madonna of Might, Mother of grief Divine – They are so wonderful. We don't have to bring in any other name because these names are complete in themselves. And if Sri Aurobindo has given these names there is a reason behind it: perhaps simply that he wanted to go beyond traditions and bring in a new dimension. So let's live with that new dimension – these three Madonnas.

We may stop short with one or the other aspect of the Divine. We may be satisfied with wisdom and knowledge entering into our minds and informing our higher chambers; or we may stop short simply with love in the heart and bhakti and self-giving. Or we may be satisfied with the power which simply trusts the Divine and helps people endure life or battles against all that stands in the way of the divine consummation. One may stop with identification with any one of these Soul-powers and become a vibhuti. But we know that this is an Integral Yoga; so all of them must come together and something still greater must be found. Each of these Madonnas awakens something within us: the power of knowledge, the power of the might and strength of God, hope – all these awaken in us as we take the turn towards Yoga. They are godheads and they begin to emerge. They are helpful Powers in our journey and yet we have to strive to go beyond, for the Supreme Godhead is our goal. We have to remember what Savitri tells the Madonna of Light:

Even if thou rain down intuition's rays,
The Mind of man will think it earth's own gleam,
His spirit by spiritual ego sink,
Or his soul dream shut in sainthood's brilliant cell
Where only a bright shadow of God can come.

We are not here to become saints and yogis and all the old stuff, but for something entirely new. When someone wrote a poem on Sri Aurobindo – “Hail the last rishi Sri Aurobindo!” Dilip Kumar Roy sent it to Sri Aurobindo saying, “I don’t know whether to rejoice or feel sad about it. I rejoice because he has called you a great rishi but I feel sad because he says you are the last one.” And Sri Aurobindo with his sense of humour replied, “Well he’s right. Maybe he has caught a glimpse that after this there will be superman. We don’t need rishis after that.” This yoga is not about becoming a saint or a sage or a rishi or any of these terms: they all belong to the old world. There is something new to aim for. Not ‘*Sainthood’s brilliant cell*’! That narrow place receives reflected light and believes it to be its own. And how many have gone down the path of spiritual ego or ended up forming yet another cult!

Let us leave all that behind and follow Savitri as she passes further towards the soul’s mystic cave, and Sri Aurobindo describes the wonderful state as one draws near the soul. It is ‘*a night of God*’. Everything that we believe we know, including the pride of knowledge, everything is taken away. We are newborn at each moment. Look at the Divine Mother who has so many experiences: when she comes before Sri Aurobindo what is her prayer? She says, “I am like a new born child”. This is the state which the soul spontaneously brings into us: a profound humility. However much we may know, still we will remain as if we know nothing, because all knowledge belongs to the Divine and there is so much more that, as the mystic poet Kabir says, “If we were to make ink out of the seven oceans and if we were to cut all the trees and turn them all into pens, and were to use the entire surface of the earth as paper, still we would not be able to put into writing the glory of these two words – “*Hari gun likha na jai!*” Hari – the Divine. Such is the greatness of the Infinite. So how much can one book or many books or any amount of wisdom capture of Him? Nothing! The soul-touch brings one into that state before the Divine.

I think that may be the reason why many temples have low ceilings and people find it very uncomfortable: it is a lesson in humility. There is a tale about someone who complained to the Mother saying “The ceiling is very low” – he wanted to get it changed. But she

said “Very good, it will teach him humility. Every time he passes through, it will teach humility.”

Sri Aurobindo with his characteristic humour says that although the Divine is everywhere He has hidden itself deep within. Why? To avoid ‘*the profaning touch of thought*’. It knows that human beings will go to temples, to churches and mosques. They will listen to hundreds of speakers but they will not look within. So that is where the soul has hidden itself.

Nevertheless, Savitri finds her soul and then we have the wonderful description of the psychic being and the central being. She discovers her psychic being and then fuses with her central being, the *jivatman* which stands above. Here towards the end we are told again that this is the first victory to be won because this is the first touch of immortality. To discover the soul is to discover our immortal being. Without it we cannot really think about conquering death, so this is the first thing to be done, and this is what Savitri discovers. As the soul steps forward, all the centres spontaneously open towards the light and the might and the right of the Divine and they blossom. We have a long description of that wonderful experience, but we will not dwell on that just now. On page 531 we find these lines:

In the slow process of the evolving spirit,
In the brief stade between a death and birth
A first perfection’s stage is reached at last;

This is the first perfection – the psychic transformation – where all is governed by the soul. This itself is a great thing in the yoga but it can come in the simplest of ways by turning to the Divine Mother.

Out of the wood and stone of our nature’s stuff
A temple is shaped where the high gods could live.

Now we can understand why those gods were sleeping: because there was no proper place for them. But now the lamp has been lit and we have prepared a nice place for them. The temple has been cleaned, so now the gods awake and occupy their respective places. They say, “Yes, now the temple has been lit.”

Even if the struggling world is left outside
One man's perfection still can save the world.

Thus has come about the first marriage between heaven and earth – the first perfection and an indispensable stage in yoga. Sri Aurobindo devotes almost five cantos to it and the remaining two cantos are almost like a summing up, because once the soul steps forward the rest becomes relatively easy and there is a rapid efflorescence.

* * *

However, the emergence of the soul is not the final perfection. For the final perfection the ego must be slain. As long as the ego remains it becomes our instrumental personality and we still somewhere outwardly identify with it; or if we are not identified with it we know it is there and the soul acts through it. The ego must disappear. That is the next command which Savitri receives. But first she hears the Voice of Night which proclaims that a supramental transformation and change of earth is not possible. It insists “Man is a creature of mud and I am its ruler. You can go off into high heavens in the transcendent sphere but don't think about transformation.” But then Savitri hears the Voice of Light which chases away the darkness and says, “It is possible”, and shows her the way forward. This way is shown on page 538.

When Nature who is now unconscious God

So beautiful! Nature is divine but it is still unconscious. When it grows fully conscious and transparent before the Divine it will spontaneously transmute itself.

When Nature who is now unconscious God
Translucent grows to the Eternal's light,
Her seeing his sight, her walk his steps of power
And life is filled with a spiritual joy
And Matter is the spirit's willing bride.

This is what it is meant to be. When Huta showed Mother a card depicting Shiva and Shakti together, Mother said, “It is a symbol of the Spirit identifying with material nature.” That is the symbol. It has been foreseen and we see this same symbol in the whole story

of Shiva and Sati. Sati – material nature – must purify herself before she is ready to meet Shiva. She must burn in fire and completely annul herself; then she is reborn as Parvati: the purified earth-nature which is born on the high peaks of Himalaya. Then she can unite permanently with Shiva. It is the same for us: we have to burn this earth-nature in purifying fire, and this fire is very exacting; it leaves nothing, nothing, nothing untouched by the purifying Flame:

Consent to be nothing and none, dissolve Time's work,

This reminds me of a story when Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry, leaving the scene of Indian politics. People were asking him, "Why aren't you coming back? What are you doing there?" Sri Aurobindo would hardly reply. Then some people who were active in politics in those days came here to meet him and asked, "Sir, what are you doing here in Pondicherry?" Sri Aurobindo kept quiet for a while and then said, "Well, nothing." (*Laughter*)

We are just waiting for someone to ask us so that we can tell them "Don't you know we are engaged in a special yoga. Do you know about it? I'll tell you about it. You know, it is a very difficult yoga. I am among the elite, called and specially chosen by the Divine." But what do we know really? It is His play and He is delighting in this play. *'Consent to be nothing and none, dissolve Time's work.'*

Cast off thy mind, step back from form and name.

Annul thyself that only God may be.

This is the great command. Annul yourself completely. *'Annul thyself that only God may be.'* What a vastness! What a liberating truth! What a profound engagement! And it can only come when nothing else remains in our thoughts and feelings except the Divine. Nothing of ourselves. What is our Past? What is happening in the Present? What will happen to us in the Future? What we have been and what we shall be? Everything we abandon completely at Her Feet. As the Mother puts it: "As Thou willest! As Thou willest! Whether Thou givest to me joy or suffering! Whether Thou givest to me pleasure or pain! Everything comes from you, returns to you."

Savitri goes through that and then she is projected, drawn into, the Absolute; for when there is nothing, when all Time's work is

undone, then we experience that great longed-for Nirvana. In Sri Aurobindo's yoga we don't seek it but it comes. And what kind of a nirvana? Because there is a mental nirvana, a vital nirvana, a physical nirvana; they are just first touches. Savitri experiences the nirvana where one enters into the very Absolute, where all creation appears as nothing but a transient storm passing before our eyes.

In one of her prayers the Mother says that earthly realisations take too important a place and that at some point we have to get rid of all this: "Oh, what may happen? A Third World War? What will happen to humanity then?" We identify with humanity, therefore we egoistically want to know. Who knows? The Divine may say, "I have plan B". What is plan B? If humanity goes away – Dolphins! Round the corner! All problems of food, all problems of buildings and pollution – everything will be solved in one stroke. Global warming, this, that.... You know we had a talk yesterday about global warming: in fifteen or twenty years the whole earth, everything, will be drowned in water. Will evolution stop? No. Will transformation stop? No. Man may or may not. Sri Aurobindo says "The Mother has left the question hanging." He says, "One thing is sure that this earth will be saved. As to humanity Mother has left that question hanging and I can only do the same." We should not worry. As Teilhard de Chardin has put it, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience but spiritual beings having a human experience." Once we know that, it doesn't matter. We'll colonise somewhere or the other – wherever He wants, wherever the Divine sends us; if in the heart of a dolphin, why not? We should not worry about it.

Savitri enters that state of the Absolute where there is nothing. Then she waits for the command. It is the same state which Aswapati reached by his tapasya when he came to the door of the Unknowable, where he could either merge and completely abolish himself – rare yogis are known to do that, to throw themselves into the Unknowable – or bring out from the frontier of the form and the formless a new Force, a new Power to manifest upon earth. Now, as we all know, it is history. What was hidden in the Unknowable? The supramental consciousness and the supramental truth.

(Text continues on p.39)



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



On 18 February 2018 Sonia Dyne gave the 8th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture in the Sangam Hall

The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi visits Auroville

The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, visited Auroville on 25 February 2018 to grace Auroville's 50th Anniversary Celebrations. Before proceeding to the Matrimandir and Bharat Nivas, where he gave an inspiring address, he paid homage to Sri Aurobindo's statue at Savitri Bhavan.





On arrival he was introduced by Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, to members of the Auroville Working Committee.



Dr. Karan Singh and the Prime Minister listening to 'Vande Mataram' being sung by a choir of Aurovilians.

Divine Flowers exhibition





This collection of live flowers and paintings with the Mother's Spiritual Significances opened on the Mother's Birthday, 21.02.2018 and continued until the evening of Auroville's 50th Birthday on 28.02.2018. Many visitors and groups of school children from around the region enjoyed the beautiful displays.









From 6 am on Monday 19 February until 4.30 pm on Tuesday 20 February the Savitri Around the World complete reading of Sri Aurobindo's mantric epic was live-streamed around the globe from Savitri Bhavan; 471 readers representing 99 locations in five continents participated, and many people from Auroville came to watch the streaming on the big screen in the Sangam Hall, while others watched on the Internet across the world.



On 28 January 2018, following his Walks of Hope around Auroville and neighbouring villages, Sri M gave a talk in the Sangam Hall.

(continued from p.30)

And what does that state do? It makes her being vast. We have to become vast when the ego is gone. This is one of the things we experience – vastness! Vastness is not the wideness of the waste paper basket where everything from the most beautiful poem to the most mundane things are jumbled together. Vastness is the vastness of Space where countless stars hang, each in its right place. That is how the Vedic rishis put it: *satyam ritam brihatam*. Vastness alone is not true enough. There must be a truth which arranges things hierarchically to live by the law of truth.

Repeatedly Mother tells us that when mental rules, mental measures, social norms fall away, what helps us to walk the path? Normally human beings are governed by their desires, or by duty, principle, social and religious norms. When those are gone what can guide us? The law of Truth. That is what Yajnavalkya is aspiring for: *Hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitam mukham*¹: the Law of Truth begins to manifest. And in that vastness we have this beautiful experience.

And one small thing: after that experience and realisation, we shall find that every experience is uplifted as it were by the Divine touch. Sri Aurobindo once again brings out the human side of Savitri: either she is sitting with Satyavan or she is engaged in her everyday activities: the broom, the jar, the well. None of these experiences should dislocate us. Yogis of a certain kind withdraw from world. But the age is coming when yogis would be like Janaka, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, like Ajatashatru, engaged in every activity of life. That is what we have in Auroville, in the Ashram.

This is a great lesson. Being a Yogi doesn't mean wearing a particular dress or following a certain practice and henceforth calling oneself Swami so-and-so-ananda. Thank God Sri Aurobindo doesn't do that. We have come from Ananda and belong to Ananda; we don't need to put it after our names; it is our name and our surname, we don't need to qualify it further. As to 'Swami', that's a debatable thing.

1. Isha Upanishad v.15: "The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight." CWSA 17 : 9

It implies self-mastery. And that implies a cosmic spirit – for there is not just one kind of self-mastery. As we grow as a representative of the race and enlarge into cosmic consciousness the greater the difficulties and new challenges we have to face and every time they have to be mastered by the same process. Savitri experiences this profound truth on the last two pages of Book Seven.

We have come to the end of The Book of Yoga – the greatest formula of God. If any formula is given to mankind we have its echo, some glimpse of it, in the Ishopanishad where it says *Yastu sarvani bhutani atmanya-vanupasyati*: the one self which has become all things. We have this great formula. But after all this process, this is Savitri's experience as described on page 556:

Mind was a single innumerable look
Upon himself and all that he became.
Life was his drama and the Vast a stage,
The universe was his body, God its soul.

Every day we see God. Every day He changes His dress. Every three months He changes His dress completely. Sometimes His dress is green, sometimes it's brown, sometimes it's white. If we go to Siberia or the mountains He wears a white dress because He likes that. When it's a barren desert He wears a golden-brown dress. It's God's dress. Sometimes at night he wears a dark dress which is full of stars shining like his mala. The universe is His body.

All was one single immense reality,
All its innumerable phenomenon.
Her spirit saw the world as living God;

Not just a divine Presence hidden within, *nityo nityanam chetanas chetananam*, but something dynamic, active, living, that is forever bringing out new things, changing, taking things into itself. It is living God: not just a Presence which is inert and inactive like Shiva lying under Kali's feet but a living and dynamic God.

It saw the One and knew that all was He.

This 'all' is literally all and everything: from tree and flower and plant Savitri discovers everything to be nothing else but the one

being, the one infinite, and she herself is identified with all that.
Lovely lines:

She was a subconscious life of tree and flower,
The outbreak of the honied buds of spring;
She burned in the passion and splendour of the rose,
She was the red heart of the passion-flower,
The dream-white of the lotus in its pool.

If people ask us “Where is God?”, after reading these lines we can say that he is everywhere. Only our eyes are not attuned to see him everywhere because they are imprisoned by the ego and the mind and the senses.

Out of subconscious life she climbed to mind,

From identification with ‘*tree and flower*’ we have to go further and further.

She was thought and the passion of the world’s heart,
She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
She was the climbing of his soul to God.

It is She who carries on the journey. More than our journey it is the journey of the Eternal within us, it is the journey of the Divine Mother within us. That’s why there is hope. It means that those who despair and say “Oh I am no good!” are relying on their own ego. I may be no good by my own egoistic standards or by the standards that others set for me; but if the Divine has called me, surely He knows whom He has called. He knows what nutcases we are. He knows all the twists and turns of our nature, and He knows what He is going to do with this material because it is nothing but the Divine himself. He knows Himself and that is why there is hope for us.

She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
She was the climbing of his soul to God.
The cosmos flowered in her, she was its bed.
She was Time and the dreams of God in Time;

This is why she knows all the pralayas which have taken place. She is Mahakali who changes Time. But who is this ‘*godhead hid in the*

heart of man? Gauri, the Mother, the Divine Mother, waiting for her moment to come. And when Kali, Time, has cleared the way, then she will step out for the new creation. So:

She was Time and the dreams of God in Time;
She was Space and the wideness of his days.

But who is She? Who can ever know?

From this she rose where Time and Space were not;

Here we see the Divine Mother in her triple identity, as the individual, the universal and the transcendent – and if we may say so, something beyond all the three.

From this she rose where Time and Space were not;
The superconscient was her native air,
Infinity was her movement's natural space;
Eternity looked out from her on Time.

And yet – this is the marvel of marvels – this Eternity, this Infinity has chosen to wear a human form, a limited face. All that we can do from our side is to have gratitude in our hearts towards that.

Very often people ask “What has Sri Aurobindo done?” It's a weird question but you have to tackle all kinds of questions. My take on it is that Sri Aurobindo has given many gifts to the world, right from his revolutionary days: gifts to India; gifts in the form of great ideas released into the world; the thoughts and knowledge that came through the *Arya*; the gift of Integral Yoga which is a path in its own right; the gift of a space – the Ashram – where we can all engage in yoga; the gift of Auroville where people from all over the world can come; and here is another marvellous gift – some 300 people can sit in this hall and share something on Mother and Sri Aurobindo. And above all the gift of *Savitri*: I believe that if Sri Aurobindo had given nothing else and done nothing more, *Savitri* alone would have been more than enough. What he has given us is far, far more than we can assimilate. *Savitri* alone is sufficient unto itself. Just reading *Savitri* can take us to the highest realisations of the yoga of transformation. How can it do that? Some people say, “Ah! This is a holy sentiment!” But no, it is a very ancient

knowledge. The tantric yogis would invoke a deity through *yantra*, *mantra* and *puja*, but particularly *mantra*. By the *mantra*, the sound-body, they would bring the deity near. Sri Aurobindo knows that the Divine Mother cannot come just like that, She is beyond all this. But he too created a *mantra* and wherever this *mantra* is chanted or read, in whatever way – it doesn't matter – she comes there because this *mantra* is nothing else but her body, her sound-body, her word-body. That's what Savitri is – a living, eternal Presence in the human heart.

My Savitri Work with the Mother
by
Huta D. Hindocha

Huta was preparing this book for publication when she passed away on 17 November 2011. It gives a unique account of her 18 years of working association with the Mother on Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic. Now it is shared with humanity, as she wished, by her Havyavahana Trust.

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The English of *Savitri*

Book Two, Canto Four

The Kingdoms of the Little Life

Section 4, lines 201-349

by Shraddhavan

We are following King Aswapati in his exploration of the planes of existence which come into being through the evolution of Life in Matter. They are not involutory worlds. In the involution there is a descent of all the higher principles and planes into Matter, from where they gradually emerge in the process of evolution. We read about this upward and downward ladder of planes at the end of Book One, Canto Five, and again in Book Two, Canto One on page 99 it is mentioned briefly. When life starts to emerge out of Matter then new universal levels of being are created. This canto describes three such levels. The first two sections introduced us to this evolutionary process, and the short third section described the first emergence of short-lived life-forms still dominated by the inertia of matter. The section concluded with the line '*Nothing seemed worth the labour to become*': what use is such a helpless and petty world – this most material level of life? But now Sri Aurobindo will tell us that King Aswapati is able to see beyond the apparently worthless appearances to the greater significance of this plane.

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

Looking at the first very primitive forms of life which emerged in this early stage of the evolution of life on earth – one which lasted about three hundred and fifty million years, the biologists tell us – any visitor to earth from outer space during that time would not have seen anything very promising and might well have

wondered whether the existence of these tiny helpless life-forms was really worthwhile. But King Aswapati's '*wakened eye*' sees these appearances differently. His spiritual consciousness is like a single star burning alone, a solitary representative guardian Light, awake and watching amidst '*the drift and teeming of a mindless Night*'. The only conscious being in a world that seems '*aimless*', he is looking forward to a '*tremendous dawn of God*' when the full light of higher consciousness will illumine this '*mindless Night*'; and from that perspective he can see '*the purpose in the works of Time*.'

For our mental consciousness it is very difficult to detect a '*purpose in the works of Time*'. We need Sri Aurobindo to see it for us and tell us about it. But Aswapati, with his awakened spiritual consciousness, and the knowledge that he has gained through his tapasya, is able to see a purpose and significance even in the first tentative manifestations of life in material forms.

Q: What is this '*drift and teeming*'?

At this level, there is no clear direction and things are drifting aimlessly. There are many many tiny creatures swarming around in that '*mindless Night*'; it is '*teeming*' with small primitive life forms. It all seems meaningless and worthless, but Aswapati, with his deeper spiritual vision, can see that

Even in that aimlessness a work was done
Pregnant with magic will and change divine.

Even in all that apparent '*aimlessness*', that '*drift and teeming of a mindless Night*', a great work is being done, which will give birth to the magical fulfilment of a divine intention and a divine change.

The first writhings of the cosmic serpent Force
Uncoiled from the mystic ring of Matter's trance;
It raised its head in the warm air of life.

This stage represents '*The first writhings of the cosmic serpent Force*'. Serpents symbolise energy and force. '*Writhings*' are the coiling movements made by snakes. The universal dynamic Force of evolution is just starting to wake up. It has been rolled up, asleep

in *'the mystic ring of Matter's trance'*, like a snake hibernating in cold weather. Reptiles need warmth in order to be able to move; now *'in the warm air of life'* the evolutionary Force is beginning to wake up, to uncoil and move. This is the first stage of the emergence of life in matter.

It could not cast off yet Night's stiffening sleep
Or wear as yet mind's wonder-flecks and streaks,
Put on its jewelled hood the crown of soul
Or stand erect in the blaze of spirit's sun.

At first the *'serpent Force'* cannot *'cast off'* its *'stiffening sleep'* of Night, of Unconsciousness. In cold countries snakes hibernate through the winter, and if you come across them they may be absolutely stiff like a piece of wood. Similarly the Life-Force when it first starts to wake up is rigid and unable to move freely, but later on it will awaken fully and develop a beautiful skin to match its growing mind consciousness. Since mind is a state of mingled knowledge and ignorance, the cosmic serpent will not become fully golden at first but will get *'flecks'*, patches and *'streaks'*, lines of brightness and colour. It will develop a beautiful jewelled hood, the sign of the soul; eventually, no longer writhing on the ground, it will be able to *'stand erect in the blaze of spirit's sun'*. Sometimes we see images of the Buddha protected by this cosmic snake with its hood open, wearing a jewelled crown. All that is yet to come; for now Aswapati is observing *'The first writhings of the cosmic serpent Force'* expressed in the first primitive life-forms.

As yet were only seen foulness and force,
The secret crawl of consciousness to light
Through a fertile slime of lust and battenning sense,
Beneath the body's crust of thickened self
A tardy fervent working in the dark,
The turbid yeast of Nature's passionate change,
Ferment of the soul's creation out of mire.

All that can be seen at first of that future greatness, that divine change, is only *'foulness'* – mud, mould, slime – and *'force'*: a dynamic energy is there. These are the first manifestations of life in matter. They represent *'The secret crawl of consciousness to*

light'. As soon as life emerges, there is some first manifestation of consciousness; but it is nothing like what it will become with the development of mind, of soul, of spirit. The first movements of consciousness resemble a worm crawling '*Through a fertile slime of lust and battenning sense*'. Those first life forms must have formed from slimes and moulds and yeasts. '*Slime*', which we consider dirty and disgusting and a sign of decomposition, can also give rise to new life; but the first expressions of that awakening life are '*lust*', desire in its crudest form, '*and battenning sense*': the bacteria and one-celled creatures are eagerly feeding on each other. '*Battenning*' is what parasites do: they eat up their hosts; or scavenger animals '*batten*', feast greedily on dead bodies. In those primitive creatures, there is a first manifestation of the action of the senses, some perception of what is desirable and what is undesirable, what is good to eat and what should be avoided. The first emergence of '*sense*' is like that: it just wants to devour things, take them into itself. Aswapati sees this slow emergence of consciousness going on below the outer physical surfaces: '*Beneath the body's crust of thickened self*'. This '*working*' is '*tardy*': it is taking a long time; but nevertheless it is '*fervent*', very energetically active. This '*turbid yeast of Nature's passionate change*' is working away '*in the dark*', under the surface where it cannot be seen. '*Yeast*' is an organic substance we use to start fermentation, for example in baking bread. We can buy yeast in the form of a dry powder; if we mix it with water or milk and add a little sugar the mixture will start to bubble and produces a '*turbid*' muddy-looking liquid which is active and bubbling. We can add it to flour to make dough. The liquid yeast will make the dough rise and puff up so that it can be baked to make bread. '*Turbid*' means both '*dark*' and '*disturbed*', '*in movement*'. Yeast '*ferments*': it turns sugars into energy. Life starts emerging from Matter in the form of '*mire*', sticky, slimy mud. A basis has to be created for the emergence of the soul in a body. Under the outer crust of the body, these active processes are going on to enable it to live and develop. This is the '*Ferment of the soul's creation out of mire*'.

A heavenly process donned this grey disguise,
A fallen ignorance in its covert night
Laboured to achieve its dumb unseemly work,

A camouflage of the Inconscient's need
To release the glory of God in Nature's mud.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that behind '*this grey disguise*' of these primitive life forms '*A heavenly process*', a divine working is going on. 'To don' means to put on a garment, a robe or cloak or a disguise. In secret, in the darkness of this '*covert night*', an ignorant consciousness is labouring, working hard to achieve '*its dumb unseemly work*'. '*Unseemly*' means 'ugly' and 'disgusting'. But this unattractive appearance is a '*camouflage*' of the '*need*', the inbuilt urge of the Inconscient to '*release the glory of God in Nature's mud*'. Aswapati sees this process going on and can see where it is leading: this '*unseemly*' fermentation is going to release mind, it is going to release soul: it is going to release '*the glory of God*' even in the mud of earth-nature.

Q: What is '*camouflage*'?

Soldiers wear '*camouflage*', specially coloured clothing to make them difficult to see; they also camouflage their camps to make them merge with their surroundings; many animals, especially chameleons and octopuses, are able to alter their skin-colours to make them invisible to predators. Here it means 'a deceptive appearance'.

His sight, spiritual in embodying orbs,
Could pierce through the grey phosphorescent haze
And scan the secrets of the shifting flux
That animates these mute and solid cells
And leads the thought and longing of the flesh
And the keen lust and hunger of its will.

Aswapati can see and understand this '*heavenly process*' going on because even his physical eyes, his '*embodying orbs*', have the power of spiritual sight. '*Orbs*' is a poetic way of referring to the eyes; an '*orb*' is a sphere and our eyeballs are spherical in shape. With his power of spiritual vision, Aswapati is able to '*pierce through the grey phosphorescent haze*': to penetrate the luminous fog which is the atmosphere of that realm. Phosphorescence is bio-luminescence: light created by living organisms. Because Aswapati can see through that hazy atmosphere he is able to '*scan the secrets of the shifting*

flux'. There is a flow, a '*flux*', a tide of energy that '*animates these mute and solid cells*'. The cells of a living body are made of matter, but they are 'animated', made living by a flow of life-energy. That makes the difference between a physical body and a purely material form like a stone. There is some movement of life-energy in even the simplest cell, and that ever-dissatisfied and searching life-flow leads the thoughts and desires of our flesh; the physical substance of our bodies has its own keen lusts – its strong desires and hungers and its own wills and choices which are expressed in spontaneous life-movements.

This too he tracked along its hidden stream
And traced its acts to a miraculous fount.

With his power of spiritual vision Aswapati is able to trace the course of that '*hidden stream*' of life-energy back to its source. He finds that it originates from '*a miraculous fount*', a spring, like the source of a stream or river, which is described in the next sentence:

A mystic Presence none can probe nor rule,
Creator of this game of ray and shade
In this sweet and bitter paradoxical life,
Asks from the body the soul's intimacies
And by the swift vibration of a nerve
Links its mechanic throbs to light and love.

He finds that the source of this flow of life-energy is '*A mystic Presence*'. Nobody can '*probe*' or '*rule*' that mysterious Presence which is the '*Creator of this game of ray and shade*', the life of this world of dualities and contradictions in which sunlight and shadow alternate, which is both '*sweet and bitter*', which is '*paradoxical*', apparently self-contradictory. The '*mystic Presence*' which is the source of all life wants physical bodies to become able to experience and express '*the soul's intimacies*': the subtle sensations and emotions that are characteristic of the soul. To make this possible, it develops a nervous system which links the mechanical movements of the body with conscious sense-perceptions and with emotions. Our scientists cannot really explain how '*the swift vibration of a nerve*' does this; they say that electrical or chemical impulses carry sense-impressions to the brain which interprets them as either pleasing or

painful. But here Sri Aurobindo is giving a different explanation. He tells us that a divine observing Presence behind is asking the body to respond and giving it the means to do so. Through '*the swift vibration of a nerve*', the body's '*mechanic throbs*' – the apparently automatic and unconscious movements of the physical body – are connected to experiences which are super-physical: spiritual light, consciousness and Love.

It summons the spirit's sleeping memories
Up from subconscious depths beneath Time's foam;
Oblivious of their flame of happy truth,
Arriving with heavy eyes that hardly see,
They come disguised as feelings and desires,
Like weeds upon the surface float awhile
And rise and sink on a somnambulist tide.

The '*mystic Presence*' at the fount of life calls up '*the spirit's sleeping memories*' of consciousness and bliss from the '*subconscious depths beneath Time's foam*' where they are lying as if at the bottom of a deep ocean of unconsciousness. Time with its hours and moments is just the '*foam*', the bubbles on the surface of that sea. When they are summoned, the spirit's memories rise up towards the surface, but they have forgotten the truth of their origin, they are '*Oblivious of their flame of happy truth*'. So they arrive sleepily '*with heavy eyes*', hardly able to open their eyes. They reach us '*disguised as feelings and desires*' so we have no idea that they really originate from faint memories of the spirit's original state of bliss. Those '*feelings and desires*' float on the surface of our consciousness for a time like seaweed on the surface of the sea, '*And rise and sink on a somnambulist tide*'. A '*somnambulist*' is a person who walks around in their sleep; the surface consciousness is asleep, but the sleepwalker gets up, driven by some inner impulsion; their eyes are closed, yet they show perfect consciousness as they move around. They do things that we would never dream of doing in the waking state, such as walking along high narrow ledges; so it is considered very dangerous to wake them up until they have returned safely to their bed, because if they suddenly become conscious in a strange place they might fall. They are being guided by some inner consciousness. A

subconscious '*somnambulist tide*' is guiding the body's responses as if with perfect awareness.

Impure, degraded though her motions are,
Always a heaven-truth broods in life's deeps;
In her obscurest members burns that fire.

The '*motions*' or movements of the life-force in matter are often '*Impure*' and '*degraded*' because of her fallen state under the domination of inconscience and ignorance. But nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo tells us, a divine truth is always brooding in her depths, and even in her darkest parts, '*her obscurest members*', the fire of that '*mystic Presence*' is burning. The '*heaven-truth*' which is brooding in her depths will give birth to diviner things. The origin of life is divine and so all the expressions of life must also become divine. In the present stage of evolution the movements of the life-force may be impure and degraded but Sri Aurobindo does not want us to reject life. We may reject the impurities, but Life itself is a divine power which we should honour and treasure. This is one of the ways in which Sri Aurobindo's view is different from that of many other spiritual paths. Many spiritual seekers feel that in order to reach a higher consciousness they must reject and exclude the ordinary movements of life; but Sri Aurobindo is repeatedly telling us that life itself is a divine power and is destined to become able to express itself divinely even here in the material world. We should not try to erase it or suppress it and deprive ourselves of that divine force of creativity and its power for positive change.

A touch of God's rapture in creation's acts,
A lost remembrance of felicity
Lurks still in the dumb roots of death and birth,
The world's senseless beauty mirrors God's delight.

Although we do not always see it or sense it, something divine is hiding '*in the dumb roots of death and birth*'. We are subject to mortal life which seems to be a progress from cradle to grave and grave to cradle again, but hidden from us in the deeper levels of that process there remains always '*A touch of God's rapture in creation's acts*', his creative joy. Sri Aurobindo tells us that the origin of creation is not Desire, as some spiritual teachings declare, but Delight. The

remembrance of God's delight in creating the world is still held in the '*dumb roots of death and birth*', and because of that we can look around and enjoy all the apparently meaningless beauty of nature. It is a reflection of the delight of the divine: '*The world's senseless beauty mirrors God's delight*'.

That rapture's smile is secret everywhere;
It flows in the wind's breath, in the tree's sap,
Its hued magnificence blooms in leaves and flowers.

The '*smile*' of that divine rapture is everywhere, in everything; but it is secret, hidden, lurking. We do not always see it or do not recognise that we are seeing it. That smile of creative rapture '*flows in the wind's breath, in the tree's sap*'. '*Sap*' is the liquid which circulates in plants, the juice that carries their life-force. The '*hued magnificence*' of that smile blooms and blossoms in the many colours of '*leaves and flowers*'.

When life broke through its half-drowse in the plant
That feels and suffers but cannot move or cry,
In beast and in winged bird and thinking man
It made of the heart's rhythm its music's beat;
It forced the unconscious tissues to awake
And ask for happiness and earn the pang
And thrill with pleasure and laughter of brief delight,
And quiver with pain and crave for ecstasy.

This is what has happened as life evolved beyond the plant: in plants, the poet says, the life-force is half asleep, drowsy; plants can feel and suffer but they cannot '*move or cry*' as animals can. But in animals and birds and human beings the life-force has '*made of the heart's rhythm its music's beat*'. The rhythm of heart-beats is the characteristic music of life. This rhythmic music has '*forced the unconscious tissues to awake*', making them '*ask for happiness and earn the pang*': our efforts to gain happiness often only bring us pain, but the awakened tissues can also '*thrill with pleasure and laughter of brief delight*', or they can '*quiver*' or tremble '*with pain*' and '*crave for ecstasy*'. Craving is an intense desire for the intense delight which is ecstasy. All these sensations and emotions are expressions of the life-force in the body. Here Sri Aurobindo gives

us a succession of verbs, of words indicating movement: life forces the ‘*unconscious tissues*’ of the body to awake, to ask, to earn, to thrill, to quiver and to crave; and the thrill of life brings us ‘*pleasure*’ and the ‘*laughter of brief delight*’: sometimes we may laugh out loud with delight, but only for a moment or two.

Imperative, voiceless, ill-understood,
Too far from light, too close to being’s core,
Born strangely in Time from the eternal Bliss,
It presses on heart’s core and vibrant nerve;
Its sharp self-seeking tears our consciousness;
Our pain and pleasure have that sting for cause:
Instinct with it, but blind to its true joy
The soul’s desire leaps out towards passing things.

This refers to the life-force as we experience it on our present level of evolution. It has been born ‘*from the eternal Bliss*’, as Sri Aurobindo told us earlier¹, but it has been ‘*Born strangely in Time*’: this expression of the divine Consciousness-Force has entered into this world of Time and become subject to the domination of Matter. Here it is ‘*Too far from Light*’, too far away from its original Light of pure Consciousness, and yet it is still ‘*too close to being’s core*’, too close to the very heart of our existence for us to ignore it: it is ‘*voiceless*’ and ‘*ill-understood*’: it does not speak clearly to our mental understanding, it is a mystery to us, but its mysterious urges and compulsions are ‘*Imperative*’: we cannot deny them. It presses on the ‘*heart’s core*’, the very centre of the heart, the seat of our emotions, and on the nerves as they vibrate with sensations. The life-force in us is seeking for its essence and its fulfilment and its ‘*sharp self-seeking tears our consciousness*’ waking us up to both pleasure and pain. The evolving soul identifies with the life movement. It becomes ‘*Instinct with it*’, pervaded by that awakening ‘*sting*’. As long as it identifies with the life movements the soul is ‘*blind to its true joy*’. Instead ‘*The soul’s desire leaps out towards passing things*’, things that are not eternal, which do not last. It is in love

1. ‘... pure and bright from the Timeless was her birth, ...
Beauty and happiness are her native right
And endless Bliss is her eternal home.’ – *Savitri* p.118

now with one thing and then another. It is only when the soul can detach itself from identification with the life movements that it begins to find true joy.

All Nature's longing drive none can resist,
Comes surging through the blood and quickened sense;
An ecstasy of the infinite is her cause.

The longing of the life-energy in Nature just gets hold of us, none of us can resist it. When it '*Comes surging through the blood*' like a tsunami the senses 'quicken': they wake up, become alive and alert. 'Quick' of course has the idea of speed; but in poetic English 'quick' also means 'alive'. We speak of 'the quick and the dead', meaning the living and those who are no longer living. When the senses 'quicken' they become more alive, more alert, more conscious; so when the '*longing drive*' of nature is impelling us all the senses are '*quicken*' and become super-sensitive. The cause of that '*longing drive*' is '*An ecstasy of the infinite*'. That is why it is so imperative, so irresistible. In us, that '*ecstasy of the infinite*' gets turned into the limited movements, the '*finite loves and lusts*', which are characteristic of the life-force at work within the body, which Sri Aurobindo expresses in the next sentence:

It turns in us to finite loves and lusts,
The will to conquer and have, to seize and keep,
To enlarge life's room and scope and pleasure's range,
To battle and overcome and make one's own,
The hope to mix one's joy with others' joy,
A yearning to possess and be possessed,
To enjoy and be enjoyed, to feel, to live.

First, '*The will to conquer and have*', '*to seize and keep*': to get hold of and hold onto. Then, the urge to widen: '*To enlarge life's room and scope and pleasure's range*'. It is the life-urge that opens us up to larger and wider experience, overcoming the *tamas*, the inertia that is characteristic of matter, and enlarging the range of our pleasures and pains. People who have this life force very strongly in them do not even seem to mind whether it is pleasure or pain they are feeling: they want intensity of experience and lots of different experiences. That urge makes us ready to '*battle and overcome and*

make one's own'. People set themselves challenges or set out in search of them, to master difficulties. And then of course there is the drive towards oneness that makes us hope to mix our own joy with the joy of other people in relationships and the '*yearning to possess and be possessed*', '*To enjoy and be enjoyed, to feel*'. This is life; this is what it means to live. The '*ecstasy of the infinite*' expresses itself in these ways in our limited, separative personalities, making us grow, widen, expand, leading us ever further on our journey towards fulfilment.

Here was its early brief attempt to be,
Its rapid end of momentary delight
Whose stamp of failure haunts all ignorant life.
Inflicting still its habit on the cells
The phantom of a dark and evil start
Ghostlike pursues all that we dream and do.

In this Kingdom of the Little Life, Aswapati sees the '*early brief attempt*' of the life-force to exist expressing itself in these ways, and also '*Its rapid end*'. Any delight that comes is just '*momentary*', it lasts only a moment. That limitation of delight and force is the '*stamp of failure*' which '*haunts all ignorant life*'. Wherever life is ignorant and limited, that '*stamp of failure*' is always inevitably there, spoiling whatever achievements and experiences are attempted. Aswapati is seeing this on the plane of the '*Little Life*' which represents our evolutionary beginnings. This habit of coming into existence for a brief moment and seizing as much as we can before we have to die is conditioning the cells of our body even now, when we have developed into much more complex beings. The ghost of that '*dark and evil start*', that painful and distorting emergence of life in matter, is still there in our cells and acting on us, pursuing and affecting '*all that we dream and do*'. The life-force gives us wonderful dreams, but also at the same time the feeling that they are out of our reach: if we try to achieve them, some check, some failure will come and prevent us. The words '*haunting*', '*phantom*', '*Ghostlike*', all suggest that a '*dark ambiguous presence*'¹ is hanging around all our attempts at higher achievements and thwarting or spoiling them.

1. *Savitri*, p.130

Although on earth are firm established lives,
A working of habit or a sense of law,
A steady repetition in the flux,
Yet are its roots of will ever the same;
These passions are the stuff of which we are made.

We are living here on earth where there are '*firm established lives*', unlike that plane of the Little Life where everything was unsteady and fleeting, where those little entities were coming briefly into existence and then disappearing. Sometimes if we wake from a rather unpleasant dream we may experience a sense of relief to find ourselves again in the physical world where things are stable and fixed so that we know more or less where they are, and they stay where they are put. Here on earth a '*working of habit*' keeps things relatively stable. There is some '*sense of law*' and predictability that allows us to feel that we know how to deal with things. There is '*A steady repetition in the flux*': there is a flow of things – '*flux*' means flow – but it follows similar lines, which gives us a feeling of familiarity and reliability: a new day dawns and passes, night comes and we go to bed feeling quite confident that another day will come; the days pass and the seasons pass, we start small and gradually grow: there is a '*flux*' of constant change but there is '*A steady repetition*' in the flow. But behind all this, at the origin of all this, '*its roots of will*' remain the same as in the Kingdoms of the Little Life. '*These passions are the stuff of which we are made*'.

This was the first cry of the awaking world.
It clings around us still and clamps the god.
Even when reason is born and soul takes form,
In beast and reptile and in thinking man
It lasts and is the fount of all their life.

What Aswapati is witnessing in these Kingdoms of the Little Life is '*the first cry of the awaking world*': the cry of life being born. That first experience is still clinging around us, gripping us like a clamp. Carpenters use clamps when they want to keep their wood fixed so that it will not move. There is a god within us trying to emerge, but that growing divinity is clamped, held tight by these primitive life

impulses. So ‘*Even when reason is born and soul takes form*’, still in the animals and the reptiles ‘*and in thinking man*’ that first cry of life persists. It is the ‘*fount*’ from which all earth-life flows. Even we mental beings still have our reptilian brain; we do not know much about what it is doing really but it dominates our physical life. We are still carrying our animal past in our DNA: ‘*It lasts and is the fount of all [our] life*’. Why did things have to take this form? Sri Aurobindo tells us:

This too was needed that breath and living might be.

‘*This too was needed*’, this whole process was needed in order that ‘*breath*’, Prana, life-force, could become active here in the material universe.

The spirit in a finite ignorant world
Must rescue so its prisoned consciousness
Forced out in little jets at quivering points
From the Inconscient’s sealed infinitude.

Our world is not infinite. It is ‘*a finite ignorant world*’: a world of limitation, separation and ignorance. Under these conditions, this was the way in which universal spirit could begin to rescue its infinite consciousness ‘*prisoned*’ in matter. With the emergence of life, the consciousness imprisoned in matter gets ‘*Forced out in little jets at quivering points*’. These ‘*quivering points*’ are the first small individual beings in which consciousness begins to escape from ‘*the Inconscient’s sealed infinitude*’. There is this infinite mass of inconscient matter in which infinite consciousness is imprisoned. How can it be released? We can say that all matter is absolutely packed with consciousness but has no means of expressing itself until life appears and begins to wake up in substance. It emerges in individual bodies: first in very, very simple life forms and then in more complex ones. These life-forms have all been born from matter, so they are all following the same law.

Then slowly it gathers mass, looks up at Light.
This Nature lives tied to her origin,
A clutch of nether force is on her still;
Out of unconscious depths her instincts leap;

A neighbour is her life to insentient Nought.
Under this law an ignorant world was made.

The spirit in a finite ignorant world must rescue its prisoned consciousness in this way from the inconscient. It starts in a very small way but then *'slowly it gathers mass'*. When it reaches a certain level, it can look *'up at Light'*, becoming aware of the possibility of greater consciousness. But this earth-Nature *'lives tied to her origin'*: the Inconscient. *'A clutch of nether force is on her still'*: a *'clutch'* means 'a grip': earth-Nature is still in the grip of a *'nether force'*. *'Nether'* means 'lower'. A force from below, from the Inconscient, is still holding tight onto the Nature that we know. *'Her instincts'* are coming up out of *'unconscious depths'*. Instincts tell animals what to do in order to survive; they represent a kind of knowledge, a kind of consciousness. But in our world the instincts are coming up out of the unconscious depths. Life on earth is *'neighbour to insentient Nought'*: it lives very close to a Nothingness which has no feelings, no sense-capacities. Sense is a form of consciousness that is characteristic of living matter. But earth-life has emerged from inconscient matter which is *'insentient'*, without the power of sense. *'Under this law an ignorant world was made'*. This ignorant half-conscious world that we live in has been made under *'this law'*: the law of life and mind under the domination of matter.

In the enigma of the darkened Vasts,
In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite
When all was plunged in the negating Void,
Non-Being's night could never have been saved
If Being had not plunged into the dark
Carrying with it its triple mystic cross.

These are such mysterious and powerful lines! They are among the lines that the Mother has recorded, and Sunil-da has composed wonderfully moving music to accompany her reading of them. Let us try and understand them. *'In the enigma of the darkened Vasts'*: an *'enigma'* is a riddle or mystery, a puzzle that is very difficult to understand. The existence of the material universe is an *'enigma'*: where has it come from and why? We believe, we are

told, that the origin of everything is Sat-Chit-Ananda: pure and perfect Existence which is perfectly Conscious and full of power, and also full of perfect Bliss. But if that eternal and infinite state is the origin of everything, how could it possibly become or create or manifest this world that we live in? In these lines Sri Aurobindo seems to be speaking of some cosmic or super-cosmic disaster, in which the infinite and eternal has undergone a dark transformation: a *'passion and self-loss of the Infinite'* in which all existence has been plunged into a *'negating Void'* which is the very opposite of 'Sachchidananda': an Asat, *'Non-Being'*, a state of non-existence. He does not tell us how or why such an event could happen, but he tells us that in order to rescue that Non-Being from its dark state, its *'night'*, *'Being'* – pure and absolute Existence – had to plunge after it into the darkness, *'Carrying with it its triple mystic cross'*. The word *'passion'* has different shades of meaning but always implies intense feeling of some kind. In Christian terms we speak of 'the passion of Christ', meaning the suffering of Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. Here it is *'the passion and self-loss of the Infinite'*: in the process of involution the supreme consciousness, by a deliberate choice, loses awareness of its origin, loses awareness of its own true self: super-consciousness becomes the inconscient. As a result *'all was plunged in the negating Void'*, falling down into a dark emptiness that says 'No' to all existence, to all consciousness, to all delight. It becomes as it were, Non-Being. That night of Non-Being *'could never have been saved'* if Being – conscious existence – *'had not plunged into the dark / Carrying with it its triple mystic cross'*.

'Sachchidananda' is the term coined by the ancient rishis to express the triple terms of being – Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. The cross symbolises the suffering of the Divine in the material universe: the straight path of the divine descent and ascent being resisted, barred by the resistance of the fallen world.

Invoking in world-time the timeless truth,
 Bliss changed to sorrow, knowledge made ignorant,
 God's force turned into a child's helplessness
 Can bring down heaven by their sacrifice.

This is ‘*the dread mysterious sacrifice*’¹ by which bliss changes to sorrow, knowledge becomes ignorance and God’s omnipotence is turned into the helplessness of a little child. This sacrifice is made in order to invoke, to call down into ‘*world-time*’ ‘*the timeless truth*’ and to ‘*bring down heaven*’.

Sri Aurobindo never uses the word ‘*sacrifice*’ as it normally is in the west, meaning ‘to give up something you value in a way that is very painful and causes you a great effort’. In the Indian way of seeing things a sacrifice is an offering that is made voluntarily to some higher power in the aspiration of receiving a boon, a blessing, in return. But Sri Aurobindo quotes from the Gita: ‘with sacrifice as their companion ... the All-father created this world’². He sees Sacrifice as the universal law of interchange between the higher consciousness and the lower consciousness which enables the evolutionary process to proceed. There is the sacrifice of the lower to the higher, an aspiration and self-giving to what we feel to be greater than ourselves and above us. This is a very powerful way for us to progress. But there is also the much more powerful sacrifice of the higher to the lower, which Sri Aurobindo refers to here: the Divine leaving its state of perfect existence, conscious-force and bliss to plunge into Non-Being, in order to bring existence, consciousness and bliss even there. The great sacrifice of the involution of the One makes possible the evolution of the Many and the All. And each step of evolution is aided by another descent. We read about this in the closing section of Canto Three. The potentiality for life was inherent in inconscient matter. To release it, to enable it to emerge, a movement of aspiration from below was needed. In response to that call, the free life-force from above descended to wake up the involved principle. But then the life-force itself was swallowed up in Matter and had to undergo the slow emergence that we have been reading about in this canto. We see the great mystery of sacrifice expressed dynamically in Sri Aurobindo’s symbol: the descent bringing about the ascent and the ascent bringing about the descent, represented by the downward- and upward-pointing triangles respectively.

1. CWSA 23-24:106

2. *Ibid.*

A contradiction founds the base of life:
The eternal, the divine Reality
Has faced itself with its own contraries;
Being became the Void and Conscious-Force
Nescience and walk of a blind Energy
And Ecstasy took the figure of world-pain.

As a result of this sacrifice of the higher to the lower through God's plunge '*into the dark*', life in the world is based on a '*contradiction*'. Sri Aurobindo states this very simply:

The eternal, the divine Reality
Has faced itself with its own contraries;

It is as if the supreme Reality has set itself an immense challenge: '*Being*', Sat, pure existence, has become '*the Void*' – emptiness, nothingness, non-existence; '*Conscious-Force*', Chit-Tapas, has turned its perfect consciousness and omnipotence into '*Nescience*' – absence of consciousness, a state of not-knowing, and the '*walk of a blind Energy*': the unseeing movements of unconscious material force; and '*Ecstasy*', the supreme inalienable Bliss, Ananda, '*took the figure of world-pain*', turning into the suffering and sorrow that afflicts the evolving manifestation. Why would the One supreme Existence-Consciousness-Bliss allow that to happen?

In a mysterious dispensation's law
A Wisdom that prepares its far-off ends
Planned so to start her slow aeonic game.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that these are the starting conditions, the basic rules chosen by the supreme Wisdom for '*her slow aeonic game*', which will be played out slowly through '*aeons*', the immeasurably long periods of time required to achieve her aims, the '*far-off ends*' of the evolution of divine life in the material universe. The word '*dispensation*' refers to the way that the Creator has arranged the Creation, the laws or methods that have been chosen to rule it. It seems that the starting-point for the manifestation which we find ourselves part of has been a choice of the supreme Reality to face itself with a play of '*contraries*', of oppositions. As a result, the game of Life starts with the emergence we have been reading about:

A blindfold search and wrestle and fumbling clasp
Of a half-seen Nature and a hidden Soul,
A game of hide-and-peek in twilight rooms,
A play of love and hate and fear and hope
Continues in the nursery of mind
Its hard and heavy romp of self-born twins.

These '*self-born twins*' are '*a half-seen Nature and a hidden Soul*': the Lord and his Mighty Mate, the Two-in-One, are playing out their game of hide-and-peek in the dim '*twilight rooms*' of the Ignorance, their '*nursery of mind*' where the game is a '*hard and heavy romp*', rough and crude. But it will not go on like that:

At last the struggling Energy can emerge
And meet the voiceless Being in wider fields;
Then can they see and speak and, breast to breast,
In a larger consciousness, a clearer light,
The Two embrace and strive and each know each
Regarding closer now the playmate's face.

In the course of unfolding time and evolution their '*hard and heavy romp*' of '*blindfold search and wrestle and fumbling clasp*' becomes more conscious. The '*struggling Energy*' of material Nature can meet her partner '*the voiceless Being*' who is Soul and Spirit in '*wider fields*' of consciousness than their original limited '*nursery*'. In the '*clearer light*' of that '*larger consciousness*' they can see each other better, and both Nature and Soul can recognise who their playmate is. That will lead to the fulfilment of the '*slow aeonic game*' in their playfield of universal Space and Time and Multiplicity.

Even in these formless coilings he could feel
Matter's response to an infant stir of soul.

Even in '*formless coilings*' of the least-developed of the realms of the Little Life, Aswapati is able to recognise what is going on in this game and to feel that the first movements of primitive life are the response of Matter to an '*infant stir of soul*', like the first uncoordinated movements of a newborn child.

In Nature he saw the mighty Spirit concealed,
Watched the weak birth of a tremendous Force,

Pursued the riddle of Godhead's tentative pace,
Heard the faint rhythms of a great unborn Muse.

What Aswapati is seeing in this Kingdom of the Little Life is '*the weak birth of a tremendous Force*'. He is able to see the '*mighty Spirit*' that is '*concealed*', hidden in apparently unconscious material Nature. He is able to trace '*the riddle of Godhead's tentative pace*', the mysterious appearance of the slow and hesitant first steps of developing Divinity, and to see where they are leading. He can faintly hear the rhythms of a glorious symphony which is in preparation by a great Muse, an inspiring creative Spirit who has not yet been born but who will inevitably emerge from these first stirrings of Life in Matter.

End of Book Two Canto Four Section Four

(to be continued)

Dreams for Coming Things

Some Paintings on Savitri

by

Marc Desplanque

Published by Savitri Foundation New Delhi,

e-mail: info@savitri.in

website: <http://www.savitri.in>

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Calendar of Events

November 2017 – February 2018

Regular weekly activities:

- Sundays 10.30 am-12 noon: *Savitri Study Circle*
- Mondays 3-4 pm: *Going Deep Within*, led by Dr. Jai Singh
- Tuesdays 9 am-12.00 noon: *Introduction to Integral Yoga*, led by Ashesh Joshi
- 3-4 pm: *Going Deep Within*, led by Dr. Jai Singh
- 4-5 pm: *L' Agenda de Mère* – Listening to The Mother's recorded talks with Gangalakshmi
- 4.45-5.45 pm: *Mudra Chi* - A body prayer in Tai-chi form based on the Mother's Mudras, led by Anandi
- 5-6 pm: *Let us learn Savitri together*, in Tamil, led by Buvana
- 5.45-7.15 pm: *OM Choir*
- Wednesdays 5.30-6.30 pm: *Essays on the Gita*, led by Shraddhavan
- Thursdays 4-5 pm: *The English of Savitri*, led by Shraddhavan
- Fridays 3-4 pm: *Exploring the Bhagavad Gita*, led by Dr. Jai Singh
- 4-5 pm: *L' Agenda de Mère* – Listening to The Mother's recorded talks with Gangalakshmi
- 5.30-7.00 pm: *Meditation with Hymns of the Rig Veda translated by Sri Aurobindo*, led by Nishtha
- Saturdays 4-5 pm: *L' Agenda de Mère* – Listening to The Mother's recorded talks with Gangalakshmi
- 5-6.30 pm: *Satsang* led by Ashesh Joshi

Monthly Activity:

Full Moon Gatherings in front of Sri Aurobindo's statue

Exhibitions November 2017 to February 2018

1. November 1-30: *Meditations on Savitri – Books Four to Seven*: paintings made by Huta with the Mother's guidance.
2. November 1-15 and 1 January to 15 February 2018: *Glimpses of the Mother*, texts and photographs.
3. 1 November to 28 February : *Sri Aurobindo: A life-sketch in photographs*.
4. February 21-28: *Divine Flowers* – live flowers and flower paintings with the Mother's Spiritual Significances

Special Events:

November

- 6 **Film** – *A New Birth* – a meeting of the Mother with Surendranath Jauhar on 11.05.1967, followed by *Adoration of the Divine Mother*.
- 13 **Film** – *The Mother – 'Glimpses of Her Life' and 'Four Aspects'*. We can see the Mother giving Darshan at the Ashram and hear her reading from Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother* with her organ music.
- 17 **Exhibition** – *Portraits, Dreams & Visions of Sri Aurobindo & The Mother*. Solo painting exhibition by Prabhat Kumar Rautray
- 20 **Film** – *Journey to the Life Divine – Part One*. This film created in the Ashram covers the lives and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from their childhood up to November 24, 1926.
- 27 **Film** – *Pictures of Sri Aurobindo's Poems – Part One*. A film by Manohar illustrated with paintings by Huta. The poems are read by Huta and accompanied with music by Sunil.

December

- 4 **Film** – *The Mother on Sri Aurobindo*. A film by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram made in 1992 and re-edited in 2015, followed by *Our Gratitude*, a musical offering specially composed for the centenary of the first meeting of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in 1914.
- 11 **Film** – *The Yoga after Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's Passing*. Dr. Alok Pandey speaks about yoga and the mystic union and how communion with the Divine is always an inner event.

- 18 **Film** – *Pictures of Sri Aurobindo's Poems – Part Two*. A film by Manohar illustrated with paintings by Huta. The poems are read by Huta and accompanied by Sunil-da's music.
- 23 **Talk** – *Facing Mental challenges on the Spiritual Path* by Dr. Alok Pandey.
- 25 **Film** – *Home – The Earth: our home is a miracle and a beauty*.
- 31 **Meditation** – A midnight meditation to give thanks for 2017 and welcome in 2018 in the Square Hall on December 31 from 11.30 pm onwards.

January 2018

- 8 **Film** – *Responses to Questions about Auroville* by Shraddhavan.
- 15 **Film** – *Shyama or 'Krishna the Dark in Feminine Form'* Part 1: the journey of one of Auroville's earliest pioneers.
- 22 **Film** – *Shyama or 'Krishna the Dark in Feminine Form'* Part 2
- 28 **Talk** – by Sri M *On Human Unity*.
- 29 **Film** – *Interview with Aurosylle* – one of Auroville's younger generation is interviewed by Narad.

February

- 5 **Film** – *The Children of Auroville: Part One, Early Education*.
- 12 **Film** – *Interview with Amy* by Narad, Part Two.
- 17 **Talk** – in Italian by Paola De Paolis on her latest book, '*Savitri – La scoperta dell'Anima e la vittoria sulla Morte*', ed. La Lepre, Roma.
- 18 **Talk** – *Inside the World Stair: Book Two of Savitri* : The 8th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture by Sonia Dyne.
- 19 **Savitri Around the World** : a project of Auroville International: complete continuous reading of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* by 471 readers from 99 locations around the world, starting from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and ending in Auroville. It was screened in the Sangam Hall from 6 am on Monday February 19 to 4.30 pm on Wednesday 21 February.
- 19 **Film** – *The One Whom We Adore as the Mother* – Film prepared by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives.

- 21-28 **Exhibition** – *Divine Flowers*: an exhibition of live flowers and flower paintings with the Mother’s spiritual significances and comments.
- 22 **Film** in Tamil – *Building Matrimandir : Labour of Love 1971-2008*.
- 26 **Film** – *Building Matrimandir : Labour of Love 1971-2008* (English version)
- 26 *Offering to the Divine Mother* by visiting Chinese devotees: Guqin music, Tai-chi routine, Dance with yoga poses and Tea Ceremony.
- 27 **Book Release with readings** – *50 Poems from Auroville*
- 28 **Presentation** – *Seven Years in the Woods of Sanskrit (संस्कृतवनेषु वर्षसप्तकम्)* by the Sanskrit Research Institute showing their work from 2011-2018.

In the Light of Savitri – A la luz de Savitri

96 Paintings on Savitri

by

Beatriz Uribe Vèlez

This book is bi-lingual and gives the text in both
Spanish and English

ISBN: 978-958-99101

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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

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Savitri
is a Mantra
for the transformation
of the world

The Mother