

Invocation

Savitri

B H A V A N

Study notes No. 49

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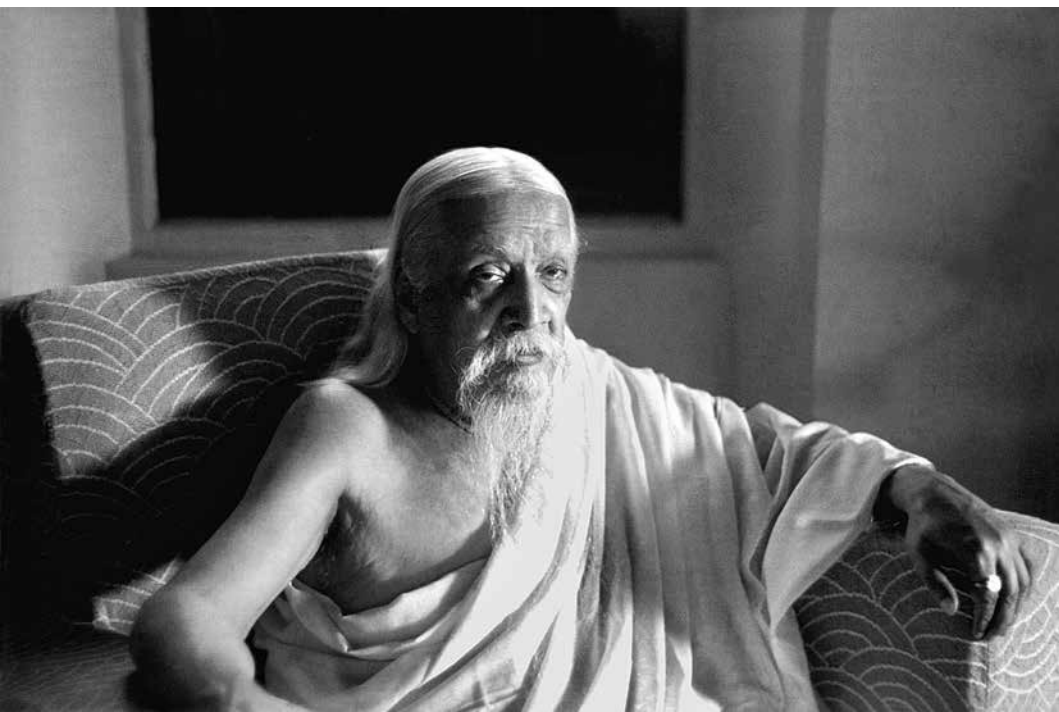
C O N T E N T S

Inside the World Stair <i>by Sonia Dyne</i>	4
The English of <i>Savitri</i> <i>by Shraddhavan</i>	28
<i>Savitri</i> Encyclopedia Project <i>by Sebastian Nitzschke</i>	61
Calendar of Events <i>March – September 2018</i>	63

Who can understand Sri Aurobindo? He is as vast as the universe and his teaching is infinite...

The only way to come a little close to him is to love him sincerely and give oneself unreservedly to his work. Thus, each one does his best and contributes as much as he can to that transformation of the world which Sri Aurobindo has predicted.

THE MOTHER
2 December 1964
MCW 12:397



Inside the World Stair

*The Eighth Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture
given by Sonia Dyne
at Savitri Bhavan on 19.02.2018*

In 2011 Sonia Dyne gave the second Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Lecture in the amphitheatre at Savitri Bhavan, with the title "Savitri, the Rainbow Bridge". In 2018 she graciously agreed to Mrs. Meera Nadkarni's request to give another Memorial Lecture. Sonia has a special connection with Sri Aurobindo's epic and with Dr. M.V. Nadkarni, in whose memory this lecture is held each year. She worked with him in Singapore and has been studying and giving talks about Savitri for many decades. Over recent years, Sonia has been pursuing a profound research into Book Two, The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, which deals with King Aswapati's exploration of the ascending series of planes of existence making up 'The World Stair'. In this talk she shared her insights on this, the longest Book of Savitri.

The Mother as the Mahashakti of this triple world of the Ignorance stands in an intermediate plane between the supramental Light, the Truth life, the Truth creation which has to be brought down here and this mounting and descending hierarchy of planes of consciousness that like a double ladder lapse into the nescience of Matter and climb back again through the flowering of life and soul and mind into the infinity of the Spirit.

Sri Aurobindo
The Mother

I feel immensely privileged to be talking to you dear fellow lovers of *Savitri* and friends of Dr. Nadkarni, in this beautiful Sangam Hall where everything seems to me to have been designed with a kind of heavenly inspiration from the speaker's point of view. From where I am sitting I am looking upwards at Sri Aurobindo, and feel, as I am sure many other speakers have done before me, that He is there. I

may make my salutations to him and I may offer at his feet the words that I shall speak today. I do not turn my head but I know that behind me there is the Mother, descending her stair as if through a magical gateway which opens into another time and space; and I know that she is looking up to Sri Aurobindo too. I feel among friends here. I feel almost the spirit of Dr. Nadkarni standing beside me. I am sorry that Mrs. Meera Nadkarni cannot be here with us today, because if she were she could confirm many of the things which I am going to say about that very remarkable man. Sri Aurobindo wrote ‘... we labour that from us may rise / A larger-seeing man with nobler heart’,¹ and those of you who knew the professor will realise that this is a very true description of Dr. Nadkarni himself. He was a modest man but totally devoted to his belief that India needed to hear the message of Sri Aurobindo. And I know, from having had the pleasure of his company for eight years in Singapore, that all his spare moments were devoted to trying to make sure that Sri Aurobindo’s message was heard. He had come to Singapore from the University of Hyderabad where he was Professor of Linguistics and he stayed with us there for eight years during which he managed to come and speak to the members of the Sri Aurobindo Society – we were a very small group in those days – almost every week. And he spoke with much fire and passion. One day after he had been reading some lines from *Savitri*, and the entire room reverberated with the passion of his voice, I turned to Meera and asked, “Is he like this at home too?” She said “No. He is a very quiet man.” Well, quiet he may have been but effective he certainly was, because he was much loved and is even now remembered with very great affection and respect. So here we are gathered together in these beautiful surroundings to honour the memory of Dr. Mangesh Nadkarni, my dear friend and mentor for so many years in Singapore. As it happened, it was not his academic work that brought us together but his deep appreciation of the poetry of Sri Aurobindo, and especially of *Savitri*. Above all it was the conviction and sheer enthusiasm he brought to the work of making Sri Aurobindo’s vision known which moved his audience then, and is still the memory I cherish. I know that he took very seriously the need to spread the message

1. *Savitri* p.342

of Sri Aurobindo throughout India and that he understood that India could be Guru to the world only if India could hear and receive the message of Sri Aurobindo. He devoted all his efforts to making that message known in India and abroad. I want to read you some words from *The Mother* which I think are very relevant:

India has become the symbolic representation of all the difficulties of modern mankind. India will be the land of its resurrection, the resurrection to a higher and truer life. That same thing which in the history of the universe made the earth the symbolic representation of the universe so as to be able to concentrate the work on one point – that same phenomenon is taking place now: India represents all the terrestrial human difficulties and it is in India that there will be a cure. And it is for this that I have been made to start Auroville.¹

Very significant words, and I am delighted to be able to speak them again in Auroville itself.

Dr. Nadkarni spoke everywhere with such faith and such conviction – he did not worry whether he had a large audience or a small one. In fact, there were occasions, so his wife Meera told me, when very few people attended the lecture, and once or twice, if I understood her rightly, she herself was the only person in the audience – but still he spoke. Why? Because somebody might come in, somebody who needed to hear that message; and if not, well, I think he spoke because he wanted to imprint that message on the very air of India. This is the man whom we remember and honour by this lecture tonight.

My chosen subject today is Sri Aurobindo's vision of '*The World Stair*'. However, it is not my intention to present a formal appreciation of either the literary or the philosophical content of Book Two of *Savitri*. Others have done that in the past, and in the future surely many will turn again to this most magical and enigmatic episode in *Savitri*. The exploration of the Stair that I present to you today is a deeply personal journey, my own voyage of discovery. I am also very aware of the constraints imposed on

1. *Mother's Agenda*, vol. 9, 2.3.1968.

me by time: I have one hour to set before you the issues I find most relevant to our own troubled age of transition; one hour to uncover the remedy that Sri Aurobindo has brought for the first time within our reach.

Book Two is one of the most marvellous but enigmatic Books in the whole of *Savitri* and you may think that it was a rather ambitious plan on my part, bearing in mind that The Mother had said in 1954 that it was impossible for the ordinary human mind to understand *Savitri* because it needed spiritual experience which we humans do not have. Well, that was then and then it was true. But I am an old person now and I am old enough to have seen the difference. My friends, we live in the age of Sri Aurobindo. He did not spend years in the solitude of one room for no reason. He wanted to bring down something of the higher consciousness and fix it in the earth atmosphere, and in this I know that he succeeded. I know because I am old enough to see the difference. Old age brings very few advantages but one of those advantages is hindsight, a free gift of wisdom which it goes on giving – not only illuminating the past, which we see with new eyes, but also casting light on the future direction that history has been preparing.

Let me give you some examples. Those words that you spoke in anger to a friend and agonised about afterwards: when you look at them with hindsight you see that what happened was that a relationship was cemented by the honesty and not destroyed at all. That terrible mistake you made in your youth: look at it with hindsight and it has changed; no longer does it appear to be a terrible mistake but rather an opportunity and a blessing in disguise. That is what hindsight does. We all need it and we older folk have more of it than anybody else. It is a free gift, as it were. And it is a gift that goes on giving, because when you look back with hindsight you can also see the way that the future is being prepared and that is quite a useful thing too. On a personal level, the terrible mistake that we agonised over for years becomes, with hindsight, a blessing in disguise. On the level of international affairs, even the catastrophe of war can only be understood when we see shining through the human tragedy its ultimate necessity and divine intent. I would like to take you back to the very fateful year of 1946: the

year of the Japanese surrender at the end of the Second World War. I well remember that there was singing and dancing in the streets and there was a great deal of rejoicing because the war was over, and I also saw that many good things happened despite the fact that we were at war. People were brought together in a very real sense of unity. Women were called up to do men's jobs and so were liberated from the drudgery of housework, and things like that happened which were not bad.

But there is a dark side to 1946 too: the mass destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The end of the war came about at a terrible cost. We suddenly found ourselves in the nuclear age and that changed everything. For a long time there had been a kind of confidence in the world and that was shaken. Sri Aurobindo believed and taught that life was inherent in all matter. Now, what happens when you split the atom? If life is inherent in every atom of matter something rather terrible happens when you split the atom. Life has held her contrary Death in her firm warm embrace since the beginning of time – and suddenly the atom is split and Death is let loose upon the world and that doom still hangs over us.

What did Sri Aurobindo do in 1946? He had thrown the weight of his spiritual force behind the Allies during the war and had watched the course of the war very closely. When that responsibility was taken from him, the first thing he did was to turn to *Savitri*; turning to *Savitri*, he immediately turned to Book Two, *The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds*. He recast it totally and it became this immense Book of fifteen long cantos and over two hundred pages. Why did he do this? And why did he do it at that time?

I believe that he poured all his own knowledge, all his spiritual experiences, all his spiritual discoveries, into Book Two, and that he did so because we live in difficult times. We live in an age of transition. He wanted us to have this knowledge. He wanted to make it available to us – if we will only look and seek for it there. Is it too ambitious to think that we can know what was in Sri Aurobindo's mind when he wrote Book Two of *Savitri*? I think not. I think that the information given there is relevant to our times and we need it. Relevant in particular is the role of King Aswapati.

I ask myself “What was that role? When he entered the kingdoms of the World Stair what was he doing there?”

I have to confess that, confronted with those fifteen cantos of the World Stair I feel like a tiny butterfly who hovers over a vast tract of rare flowers; amidst this vast landscape this tiny butterfly can land on one blossom alone to sip its nectar. That one blossom for me will have to be what interests me most, and that is the role of King Aswapati. What was in Sri Aurobindo’s mind when he conceived the idea of using Book Two, with its first canto, The World Stair, to reveal the secrets of his own spiritual experience, as I believe he did? What was the role or mission of Aswapati? What was he doing when he entered the Kingdoms of the Stair?

Obviously, Aswapati represents Sri Aurobindo himself. So what is he telling us about the way forward? It seems to me now that he had some kind of avataric mission to see things differently. As we have seen, with hindsight, things change when you see them differently. He was a man who had broken the bounds of consciousness and time. He was a seer. I think he represented humanity at the highest point of humanity’s spiritual achievement. He is telling us, I think, that we have to learn how to change the past by looking at it differently. If we can look at it through the eyes of a new consciousness, we will see that there is only one Cause. We will see through the illusion of cause and effect. Cause and effect are an illusion because we are immersed in Time. In Eternity there is no such illusion because cause and effect happen simultaneously; but in Time it appears that they are very firmly bound together, by what Sri Aurobindo calls ‘*determination’s rigid chain*’.¹ We can change that. We can change it by seeing things differently. I believe that Aswapati’s mission on the Stair was to wipe out the karmic burden of the human past; in effect, to change that past; to dissolve the human karmic debt, if you like, the mutual debt which man owes to the Supreme and the Supreme owes to man. That can be repaid: the karmic consequences of our past errors can be dissolved and then the way is cleared for new consciousness to descend. That is the interpretation and, I think, the lesson of Book

1. *Savitri* p.20

Two. Time divides our life-experience into past, present and future, and so we perceive it in terms of cause and effect; but beyond that illusion there is but one single cause: the divine Power of self-limitation that Sri Aurobindo refers to in *The Life Divine* as ‘a certain Fourth’,¹ because it occupies fourth place in the sevenfold chord of being, and brings about a single effect: manifestation.

But is it really possible to change the past? Others have thought so, including the Mother and K. D. Sethna, better known to us here as the poet Amal Kiran. This question is crucial for our understanding of the revelation that Sri Aurobindo is uncovering for us in Book Two. I will begin by allowing Amal himself answer it, as he does in an unpublished letter which I have permission to share. This is what he wrote:

I had once said, “the past is the only thing that can change”. ... My meaning was: “The past’s character depends on the nature of the present to which it has led. No matter how unlovely it may look, it can become beautiful if somehow the present gets touched by a glow from beyond the usual series of events, the normal chain of cause and effect.

Realizing the inadequacy, the wrongheadedness, the erring zigzag of times gone by, we may awake keenly to the need of being different; the soul in us may arise in its creative sweet sadness at the sight of our life’s and mind’s missing of the true way; a light from our depths may suddenly leap out in response to the sense of frailty and futility in all that we have done.

Then the past alters its whole aspect and grows into a stepping stone towards the ideal. All its old appearance of a tale of mistakes and miseries and mischances, logically leading to nothing more than a variation on the same theme of “the human, all too human” takes on a new significance and becomes – to put the matter in an extreme form – hell’s hidden way to heaven.

1. *The Life Divine*, SABCL vol. 18-19, fn. p.267

To let the past be what it has been to the outer consciousness, or to transmute its lines and hues by giving them a novel denouement *lies in our hands*. And as the past is our only established possession in the presence of Time, it is the sole thing that we have the power to re-orientate by a spurt beyond our common selfhood. By such a spurt we begin to see, behind all that has happened, the secret lover, our Master, manipulating the twists and turns of our life.

A strange scheme emerges into view, everything falls into proper place and all the scattered paths are seen to come together and point to our true home that is the deep heart. At times what has impressed us as a graving in granite disperses like a mist; the entire past can vanish if the soul can give itself entirely to the Divine. The Mother has said that all karma can be wiped out at a stroke by a sweeping self-dedication to the Divine. This would be the changing of the past in the most radical sense.”

In this deeply perceptive letter, Amal comes close to the revelation that Sri Aurobindo is uncovering for us in ‘The World Stair’ and we will discuss this in more detail later. But more immediately, I needed to understand from ‘The World Stair’ what it means to practice the Integral Yoga in today’s world of rapid change. What is demanded of us now, in this age of transition between the old consciousness and the new?

If Sri Aurobindo has a special message for us today, I believe it would be a timely and important reminder: ‘*A deathbound littleness is not all we are*’.¹ Such a message may be even more relevant today than it was in those days of my youth when I listened to Professor Nadkarni in Singapore. Now as we and the world pass through a critical period when old certainties appear to be shrouded by doubt and a new vision has yet to take hold, this is also a message of hope.

1. *Savitri* p.46



Shraddhavan inviting Sonia Dyne to give the 8th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture 'Inside the World Stair' on February 18, 2018

Sri Aurobindo himself did not spend long years in the solitude of one room, bringing down into the earth atmosphere the next stage of our human evolution, and then withdraw himself from the earth scene. Sri Aurobindo's mission was to prepare the way for a new humanity: '*A larger seeing man with nobler heart*'¹ and His presence in the subtle physical of the earth-sphere is our guarantee that his work goes on, both in us and through us.

These days, even as our earthly home is threatened by man-made disasters such as climate change and the poisoning of our oceans by deadly plastic waste, perhaps nothing presents a more insidious danger to our future than the increasing acceptance of what Sri Aurobindo calls this '*littleness*' as the normal and inevitable condition of our life on earth. This '*littleness*' has nothing to do with poverty or deprivation, rather it is a sickness of the spirit which he describes in the following passage from Book Two, Canto Five:

1. *Savitri* p.342

*As long as the human animal is lord
And a dense nether nature screens the soul,
As long as intellect's outward-gazing sight
Serves earthly interest and creature joys,
An incurable littleness pursues his days.*

*Ever since consciousness was born on earth,
Life is the same in insect, ape and man,
Its stuff unchanged, its way the common route.*

*If new designs, if richer interests grow
And thought is added and more tangled cares,
If little by little it wears a brighter face,
Still even in man the plot is mean and poor.*

*A gross content prolongs his mortal state;
His small successes are failure of the soul,
His little pleasures punctuate frequent griefs:
Hardship and toil are the heavy price he pays
For the right to live, and his last wages death.¹*

We see around us a decline of the idealism and aspiration which sustained our ancestors even in difficult times with a sense of direction, a faith in the future, a belief in the life of the spirit and the presence of an eternal soul in the mortal body of all human beings. How has this decline come about?

We know that Sri Aurobindo long ago predicted the demise of the great world religions. Past generations once turned to religion for a sense of security and a path to be followed. Today the eternal Truth upon which these religions were founded is no longer fresh in us, obscured by centuries of distorting dogma and rules of conduct born of human ignorance and pride. In times of transition like our own and wherever there are guideless lives, negative energies move in with their own suggestions "Forget to hope and aspire! Let us paint our prison! Let us strengthen its bars!" We have to find the strength within ourselves to get out of that littleness, to aspire for something more, to find that something more and find it within ourselves because we cannot turn to anything outside ourselves anymore. That

1. *Savitri* pp.163-64

capacity is within us. Sri Aurobindo brought it within our reach. That is the change that he made.

Sri Aurobindo took the necessary steps to hasten the advent of a New Age for mankind. We are living in it even now. It is, as the Mother said, '*ici même*' – right here! And she compared the new world to the lining of a coat, even closer to us than the straightjacket of littleness that we continue to wear. Surely the time has come to turn that restrictive straightjacket inside out? In doing so, we find the perfect antidote to the soul sickness that afflicts us with littleness. It becomes possible to see everything as Sri Aurobindo did, from above and from the inside. We can be lifted out of ourselves into a field of experience where all contraries are joined in their essential oneness. Under the aspect of eternity everything, without exception, works in conformity with the divine will and ultimate intention.

Many years ago, in 1954, The Mother remarked that no ordinary human mind would be able to understand the secret knowledge revealed in *Savitri*. It was true then. But we live now in the Age of Sri Aurobindo. Because of what he brought and is still bringing into the earth-atmosphere, our minds are not ordinary any more. We can access the full power of Sri Aurobindo's legacy to find in ourselves the key to perfect change. We are not the helpless creatures we think we are; we can dare to hope and aspire, for we carry in ourselves the perfect antidote to our affliction of littleness: the Truth of Sri Aurobindo's teaching and his revelation of its power to dissolve the karmic burden of the human past.

In his poem *Savitri* King Aswapati stands for Sri Aurobindo, who embraced this disguise in order to share his own occult knowledge. He chose to do so in the most enigmatic and widely misunderstood of all his works: Book Two of *Savitri: The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds*. It may not have been part of his plan from the beginning, but at one point, while he was working on the poem, Sri Aurobindo took advantage of an opportunity presented by the story he was narrating.

In the legend on which *Savitri* is based, the episode of the Yoga of the King merits no more than the simple statement that he performed many austerities to seek from the gods the gift of a child. However,

in Sri Aurobindo's hands the description of the Yoga of the King is massively expanded to a whole Book of 15 cantos and over 200 pages.

Why would he do this? The answer is in the content itself: we find there the secrets of his own spiritual experience, of his life that was not on the surface for all to see, discoveries made more real to us by the mantric power of his poetry.

Sri Aurobindo designed his major prose work, *The Life Divine*, to satisfy the human intellect, in a sense as a concession to it; but he himself understood that no purely intellectual formulation of words had the same power as his poem *Savitri* to awaken direct knowledge and the deeper listening of the soul: to awaken and affirm that knowledge in the old Vedic sense of allowing the mantra to transmute it directly into spiritual experience.

Mother and Sri Aurobindo's vision of a great leap into a future supramental consciousness has never been more important, and we ourselves have never been more ready to understand that vision, because Sri Aurobindo brought something new into the earth's atmosphere.

Among the first to put this phenomenon into words was a disciple, Medhananda. Medhananda was one of the first people to recognise that Sri Aurobindo had brought something new into the world. He wrote:

Anyone can do yoga without bringing in anything new, but Sri Aurobindo made new discoveries in yoga. ... Sri Aurobindo explored new continents of consciousness; he has traced the paths and untiringly exercised the movements that lead there. He has created and made for us new steps of Vishnu. We are far from having assimilated or even accepted what he has brought into his latest incarnation, of which we have been the witnesses and recipients. ... Sri Aurobindo is an eternal birth. Thanks to him the supramental has been firmly established in the subtle physical. This is the sign that what we usually call the Divine and Matter are no longer separate. It is a great victory.¹

1. *On the Threshold of a New Age*, p.65; Pondicherry, Sri Mira Trust, 2000

There is an interesting comment by the Mother in which she speaks of a second great victory: a new psychological possibility being born into the world. Commenting on her New Year message of 1958 and speaking about the agenda of the supramental action on Earth, she says:

Suddenly Nature understood. She understood that this new Consciousness which has just been born does not seek to reject her but wants to embrace her entirely, she understood that this new spirituality does not turn away from life, does not recoil in fear before the formidable amplitude of her movement, but wants on the contrary to integrate all its facets. She understood that the supramental consciousness is here not to diminish but to complete her.¹

She also said:

You should not misinterpret the meaning of this experience and imagine that from now on everything is going to take place without any difficulties and always in a manner that favours our personal desires. It is not on this plane. It does not mean that when we do not want it to rain, it will not rain, or that when we want something to happen in the world, it will happen immediately; that all difficulties will be done away with and everything will be as it is in fairy-tales. It is not that. It is something much deeper: Nature, in her play of forces, has accepted the new Force which has manifested and included it in her movements. And as always, the movements of Nature are on a scale which is infinitely beyond the human scale and not visible to an ordinary human consciousness. It is an inner, psychological possibility which has come into the world rather than a spectacular change in earthly events. I am saying this because you might be tempted to believe that fairy-tales were going to be realised on earth. It is not yet time for that.²

“An inner possibility” said the Mother. Sri Aurobindo needed, and found, one of the great archetypal images that human aspiration has

1. MCW vol. 9, pp.247-48

2. *Ibid.* pp.245-46

seized upon to express our deep and primitive longing to touch the stars, to reach the abode of the gods: the image of a stairway to heaven, linking our earth to the sky. This image of a great World Stair became the central focus of Book Two of *Savitri*. What it became in his hands was wonderful in its evocative power, for this stair exists within ourselves: it is the hidden stair of saints and seers throughout the ages.

When all was quiet in my house
I left it by a hidden stair
With only the love of God for Light
When all was quiet there by night
I left it by a hidden stair...

(from the original Spanish of St. John of the Cross)

An image of great antiquity, the Stair is found in Ancient Egypt in the tombs of the Pharaohs. The Egyptian hieroglyph for 'stair' resembled a small flight of steps, and was often cast in gold and used as a charm. In the ruins of lost civilisations in South America, as in other places around the globe, it appears as a step pyramid or temple tower. In the oldest Book of the Bible it appears as Jacob's ladder, and in this form it has been carried by Christian missionaries to every nation on earth:

Jacob set out from Beersheba and went on his way towards Harran. He came to a certain place where because the sun had set, he took a stone, made it a pillow for his head and lay down to sleep. He dreamt that he saw a ladder, which rested on the ground with its top reaching to heaven, and angels of the Lord were going up and down upon it Jacob awoke from his sleep and said "Truly the Lord was in this place and I did not know it." Then he was afraid and said "How fearsome is this place! This is no other than the house of God; this is the gate of Heaven." Jacob arose early the next morning, took the stone on which he had laid his head, set it up as a sacred pillar and poured oil on top of it. He named that place Beth-El (House of God) but the earlier name of the city was Luz.¹

1. Genesis 28, vol.10-19

Sri Aurobindo was undoubtedly familiar with the image of the World Stair not only from this story in the Bible, but also as it was used by a contemporary poet whose work he greatly admired: Francis Thompson. Thompson wrote:

And (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacobs Ladder
Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.

The first use of the image by Sri Aurobindo himself may be in an unpublished document dated 1914. Seemingly it is a piece of automatic writing which has survived – evidence of a source of information and knowledge that Sri Aurobindo often turned to in the years following his release from Alipore jail and first arrival in Pondicherry in 1910. In a Memoir written by Suresh Chakravathy, a young disciple to whom Sri Aurobindo entrusted the task of finding a place for him to stay after his release, we can find a vivid first-hand account of one of these sessions where, in the presence of a group of young men hanging attentively upon his every word, Sri Aurobindo wrote down communications emanating from a source beyond this life we all share, asking questions and receiving answers. This manuscript bears the title *The Evolutionary Scale*. Plainly it was one of the main sources from which his vision of the World Stair was developed.

Two significant but enigmatic passages from *Savitri* now claim our attention. Neither of them can be called a description in the usual sense of that word. Both are a gateway opening onto a world of direct knowledge that often translates into spiritual experience. The first, in Book One, Canto Five, serves to introduce Aswapati and his mission as the Traveller of the Worlds:

This overt universe whose figures hide
The secrets merged in superconscious light
Wrote clear the letters of its glowing code:
A map of subtle signs surpassing thought
Was hung upon a wall of inmost mind.
Illumining the world's concrete images
Into significant symbols by its gloss,
It offered to the intuitive exegete

Its reflex of the eternal Mystery.
Ascending and descending twixt life's poles
The seried kingdoms of the graded Law
Plunged from the Everlasting into Time,
Then glad of a glory of multitudinous mind
And rich with life's adventure and delight
And packed with the beauty of Matter's shapes and hues
Climbed back from Time into undying Self,
Up a golden ladder carrying the soul,
Tying with diamond threads the Spirit's extremes.¹

These few lines make it clear that the answers we seek are already within us. They hang '*upon a wall of inmost mind*'. They are a link between our world in time and the '*seried kingdoms*' beyond time. They carry the wealth of the material existence with the transient colour and drama of human life back to the undying self in us, because all that is revealed is, on its own level, a manifestation of the One, and even this '*overt universe*' we live in carries within itself, though hidden from our gaze, '*The secrets merged in superconscious light*'.

In this initial passage, the Stair of Aswapati's world-redeeming mission is expressed in a simple but wonderfully significant image, a golden ladder '*Tying with diamond threads the Spirit's extremes.*' How are we to understand this image? On the human level of mind our aspiration conjures up a memory: a Christmas tree garlanded in sparkling silver; a little child stands beside it, gazing in wonder and delight. From a deeper level the poem's mantric power awakens and brings to the surface another memory, this time of the Mother explaining the difference between joy and felicity. These are, she says, the base angles of a triangle whose apex is beatitude, the divine Ananda in its purest form of diamond light. We will follow this thread as the Mother explains that for her the word 'beatitude' has a special meaning:

Beatitude contains within itself freshness and warmth;
passivity and activity; action and repose; gentleness and

1. *Savitri* pp.88-89

tenderness; it is a paroxysm of Joy, it is so strong that the body feels about to explode; and so it is forced to enlarge itself. The diamond light of beatitude has the power to dissolve all adverse forces. Nothing can resist it. No consciousness, no being, no adverse will can come near it without being instantly dissolved, because it is the light of the Divine in its pure creative power.¹

A second depiction of the World Stair follows a little later, in the first canto of Book Two. Here we read:

In a mystical barrage of dynamic light
He saw a lone immense high curved world pile
Erect like a mountain chariot of the gods
Motionless under an inscrutable sky.
As if from matter's plinth and viewless base
To a top as viewless, a carved sea of worlds
Climbing with foam-maned waves to the Supreme
Ascended towards breadths immeasurable;
It hoped to soar into the Ineffable's reign:
A hundred levels raised it to the Unknown.
So it towered up to heights intangible
And disappeared in the hushed conscious Vast
As climbs a storied temple-tower to heaven
Built by the aspiring soul of man to live
Near to his dream of the Invisible.
Infinity calls to it as it dreams and climbs;
Its spire touches the apex of the world;
Mounting into great voiceless stillnesses
It marries the earth to screened eternities.
Amid the many systems of the One
Made by an interpreting creative joy
Alone it points us to our journey back
Out of our long self-loss in Nature's deeps;
Planted in Earth it holds within it all realms:
It is a brief compendium of the Vast.
This was the single stair to beings goal.

1. *Mother's Agenda*, vol. 1, 22.1.1958

A summary of the stages of the spirit,
Its copy of the cosmic hierarchies
Refashioned in our secret air of self
A subtle pattern of the universe.
It is within, below, without, above.¹

Earlier I mentioned that these two depictions of the World Stair were gateways opening onto direct experience. It was while meditating on the last four lines of the passage just read that a revelation came to me concerning Sri Aurobindo's use of Mantra. It was still, as in Vedic times, '*Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deeps*'²; but in Sri Aurobindo's hands the mantric speech brings in a new element, something deeply personal: ***a reaching out to embrace and include the reader as a participant in the experience itself.***

I read the final lines over and over, because it struck me forcibly that the last line could be spoken in two ways: 'it is within / below / without / above': that means it is ***everywhere***; or else 'it is within: below; without: above', meaning that the pattern within us is below our level of consciousness, whereas outside, the pattern is above that level. Knowing the lines to be a revelation expressed in mantric poetry, I was disturbed that my own voice could change the meaning and I tried hard in my mind to bring these two meanings into some kind of oneness. The result was an experience I will never forget: a sudden reversal of consciousness put me inside the World Stair and it was not a stair at all; it was a mighty torrent of fast-flowing water without boundaries on any side. I understood that this was the Niagara of the Life-Force as it plunged from its high source '*on the summit of created things*'³ into the abyss of Time. I seemed to experience in my own body the friction of its passing through. This experience changed forever my mental understanding of what Mantra really is. I became aware of it as a power that reaches out to include and embrace us, ignorant as we are, and I understood why Sri Aurobindo himself

1. *Savitri* p.98

2. *Ibid.* p.383

3. *Ibid.* p.298

had once defined Mantra as “the word that carries the godhead in it or the power of the godhead.”¹

The role of Sri Aurobindo / Aswapati was becoming clearer: his avataric mission was to re-ascend the steps by which life had fallen, moving against the downward flow and gathering together the traces left behind. These traces, purged by his illumined gaze from all trace of falsehood and bound together by the diamond threads of divine love, would be placed once again in the transforming hands of the Mother.

A Being lived, a Presence and a Power
A single person who was himself and all
And cherished Nature’s sweet and dangerous throbs
Transfigured into beats divine and pure.
One who could love without return for love,
Meeting and turning to the best the worst,
It healed the bitter cruelties of earth
Transforming all experience to delight;
Intervening in the sorrowful paths of birth
It rocked the cradle of the cosmic Child
And stilled all weeping with its hand of joy;
It led things evil towards their secret good,
It turned racked falsehood into happy truth;
Its power was to reveal divinity.²

A primary focus of my journey through Book Two has been to discover the true role of Aswapati. Plainly he is something more than the legendary King who in ancient times petitioned the gods for a child. Here he is portrayed as a representative of mortal man at his highest level of spiritual evolution, a human being chosen by the gods to enter the eternal kingdoms of the Stair. As we read at the close of Book Two Canto One:

A seer within who knows the ordered plan
Concealed behind our momentary steps,
Inspires our ascent to viewless heights

1. *Sri Aurobindo Archives & Research*, vol. 3, no. 1, April 1979, p.19

2. *Savitri* p.291

As once the abysmal leap to birth and life.
His call had reached the Traveller in Time.
Apart in an unfathomed loneliness,
He travelled in his mute and single strength
Bearing the burden of the world's desire.¹

The '*seer within*' is also Manu. In the Hindu tradition, Manu is the eternal spirit or archetype of Man who from age to age incarnates in a human body to introduce and guide a new stage of evolution on Earth. Traditionally there are fourteen incarnations of Manu, just as there are fourteen kingdoms of the World Stair.

The idea of a sudden conversion is not only a part of Indian tradition. It is also a part of the Western tradition and here again the number fourteen seems to be significant. In the old rituals of the Catholic Church there is something called The Stations of the Cross, and in the old days there were fourteen of these Stations of the Cross and if at any point on the journey, as one walked around the church and paused before events in the life of Christ depicted on the walls, one was moved to tears or to true repentance by the sight of the suffering of Christ, all sins could be forgiven. That is very like the idea that we have on the World Stair where Aswapati sees that the errors of human nature can be wiped out if only they are suddenly seen in a new light. It is interesting that this number fourteen comes up in these two very different contexts. This fourteen cannot be a random number. There is no such thing as a random number when we are talking about the works of Sri Aurobindo. I do not know what is mysterious about the number fourteen. I asked a great expert in mathematics the other day and he said that it is twice seven.

Sri Aurobindo does not describe the avataric mission of Aswapati in detail, but instead lays emphasis on its importance: in fact the salvation of the Earth depends on it. Aswapati is the one who goes in front, revealing to Time-born mortals the steps of the return journey. It is implied that all who aspire to follow his lead must engage themselves in the same yoga: that is, to observe and discover the hidden cause of the fall of Life, to find out:

1. *Savitri* pp.101-02

The Force that moved it and the Idea that made,
Imposing smallness on the Infinite,
The ruling spirit of its littleness,
The divine law that gave it right to be,
Its claim on Nature and its need in Time.¹

This path of discovery descends to a dangerous nether world where the Life-Force, which must create on all the planes, has fashioned an empire of darkness:

This too the traveller of the worlds must dare.
A warrior in the dateless duel's strife
He entered into dumb despairing Night
Challenging the darkness with his luminous soul.²

How does Aswapati fulfil the hazardous mission he has been given? What is he called upon to do as he ascends the stair? Essentially he is there to redeem the past by changing the past, simply by looking at it with the eyes of an illumined consciousness that sees nothing contrary to the Divine Will and Intention, but sees that everything is in its rightful place, preordained from the beginning for a purpose that is hidden from mortal sight. This is the assigned task of the new humanity.

We are coming close now to an answer to the question with which we began: What was Aswapati doing as he entered one by one the kingdoms of the World Stair, always swimming against the tide of Life's descent like a salmon entering a fast flowing river from the sea, leaping over great cascades of water in a frantic attempt to reach the spawning grounds upstream where its life began? Why was his entry into the typical kingdoms so important? If we accept that the eternal, and apparently changeless, kingdoms of the World Stair came into being as a result of the fall of Life, then certainly they would bear the imprint of that fall, like a distant memory that lingers still in the earth's consciousness. Could the supramental power of Aswapati annul the human past, preparing the way for a

1. *Savitri* p.151

2. *Ibid.* p.227

new dawn? We have a hint from the Mother that such a thing might be possible:

Sri Aurobindo wrote somewhere that in a certain state of consciousness one had the power to change the past. I found that very striking. Because it is an experience I have had many times, and with all the work I am doing now, I understand better. You see, what seems to be perpetuated or preserved is not the individual: it is a state of consciousness, their state of consciousness. Those states of consciousness manifest through many different individuals and many different lives and they are what make progress towards a more and more luminous perfection. They come one after the other to be put into contact with the Truth, the Light, the perfect consciousness, and at the same time they have retained a sort of imprint, like a memory of the moments when they manifested.¹

No words of ours will ever convey the wonder of the vision which Sri Aurobindo discloses to us in Book Two and by the mantric power of his poetry, enables us to see as if with his own eyes. Writing, at the Mother's request, an essay on the passing of Sri Aurobindo, Amal Kiran said:

A kind of cosmic sweep was Sri Aurobindo's and he wanted his poem to be a many-sided carving out, in word-music, of the gigantic secrets of the Supramental Yoga.²

In case I have spoken at length about a warning and said too little about Sri Aurobindo's glorious message of hope, I will conclude now with a visionary passage which ever reminds me of a conversation with Amal himself, and how close we are in Time to Sri Aurobindo and his great contemporaries:

In dream and trance and muse before our eyes,
Across a subtle vision's inner field,
Wide rapturous landscapes fleeing from the sight
The figures of the perfect kingdom pass

1. *Mother's Agenda*, vol.7, 26.10.1966

2. K.D. Sethna, 'The Passing of Sri Aurobindo' in *The Indian Spirit and the World's Future*, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Society, 1953, 2004, pp.122-23

And behind them leave a shining memory's trail.
Imagined scenes or great eternal worlds,
Dream-caught or sensed, they touch our hearts with their depths;
Unreal seeming yet more real than life,
Happier than happiness, truer than things true,
If dreams these were or captured images,
Dream's truth made false earth's vain realities.
In a swift eternal moment fixed there live
Or ever recalled come back to longing eyes
Calm heavens of imperishable Light
Illumined continents of violet peace,
Oceans and rivers of the mirth of God
And griefless countries under purple suns.¹

I remember Amal Kiran telling me:

“One day I asked Sri Aurobindo if the suns were really purple
and he said ‘Yes’ ”.

It is the sort of question I would have asked too. But both of us forgot that to the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction, all things are equally ‘real’. To this poet, to this seer, there is no such thing as unreality: everything is real, even the possibility of changing the past. Thank you.

1. *Savitri* p.120

Love – the Truth that Saves

The 9th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Lecture

will be given at Savitri Bhavan
on Tuesday February 19, 2019
4.00 -5.00 pm

by
Dr. Larry Seidlitz

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



On June 21st (International Yoga Day) Shri M.V. Chunkath, Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, inaugurated the newly extended Meditations on Savitri Picture Gallery, where the full sequence of the illustrations to Savitri created by the Mother with Huta from 1961 to 1966 is now on permanent display. After the ceremony a copy of Huta's recently published book My Savitri Work with the Mother was presented to Mr. Chunkath.



The English of *Savitri*

Book Two, Canto Four

The Kingdoms of the Little Life

Sections 5 and 6, lines 350-671

by Shraddhavan

Section 5, lines 350-523

In the previous section we read that this manifestation we live in starts from contradictions and moves towards a higher harmony of all potentialities. Sri Aurobindo showed us the first level of the emergence of life in matter and assured us that however unpromising earth-life may appear to be at present, eventually it will lead to a conscious meeting of Nature and Soul. The first level of evolving life which he showed us seemed to be dominated by the quality of *tamas*, the unconsciousness and inertia of matter. The next level, explored in this section, is more dynamic:

Then came a fierier breath of waking Life,
And there arose from the dim gulf of things
The strange creations of a thinking sense,
Existences half-real and half-dream.

There is more fire, more energy on this level. While the previous stage of the evolution of life was still under domination of *tamas*, in this second one *rajas* dominates with ‘*a fierier breath of waking Life*’ and as a result Aswapati sees the emergence of new beings out of the ‘*dim gulf of things*’, the deep inconscient root of evolution.

‘*Fierier*’ is the comparative form of the adjective ‘fiery’, one of the most commonly misspelled words in the English language, because it is connected with ‘fire’ and we might expect it to be written ‘firey’. This is one of many illogicalities in English spelling which have resulted from different influences on the written language over the last thousand years. It has been proposed to avoid these by using more phonetic spellings based on the sound of words, and this has

been implemented to a certain extent in American English; but it has been found that too many visual clues to the history of words and their root meanings would be lost by insisting on strictly phonetic spellings, so for now many anomalies such as this one remain.

These new beings are strange, '*The strange creations of a thinking sense*', which are not fully real, but only '*half-real and half-dream*'. The next sentence casts a little more light on these short-lived creatures.

A life was there that hoped not to survive:
Beings were born who perished without trace,
Events that were a formless drama's limbs
And actions driven by a blind creature will.

Nowadays scientists are telling us more and more about the evolution of life on earth. Apparently the first living creatures to appear were viruses and bacteria followed by single-celled creatures such as amoebas, and we are told that more complex life forms emerged only more than two hundred and fifty million years later; but then an abundance of different species appeared, most of which have '*perished without trace*'. The poet calls the events which led to the appearance and disappearance of these different life-forms the '*limbs*' of '*a formless drama*' – a sequence of happenings without much coherence, and '*actions*' that were not consciously planned but '*driven by a blind creature will*': the random or instinctive behaviours of those primitive creatures.

A seeking Power found out its road to form,
Patterns were built of love and joy and pain
And symbol figures for the moods of Life.

In this blind and groping way a '*seeking Power*' in life discovered '*its road to form*' and durable forms emerged which provided '*Patterns*' or templates that were able to express emotions such as '*love and joy and pain*' and these species or types were '*symbol figures for the moods of Life*' corresponding to different aspects of life-expression. In the next sentence the poet gives some examples:

An insect hedonism fluttered and crawled
And basked in a sunlit Nature's surface thrills,

And dragon raptures, python agonies
Crawled in the marsh and mire and licked the sun.

Two forms of life which emerged at that stage were insects and reptiles. '*Hedonism*' means 'living for pleasure'. Some insects have wings and can flutter, others can only crawl, but many of them 'bask', lying in the sun and enjoying the '*surface thrills*', the sensations which come from '*a sunlit Nature*'. In the period when insects and reptiles were the dominant species, it seems that much of the earth had a tropical climate and there was a lot of swampy fertile marshland. Reptiles are the so-called 'cold-blooded' creatures: they cannot generate heat in their bodies, but need to get warmth from their surroundings. They '*Crawled in the marsh and mire and licked the sun*', lying in a warm place to absorb the sun's energies to enable them to move freely. Insects such as butterflies, beetles and spiders; reptiles such as snakes and dinosaurs seem to typify certain moods and emotions such as '*dragon raptures, python agonies*': these are '*symbol figures for the moods of Life*'.

Q: What kind of raptures do dragons have?

What are the characteristics of a dragon? In the East, dragons are auspicious and beneficent while in the West they are fearful monsters, but in both the East and the West they live in caves, underground or at the bottom of the sea, where they gather and guard huge piles of treasure. The phrase '*dragon raptures*' suggests the delight of being in control, feeling "This is all mine! I am big and strong and powerful and I will not let anyone take it away from me."

A python is a very big and powerful snake which is not poisonous but wraps its coils around its prey and squeezes it to death. These '*python agonies*' may suggest the sufferings of the prey rather than the feelings of the predator.

Huge armoured strengths shook a frail quaking ground,
Great puissant creatures with a dwarfish brain,
And pigmy tribes imposed their small life-drift.

Typical of this stage in the evolution of life-forms were gigantic animals, '*Huge armoured strengths*', living alongside very small ones: '*pigmy tribes*'. We think of dinosaurs, huge and heavy and

armour-plated: as they move, the ground quakes and shakes. These are ‘*Great puissant creatures*’, physically powerful, but it seems that they had very small brains relative to their great size. But also emerging at the same time were the first small mammals, the ‘*pigmy tribes*’ – ‘*pigmy*’ means ‘very small’. Nowadays there are still some ‘*pigmies*’: very short human beings living in the African jungles, but they are fully human and evolved much later. Probably this phrase refers to the various species of small mammals which also appeared at this stage, and perhaps their brains were larger and more complex than those of the giant reptiles. They began to impose ‘*their small life-drift*’: their way of life, so that it became more dominant. While the dinosaurs and other gigantic animals became extinct or very much reduced in size like modern lizards, the small mammals developed into the first primates, such as lemurs, and later into the early humans who are our own distant relatives and forebears.

In a dwarf model of humanity
Nature now launched the extreme experience
And master-point of her design’s caprice,
Luminous result of her half-conscious climb
On rungs twixt her sublimities and grotesques
To massive from infinitesimal shapes,
To a subtle balancing of body and soul,
To an order of intelligent littleness.

Here Sri Aurobindo is perhaps referring to the development of primates and maybe of very early humanoid species, ‘*a dwarf model of humanity*’. The oldest humanoid remains that have been found so far are of a very small girl or woman, who has been nicknamed ‘Lucy’. He says that with these beings ‘*Nature now launched the extreme experience*’ or experiment, the ‘*master-point of her design’s caprice*’ from which modern humans would eventually develop. Nature’s design may seem fanciful, capricious, random, but all the time it has been aiming at this result, which marks a big step forward in evolution, and which will enable much greater changes to follow. The emergence of this ‘*dwarf model of humanity*’ is the ‘*Luminous result*’ of evolutionary Nature’s ‘*half-conscious climb*’, as if with each new level of development she has been moving upwards on the rungs of a ladder linking ‘*her*

sublimities', her highest and noblest states, with her '*grotesques*', weird distorted ugly ones, and covers her whole range of life-forms, '*To massive from infinitesimal shapes*', from tiny forms to huge ones. '*Twixt*' is a poetic word for 'between'. It seems as if she is experimenting with many different possibilities, but always aiming at '*a subtle balancing of body and soul*': a harmony between the form, the body, and the soul which will use the body for its self-discovery and self-expression, and working towards '*an order of intelligent littleness*': some intelligent order, in however small a form.

Around him in the moment-beats of Time
The kingdom of the animal self arose,
Where deed is all and mind is still half-born
And the heart obeys a dumb unseen control.

Aswapati observes this '*kingdom of the animal self*' developing '*in the moment-beats of Time*'. In this stage of evolution '*deed is all and mind is still half-born*'. '*Deed*' means 'action' or 'act'. At the animal stage of development, activity is the primary form of expression. At this stage '*mind*' is still only '*half-born*', so there is no thought or conscious choice. The heart, the emotional centre, is moved to act by '*a dumb unseen control*' which we would perhaps call '*instinct*', the guidance of the spirit of the species.

The Force that works by the light of Ignorance,
Her animal experiment began,
Crowding with conscious creatures her world-scheme;
But to the outward only were they alive,
Only they replied to touches and surfaces
And to the prick of need that drove their lives.

'*The Force that works by the light of Ignorance*' – we call her Nature or Prakriti, but she is of course an aspect of Shakti, the supreme creative force; at this level she is working '*by the light of Ignorance*', in the twilight of half-consciousness. Aswapati observes her beginning '*Her animal experiment*', filling the world with many different types of '*conscious creatures*'. But these animals are aware only of '*the outward*', responding only to '*touches and surfaces*' and to '*the prick of need*' which drives their lives, their action. This is the

dominant characteristic of the animal consciousness, which is still so active in us.

A body that knew not its own soul within,
There lived and longed, had wrath and joy and grief;
A mind was there that met the objective world
As if a stranger or enemy at its door:
Its thoughts were kneaded by the shocks of sense;

At this stage of evolution *'body'*, distinct physical form, has been established, and the bodies are alive, they feel longing, desire and *'wrath'* – anger, and *'joy and grief'*. There is an awakening of emotion and there is a mind that is aware of *'the objective world'* around it. But it is not aware of its subjective world, its inner consciousness or *'its own soul within'*. What thoughts it has are *'kneaded by the shocks of sense'*, shaped by sense-impressions from the world around it, which it experiences as *'a stranger or enemy'* – something hostile and alien. We *'knead'* dough when preparing bread, working it vigorously with our hands. In the *'half-born'* animal mind thoughts are shaped and formed by *'the shocks of sense'*: sense-impressions from the world outside the body arouse and form the developing mind.

It captured not the spirit in the form,
It entered not the heart of what it saw;
It looked not for the power behind the act,
It studied not the hidden motive in things
Nor strove to find the meaning of it all.

At this stage the developing mind is not able to do any of the things listed in this sentence. Later on, in a later stage of development, the mind will become able to do them, but as yet it is not able to capture or get any sense of *'the spirit in the form'*: the spirit which inhabits each form and enables it to exist. It cannot go beyond the surface appearances and impressions in order to enter into *'the heart of what it saw'*, their inner significance. It perceives actions and happenings, but it does not look for or wonder about *'the power behind the act'* which makes it happen. It does not try to find out *'the hidden motive in things'*, the reason for their existence, nor to ask for *'the meaning of it all'*. *'Strove'* is the past tense of the verb *'to strive'*, meaning *'to struggle'*, *'to make an effort'*.

Beings were there who wore a human form;
Absorbed they lived in the passion of the scene,
But knew not who they were or why they lived:
Content to breathe, to feel, to sense, to act,
Life had for them no aim save Nature's joy
And the stimulus and delight of outer things;
Identified with the spirit's outward shell,
They worked for the body's wants, they craved no more.

At this stage there are beings which look human but still have an animal consciousness. They live '*Absorbed ... in the passion of the scene*': their attention is taken up by all the strong impressions that are coming to them from their surroundings. They do not know who they are. They do not know why they live or what for. For them it is just enough to be alive, '*to breathe, to feel, to sense, to act*'. Life has no purpose or meaning for them except the enjoyments that Nature allows them, '*the stimulus and delight of outer things*'. Even very primitive animals have a sense of identity, but they are '*Identified with the spirit's outward shell*', the body. Although these beings look human, they are like that: they work or make an effort to satisfy the needs of the body, but they have no conception of or longing for anything more.

The veiled spectator watching from their depths
Fixed not his inward eye upon himself
Nor turned to find the author of the plot,
He saw the drama only and the stage.

None of us would exist if there were not this '*veiled spectator*' within us, the hidden conscious being '*watching*' from the '*depths*'. At the stage in evolution which Sri Aurobindo is telling us about here, that veiled spectator does not turn to look '*inward*' to find out about himself; he does not turn his gaze to discover the author of the drama of life which he is observing. At this stage, the inner witness sees only '*the drama*' itself. This can happen to us if we are reading a very interesting book or watching a fascinating film: we are fully absorbed in what we are reading or seeing and forget about everything else. Then we do not give a thought to the author who has written it or his reason for doing so: we are only eager to find

out what will happen next. Similarly at this level of development the conscious being is completely identified with the outer scenes and events: Purusha is identified with Prakriti and it never occurs to him to step back from his absorption in the outer drama to try to find who or what he is.

There was no brooding stress of deeper sense,
The burden of reflection was not borne:
Mind looked on Nature with unknowing eyes,
Adored her boons and feared her monstrous strokes.

At this level, there is no inner pressure of '*deeper sense*' which would give the feeling of something more than just the surface of things. Eventually a time will come when such an inner pressure will make us 'broody', make us turn our attention inward and wonder about deeper things. That is the beginning of a more truly human state, and it can be a burden when the mind starts thinking about things; many people wish that they could go back to the unreflecting animal stage; they think that their lives would be happier and less complicated if they did not have to bear the '*burden of reflection*' which is making them wonder why things are the way they are. That '*half-born*' mind looks at the world around without understanding or asking why it is like that. It adores '*her boons*': the pleasurable experiences that she gives it, the enjoyments and delights, and it fears '*her monstrous strokes*', the terrible disasters which she sometimes inflicts, but it does not ask why or how these things happen.

It pondered not on the magic of her laws,
It thirsted not for the secret wells of Truth,
But made a register of crowding facts
And strung sensations on a vivid thread:

That mind is not 'pondering', wondering about the magic of Nature's laws; it just accepts things as they are, or as it perceives them. That '*half-born*' mind has no thirst to discover '*the secret wells of Truth*'. It is preoccupied with something else: with registering, noticing all the '*crowding facts*' it becomes aware of, recording all its many sense impressions, and stringing those '*sensations on a vivid thread*', accumulating and connecting them. That '*vivid thread*' is the thread of conscious awareness and memory. There is no awareness of any

higher consciousness, but nevertheless the consciousness of that ‘veiled spectator’ is holding the individual existence together.

It hunted and it fled and sniffed the winds,
Or slothed inert in sunshine and soft air:
It sought the engrossing contacts of the world,
But only to feed the surface sense with bliss.

Aswapati observes the way in which this animal consciousness hunts for things, runs away from things, sniffs the winds to find out what is there or might be approaching; he sees that when not active it ‘slothed inert in sunshine and soft air’. ‘Sloth’ is laziness. Our animal consciousness loves to relax in warm sunshine and soft air. It also enjoys feeling ‘the engrossing contacts of the world’, experiencing all the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches of its environment. But it is only interested in feeding ‘the surface sense’ with as much delight as possible.

These felt life’s quiver in the outward touch,
They could not feel behind the touch the soul.
To guard their form of self from Nature’s harm,
To enjoy and to survive was all their care.

These beings enjoy feeling the vibrations of life that come to them from ‘the outward touch’, the sensations; but they cannot feel the contact of the soul which lies behind every contact. Their sole preoccupation, ‘their care’ is to protect themselves, their individual ‘form of self’, from any harm, any damage that Nature might inflict upon them: to survive and to enjoy.

This consciousness is still quite strong in us, we can recognise it very well; but we are not only this. We get bored with purely physical experiences: there is something in us which is looking for more than that.

The narrow horizon of their days was filled
With things and creatures that could help and hurt:
The world’s values hung upon their little self.

The lives of these beings have only a very ‘narrow horizon’: a limited range of vision, filled with friends and enemies, food and dangers. For each of them ‘The world’s values hung upon their little self.’

We too generalise our preferences like that and tend to believe that things and people that please and help us are good while people and things that oppose or seem to threaten us are bad, evil and inhuman. It is quite striking to see how limited we are in that way. But the concept of an ideal, of a higher and larger world-view which inspires us, is evolutionarily far ahead of the state Aswapati is exploring and observing here.

Isolated, cramped in the vast unknown,
To save their small lives from surrounding Death
They made a tiny circle of defence
Against the siege of the huge universe:
They preyed upon the world and were its prey,
But never dreamed to conquer and be free.

These '*pigmy tribes*', Nature's '*dwarf model of humanity*', these beings wearing a human form but having an animal consciousness are very isolated and restricted. Surrounded by '*the vast unknown*', they feel threatened by Death from every side. So they band together to make '*a tiny circle of defence*' against '*the siege of the huge universe*' which seems to be constantly threatening and attacking them. '*Siege*' is a military operation of surrounding a building or town, cutting off supplies to it, with the intention of forcing the people occupying it to surrender. Like predators, these beings '*preyed upon the world*', feeding upon their environment, but they themselves were also '*prey*', always in danger. They accept this state of things and have no idea that one day they might be able to master the conditions of their life and enjoy a degree of freedom from fear and danger.

Obeying the World-Power's hints and firm taboos
A scanty part they drew from her rich store;
There was no conscious code and no life-plan:
The patterns of thinking of a little group
Fixed a traditional behaviour's law.

Nature, the '*World-Power*', gives these creatures indications of what to do and not do. '*Taboos*' are forbidden things that must not be done. Those creatures obey the guidance that Nature gives them, but are able to draw only '*A scanty part ... from her rich store*'.

‘*Scanty*’ means ‘very little’, ‘not enough’. These beings are able to take advantage of only very little of Nature’s rich possibilities. Their lives are moved by instinct and necessity; they have not developed any ‘*conscious code*’ of behaviour or any ‘*life-plan*’ or dharma. Each small group forms its own traditional laws about how to behave.

Ignorant of soul save as a wraith within,
Tied to a mechanism of unchanging lives
And to a dull usual sense and feeling’s beat,
They turned in grooves of animal desire.

They are not aware of soul except for some sense of a ‘*wraith*’ within them, a vague ghost or phantom. The soul is the part in us that is truly free, but they are not aware of that. They are ‘*Tied to a mechanism of unchanging lives*’, living mechanically and without change, limited by ‘*a dull usual sense*’, a very limited range of sense impressions and repetitive feelings; their lives ‘*turned in grooves of animal desire*’, as if on a gramophone record where the needle just has to go where the grooves lead it without any possibility of choice. In this case the grooves are created by ‘*animal desire*’, very basic physical needs and demands.

In walls of stone fenced round they worked and warred,
Did by a banded selfishness a small good
Or wrought a dreadful wrong and cruel pain
On sentient lives and thought they did no ill.

They have banded together to make a small circle of defence against the universe. They have made ‘*walls of stone*’. They work but they also quarrel. They war against each other or one village wars against the next. Self-interest brings them together ‘*by a banded selfishness*’, to achieve certain things. Those might be small good things or they might be terrible things, like enslaving and raping and torturing their neighbours with total insensitivity. ‘*Wrought*’ is the past participle of the verb ‘*to wreak*’ meaning ‘to work, make or create’. They cause ‘*dreadful wrong and cruel pain*’ to other creatures like themselves who are ‘*sentient*’, who have senses and feelings just as they do, without ever thinking that they are doing anything wrong.

Ardent from the sack of happy peaceful homes
And gorged with slaughter, plunder, rape and fire,
They made of human selves their helpless prey,
A drove of captives led to lifelong woe,
Or torture a spectacle made and holiday,
Mocking or thrilled by their torn victims' pangs;
Admiring themselves as titans and as gods
Proudly they sang their high and glorious deeds
And praised their victory and their splendid force.

These are some of the '*the dreadful wrong(s)*' which these beings do without any sense of wrongdoing. They are '*Ardent*', which literally means 'burning', full of excitement and enthusiasm '*from the sack of happy peaceful homes*'. 'To sack' means 'to destroy'. There are those happy peaceful villagers, and other villagers from the next valley come down from the hills and destroy everything, full of excitement and ready to feast on '*slaughter, plunder, rape and fire*'. '*Gorged*' means 'overstuffed', usually with food, but here it means with violent feelings and actions. They have become like wild animals, predators preying on '*human selves*', other human beings just like themselves. They will take captives and drive them like animals: '*A drove of captives*', a group of people who are being driven like animals, taken away from their homes to be sold as slaves. They are being led '*to lifelong woe*' – misery. Or they torture them. That is fun. That is a '*spectacle*' and a '*holiday*', an amusing change from everyday things. They make fun of those poor helpless people who are screaming there and they are thrilled by the '*pangs*', the suffering of their '*torn victims*' as they tear them to pieces. That makes them feel very powerful, superhuman, '*titans*' and '*gods*'. They celebrate by singing about '*their high and glorious deeds*', admiring their own '*victory and their splendid force*'. This is something very primitive which unfortunately still persists in some human beings.

Q. It reminds us of gladiators.

Yes, exactly. The ancient Romans are supposed to have been so civilised, but there was a terribly uncivilised and primitive side to their social life. And still today terrible things are happening which

belong to that primitive level. But those beings who wore a human form *'thought they did no ill'*. They were still innocent like animals and felt no sense of guilt or remorse. Here Sri Aurobindo is speaking about beings who already have a human form but who are not fully human.

We saw earlier that this Kingdom of the Little Life is a universal plane, a plane of cosmic consciousness, but it is one that has formed in the evolution. It is one of the evolutionary stepping stones, one of the rungs of the ladder by which the soul returns to the fullness of its divinity. So it is important for us to know about this plane. Perhaps Sri Aurobindo has written about it in such detail because we modern human beings are still very much influenced by its movements and powers and godheads, which he will describe in the next canto.

An animal in the instinctive herd
Pushed by life impulses, forced by common needs,
Each in his own kind saw his ego's glass;
All served the aim and action of the pack.

The characteristic of these beings is their animal nature. Each of them is an animal in a *'herd'*, in a group that is living by instinct, being pushed and driven, *'by life impulses'*, and *'forced by common needs'*. They cannot help following what is dictated by the shared needs of all the animals in the pack. Each of them sees a reflection of himself in all the others who are like him. Here *'glass'* means *'a looking glass'*, *'a mirror'*. They are banded together and all of them serve *'the aim and action of the pack'*, like wolves who all cooperate in the hunt.

Those like himself, by blood or custom kin,
To him were parts of his life, his adjunct selves,
His personal nebula's constituent stars,
Satellite companions of his solar I.

Each of them perceives himself as the sun at the centre of a solar system and all the others who are like him, who are his *'kin'*, related to him *'by blood or custom'*, as *'parts of his life'*, closely connected to him, *'his adjunct selves'*, joined to him; they are the *'constituent stars'* making up his *'personal nebula'*. A *'nebula'* is a group of

many stars, each of which is a sun. His *'kin'* are like him, but smaller and less important: he is the one at the centre of the system, they are the *'Satellite companions of his solar P'*, circling around him like planets around the sun.

A master of his life's environment,
A leader of a huddled human mass
Herding for safety on a dangerous earth,
He gathered them round him as if minor Powers
To make a common front against the world,

One possibility is that he may be the leader of that group. He may be the one who has some mastery, who has some power; or each of them sees himself as *'A leader of a huddled human mass'*. *'Huddled'*: if it is very cold, animals will huddle together to keep themselves warm; or if they feel vulnerable or under attack they will huddle together for protection. *'Herding for safety'*: as animals will stay close together if there is a predator around, these groups form for self-protection *'on a dangerous earth'*. Each of them gathers the others as satellite selves around him, as *'minor Powers'*, who are not as powerful as he is, but he needs them *'To make a common front'*, to stand together, *'against the world'*, against the whole universe, which appears so hostile and dangerous.

Or, weak and sole on an indifferent earth,
As a fortress for his undefended heart,
Or else to heal his body's loneliness.

Or the individual feels vulnerable and isolated, *'weak and sole on an indifferent earth'*, so he needs others of his kind to form *'a fortress'*, a strong protection *'for his undefended heart'*; or needs companionship *'to heal his body's loneliness'*, so he gathers together with other people like himself and clings to them.

In others than his kind he sensed a foe,
An alien unlike force to shun and fear,
A stranger and adversary to hate and slay.

But in others, who do not belong to his group, who are not his kin, he senses *'a foe'*, an enemy, a force that is *'alien'*, foreign, unfamiliar and *'unlike'* – different and strange; so he has to *'shun and fear'* it: it

is threatening, dangerous, and needs to be avoided; he sees them as strangers and adversaries: opponents. He hates them; he will try to kill them if he is strong enough.

Or he lived as lives the solitary brute;
At war with all he bore his single fate.

Human beings are usually gregarious: they like to gather together in a flock or pack or herd; but still it may happen that an individual may live alone, perhaps because he has been outcast or cut off from his group. Then he lives like a '*solitary brute*', without the benefit of companionship. The solitary animals are usually predators: each of them has to fend for himself. As a single individual, he is '*At war with all*' and has to bear his fate alone in a hostile world without anyone to support him.

Absorbed in the present act, the fleeting days,
None thought to look beyond the hour's gains,
Or dreamed to make this earth a fairer world,
Or felt some touch divine surprise his heart.

All these beings are absorbed in '*the present act*', just what they are doing at each moment, and the quickly passing days. There is no looking ahead: none of those beings '*thought to look beyond the hour's gains*', beyond what they can get or enjoy at the present moment. None of them is thinking about the future or dreaming of making the earth a better place; none of them is able to feel any divine touch which will '*surprise his heart*' with light and delight.

The gladness that the fugitive moment gave,
The desire grasped, the bliss, the experience won,
Movement and speed and strength were joy enough
And bodily longings shared and quarrel and play,
And tears and laughter and the need called love.

These beings are satisfied with the momentary '*gladness*' they feel when a desire is fulfilled, the bliss won by that experience. For them their experiences of '*Movement and speed and strength*', of '*bodily longings shared*', playing and quarrelling, laughing and weeping, and of the shared need they call '*love*', are satisfying enough – they are not expecting or looking for anything more.

In war and clasp these life-wants joined the All-Life,
Wrestlings of a divided unity
Inflicting mutual grief and happiness
In ignorance of the Self for ever one.

Those beings with their small life-wants and needs are actually connected to the one '*All-Life*' in relationships of conflict, '*war*', or of '*clasp*', embrace. All these relationships are '*Wrestlings of a divided unity*'. The oneness of '*the All-Life*' is a '*a divided unity*' within which the different parts struggle against each other, inflicting on each other both '*grief and happiness*', but are totally unaware of their true unity in '*the Self*' which is really '*for ever one*'. None of them knows that they are all parts of one '*Self*' within whom all this is happening and who inhabits and experiences all this '*war and clasp*'.

Arming its creatures with delight and hope
A half-awakened Nescience struggled there
To know by sight and touch the outside of things.

These beings are '*creatures*', creations of '*A half-awakened Nescience*': a state of Not-Knowing which is struggling to know, which is using the senses of sight and touch to find out about '*the outside of things*', the surfaces of the things around it. That consciousness provides its creatures with '*delight and hope*' to stimulate and support them in their struggle.

Instinct was formed; in memory's crowded sleep
The past lived on as in a bottomless sea:
Inverting into half-thought the quickened sense
She felt around for truth with fumbling hands,
Clutched to her the little she could reach and seize
And put aside in her subconscious cave.

At this level of '*half-awakened Nescience*' two important powers are established: '*Instinct*' and '*memory*'. The memory is not fully conscious; it is a sleep-state in which things that have been experienced live on '*as in a bottomless sea*', the sea of subconsciousness, where past impressions are crowded together. That '*half-awakened Nescience*', in her attempt to know, catches hold of the awakening

sense-impressions and turns them into '*half-thought*'. She is groping, feeling blindly around '*with fumbling hands*' to find '*truth*', some accurate knowledge. Whatever little truth she can '*reach and seize*' she clutches, holds onto tightly, and puts it aside, stores it away in '*her subconscious cave*' of sleeping memory.

So must the dim being grow in light and force
And rise to his higher destiny at last,
Look up to God and round at the universe,
And learn by failure and progress by fall
And battle with environment and doom,
By suffering discover his deep soul
And by possession grow to his own vasts.

This is the way that '*the dim being*', the half-conscious individual, begins to '*grow in light and force*' so that eventually it will become fully conscious, able to rise at last to its '*higher destiny*' and '*Look up to God and round at the universe*'. Memory enables us to '*learn by failure and progress by fall*'. It teaches us to '*battle with environment and doom*': the conditions which surround us and the dangers that threaten the growing being. '*By suffering*' the being can eventually discover his deep soul, learn who and what he truly is, and '*by possession*', by gaining more and more mastery, '*grow to his own vasts*': the wideness of his greater self. This is a process of learning and if memory were not there, at least in the subconscious, this growth in knowledge would not be possible. In this way a foundation is established for further progress. These are the evolutionary achievements of this '*half-awakened Nescience*', the life-force and consciousness at the animal level. This is only a beginning, but it seems that she cannot do more or progress further.

Half-way she stopped and found her path no more.
Still nothing was achieved but to begin,
Yet finished seemed the circle of her force.
Only she had beaten out sparks of ignorance;
Only the life could think and not the mind,
Only the sense could feel and not the soul.
Only was lit some heat of the flame of Life,
Some joy to be, some rapturous leaps of sense.

If we compare this *'fierier breath of waking life'*, this level of Nature's *'animal experiment'* with the previous one in which the life-force was almost totally involved in Matter, it is already quite an advance. But still all that the Life-Force has been able to achieve so far is to beat out *'sparks of ignorance'* from the inertia and inconstancy of Matter, like striking sparks from stone with a flint. *'Only the life could think'*, only the life has some consciousness, not yet the mind. *'Only the sense could feel'*, not yet the soul; *'some heat of the flame of Life'* has been lit, *'Some joy to be'*, the possibility of feeling some delight, *'some rapturous leaps of sense'*, but that is not enough, much more remains to be developed.

All was an impetus of half-conscious Force,
A spirit sprawling drowned in dense life-foam,
A vague self grasping at the shape of things.

Observing all this, Aswapati sees that at this life-level *'All was an impetus of half-conscious Force'*: the pressure or drive of a spirit which is *'sprawling'*, lying or crawling with limbs stretched out, struggling to move and find its way, *'drowned in dense life-foam'*, its movements restricted by a thick foam of life-impressions. The sense of individual self is still *'vague'*, not yet clearly defined, and it can only grasp blindly *'at the shape of things'*. But there is something significant behind these fumbling struggles and gropings:

Behind all moved seeking for vessels to hold
A first raw vintage of the grapes of God,
On earth's mud a spilt of the supernal Bliss,
Intoxicating the stupefied soul and mind
A heady wine of rapture dark and crude,
Dim, uncast yet into spiritual form,
Obscure inhabitant of the world's blind core,
An unborn godhead's will, a mute Desire.

Behind all these half-conscious, half-nescient life-movements is moving the will of a divine being which has not yet been born, which has not yet found a way to manifest: *'An unborn godhead's will'*. That godhead is still *'Dim'*, it has not yet been cast into its destined *'spiritual form'*; it is still *'Obscure'*, dwelling in the *'blind core'* of the world; but it is exerting the silent pressure of its will

in the form of '*a mute Desire*'. That Desire, that will is '*seeking for vessels*', for forms that can hold a crude form of wine: '*A first raw vintage of the grapes of God*'. The Mother has given spiritual significances to flowers and also to some fruits. The significance that she has given for grapes is Ananda, Bliss. The word '*vintage*' refers to the wine that is made from a particular variety of grapes in a particular year. Some vintages are finer than others. At this stage in the development of life, only a very crude and undeveloped form of bliss is being produced; vessels are needed that can hold that '*first raw vintage of the grapes of God*'. It seems that suitable vessels, suitable living forms, are not yet available, so the wine of delight is being spilt onto the '*mud*' of matter which is not ready to contain it. But even though it is raw and crude, even though it is being wasted, it is still '*a spilth*', an overflow, from '*the supernal Bliss*', the supreme Delight. This '*first raw vintage*' is '*A heady wine of rapture dark and crude*': the delight it gives is dark and unrefined; it is not yet the immortalising *amrita* drunk by the gods. '*Heady*' means 'intoxicating': it intoxicates the soul and mind, which are '*stupefied*', in a stupor, a drowsy unconscious state. But behind all this is pressing the '*will*' and the '*mute Desire*' of an '*unborn godhead*' which is demanding the formation of '*vessels*' that will be fit to hold the divine wine of Bliss made from '*the grapes of God*'; surely they must appear eventually.

In the previous section, Sri Aurobindo showed us the first emergence of primitive life-forms which were still in the grip of Matter's inertia and unconsciousness. In this one, he has shown us the development of the more dynamic animal creation. In the next section, the last of this canto, he will show us a third level, where emerging mind begins to be more dominant.

Section 6, lines 524-671

As we followed King Aswapati in his exploration of the World-Stair of planes of cosmic existence, we have seen the emergence of the Life-Force imprisoned in matter, first in very primitive life-forms, and then in the '*animal creation*', which included beings who wore a human form but are not yet mental beings. Now the poet will show us a first emergence of mind and thinking beings.

A third creation now revealed its face.
A mould of body's early mind was made.
A glint of light kindled the obscure World-Force;
It dowered a driven world with the seeing Idea
And armed the act with thought's dynamic point:
A small thinking being watched the works of Time.

This emergence of mind represents a new plane of existence, the beginning of a *'third creation'*. Living animal bodies have already been established; now a *'mould'* or form is made to contain *'body's early mind'*. This new development brings a *'glint of light'*, a first gleam of consciousness to light up *'the obscure World-Force'* which is guiding the development of the Earth. That *'glint of light'* introduces a new capacity into the world. *'Dowered with'* means 'gave to' or 'endowed with'. This new consciousness brings into the animal world, so far driven only by material law and blind instinct, *'the seeing Idea'* – the beginning of conscious will, so that action can now be guided and made more effective by thought. For the first time, *'A small thinking being'* is able to consciously observe *'the works of Time'* going on in the world around it:

A difficult evolution from below
Called a masked intervention from above;
Else this great, blind inconscient universe
Could never have disclosed its hidden mind,
Or even in blinkers worked in beast and man
The Intelligence that devised the cosmic scheme.

How could this new development come about? The poet tells us that it was prepared by a *'difficult evolution from below'*, in matter and the lower levels of life, which *'Called a masked intervention from above'*. At every stage in evolution there is this interaction, of a preparation and a call or aspiration from below which receives a response from above. If there had not been that call and the responding intervention it would have been impossible for *'this great, blind inconscient universe'* to disclose the power of mind-consciousness hidden within it and allowed *'The Intelligence that devised the cosmic scheme'* to work *'in beast and man'* in the form of mind and thought. *'Blinkers'* were eye-shades that used to be put

on working horses in cities, to prevent them from being distracted and alarmed by all the bustling traffic around them: they could see only what was directly in front of them. 'To work in blinkers' means 'to have severely restricted vision'. Without the call of a '*difficult evolution from below*' and the response of '*a masked intervention from above*' the material universe would never have been able to release the mind-power involved within it, and the indwelling '*Intelligence*' which has conceived the universe could not have been expressed on earth in conscious beings, even in a very restricted way.

At first he saw a dim obscure mind-power
Moving concealed by Matter and dumb life.
A current thin, it streamed in life's vast flow
Tossing and drifting under a drifting sky
Amid the surge and glimmering tremulous wash,
Released in splash of sense and feeling's waves.

Aswapati sees the first emergence of '*a dim obscure mind-power*', hidden by Matter and the dumb inexpressive life which we have been reading about in the previous section. He perceives it as a thin current being carried along in the '*vast flow*' of life, which is seen as a huge restless ocean moving beneath a sky full of drifting clouds. That thin current of obscure mind-power is drifting in the '*glimmering tremulous wash*' of the life-ocean and being thrown up here and there in splashes of sensation and waves of feeling. '*Glimmering*' means 'gleaming faintly' and '*tremulous*' means 'trembling', 'shivering' or 'quivering', as if with fear or uncertainty; both these words evoke the dimness and uncertainty of that transitional emergence.

In the deep midst of an insentient world
Its huddled waves and foam of consciousness ran
Pressing and eddying through a narrow strait,
Carrying experience in its crowded pace.

Surrounded by the '*insentient*' material world which has no senses or feelings, that thin current of mind-consciousness is carried along amidst the ocean-flow of life as if it is being forced through a narrow passage, a '*strait*', where the sea is enclosed on both sides by land. There its waves of feeling and sensation are '*huddled*', crowded

close together carrying a bubbling '*foam of consciousness*' on their crests and forming 'eddies', small whirlpools, as the current flows rapidly along '*Carrying experience in its crowded pace*'.

It flowed emerging into upper light
From the deep pool of its subliminal birth
To reach some high existence still unknown.

This thin current of mind-power flows towards the surface of the life-ocean, into '*upper light*', from '*the deep pool*' of '*subliminal*' or subconscious awareness which is its origin, on its way to a higher state: '*some high existence still unknown*'. We have come across this word '*subliminal*' earlier: it means literally 'below the threshold' – the threshold of waking consciousness. Sri Aurobindo writes of the Subliminal as a vast reservoir of universal consciousness lying below or deep within the individual waking awareness.

There was no thinking self, aim there was none:
All was unorganised stress and seekings vague.
Only to the unstable surface rose
Sensations, stabs and edges of desire
And passion's leaps and brief emotion's cries,
A casual colloquy of flesh with flesh,
A murmur of heart to longing wordless heart,
Glimmerings of knowledge with no shape of thought
And jets of subconscious will or hunger's pulls.

At this stage of its emergence there is as yet no organised centre of awareness, '*no thinking self*' and no clear purpose: the tendencies and movements of this new-born consciousness are '*unorganised*' and '*vague*'. Up to '*the unstable surface*' of this thin current, consciousness rises up from the subliminal depths in the form of incoherent impulses: sensations, desires, passions, emotions, hungers, brief contacts between bodies and hearts, vague shapeless '*Glimmerings of knowledge*', '*jets of subconscious will*' shooting up for a moment and then subsiding again.

All was dim sparkle on a foaming top:
It whirled around a drifting shadow-self
On an inconscient flood of Force in Time.

All these brief moments of awareness form a foaming surface on the top of the current, sparkling with dim light here and there, eddying like a whirlpool around '*a drifting shadow-self*', a vague aimless individual centre carried along on '*an unconscious flood of Force in Time*'. There is no controlling or organising centre – the thin current of emerging mental awareness is carried along by a flow of unconscious material Force.

Then came the pressure of a seeing Power
That drew all into a dancing turbid mass
Circling around a single luminous point,
Centre of reference in a conscious field,
Figure of a unitary Light within.

But then Aswapati perceives '*the pressure of a seeing Power*', a Power with a vision and an aim, which is drawing all these '*Glimmerings of knowledge*' and '*jets of subconscious will*' together to form '*a dancing turbid mass*', as we might see scraps of debris carried along on the surface of a rapid stream being brought together and carried around in an eddy or small whirlpool to form a '*turbid mass*', a dark mass dancing on the surface of the water as it circles round and round. Aswapati sees that this accumulating mass of experience is '*Circling around a single luminous point*' of consciousness which functioned as a '*Centre of reference in a conscious field*', the beginning of a sense of individuality which is the expression of an inner '*unitary Light*', the unifying '*seeing Power*' which has brought all these fragmentary sensations together.

It lit the impulse of the half-sentient flood,
Even an illusion gave of fixity
As if a sea could serve as a firm soil.

That '*unitary Light*' lights up the '*half-sentient flood*', the flow of emerging life awareness. Although it is a '*flood*', like a sea of vague feelings and sensations, the fact that there is a focal centre holding them all together, a '*unitary Light*' of individual awareness, gives '*an illusion ... of fixity*', of stability and persistence, as if a shifting ocean could provide a firm basis for the formation of a durable individuality.

That strange observing Power imposed its sight.
It forced on flux a limit and a shape,
It gave its stream a lower narrow bank,
Drew lines to snare the spirit's formlessness.

The persistence of that '*strange observing Power*' has the effect of channelling the formless '*flux*' or flow of sense experiences into a defined form, with '*a limit and a shape*'; the '*thin current*' of awareness which has been carried along on the waves of a vast ocean now becomes a '*stream*', restrained by '*a lower narrow bank*'. The gaze of that '*strange observing Power*' '*imposed its sight*': by its persistent power of vision it '*Drew lines to snare the spirit's formlessness*'. 'To snare' means 'to trap', 'to catch hold of', 'to restrain'. That Power of consciousness caught hold of the formlessness of the spirit and held it to distinct forms.

It fashioned the life-mind of bird and beast,
The answer of the reptile and the fish,
The primitive pattern of the thoughts of man.

In this way was '*fashioned*' or shaped '*the life-mind of bird and beast*', the responses of animals and fish, and even provided a first '*primitive pattern*' for the later development of '*the thoughts of man*', our human consciousness.

A finite movement of the Infinite
Came winging its way through a wide air of Time;
A march of knowledge moved in Nescience
And guarded in the form a separate soul.

This sentence seems to describe how '*a separate soul*' could begin to inhabit a material body. '*A finite movement of the Infinite*' seems to separate itself from the vast formlessness of infinite possibility to come '*winging its way*', like a bird through air, into the realm of Time and Space, the realm of limitation, definitions, individual existences, carrying with it some higher Light, so that a '*march of knowledge*' could begin to move forward in the mindless state of '*Nescience*', of No-Knowledge. That '*finite movement of the Infinite*' could establish and protect '*a separate soul*' in a material form.

Its right to be immortal it reserved,
But built a wall against the siege of death
And threw a hook to clutch eternity.

This first conscious individuality is not yet claiming the immortality it is destined to enjoy at a later stage of its development, but it is able to establish a lasting individual existence, building a protective wall against the '*siege of death*', the attacks and pressures of the surrounding environment which is constantly tending to consume and dissolve it. It '*threw a hook to clutch eternity*', to establish a connection with its everlasting origin. As a result of this process, this pressure of '*a strange observing Power*' on the first disordered flux of mental consciousness, there is a new development:

A thinking entity appeared in Space.
A little ordered world broke into view
Where being had prison-room for act and sight,
A floor to walk, a clear but scanty range.

Aswapati observes the emergence of an '*entity*', an individualised being which can think, creating its own small orderly world-view. This is still very limited, providing only restricted '*prison-room*' within which it can see and act, but it does give to the being '*A floor to walk*' on and a defined '*range*' or scope for its perception and action; but that scope, though '*clear*' is still '*scanty*': very poor and inadequate.

An instrument-personality was born,
And a restricted clamped intelligence
Consented to confine in narrow bounds
Its seeking; it tied the thought to visible things,
Prohibiting the adventure of the Unseen
And the soul's tread through unknown infinities.

Aswapati sees that in this way an '*instrument-personality*' is born: an appearance of individual existence which can be used by the mind power as an '*instrument*', a tool for exploration and development. In it '*a restricted clamped intelligence*', a limited form of intelligence which is restricted in its movements, '*clamped*', held tightly within

its limitations, accepts to limit its search for knowledge, tying down its thought-power within the ‘*narrow bounds*’ of what can be seen and touched. It does not yet allow the consciousness to undertake ‘*the adventure of the Unseen*’, or permit the soul to explore the ‘*unknown infinities*’ which are its destined field.

A reflex reason, Nature-habit’s glass
Illumined life to know and fix its field,
Accept a dangerous ignorant brevity
And the inconclusive purpose of its walk
And profit by the hour’s precarious chance
In the allotted boundaries of its fate.

That ‘*restricted ... intelligence*’ makes use of a ‘*reflex reason*’, which reflects the habitual ways of Nature as if in a mirror, to light up the life-force with a kind of knowledge which enables it to do several things: first to ‘*fix its field*’: establish a fixed idea of the environment it is operating in; secondly to ‘*Accept a dangerous ignorant brevity*’: to recognise and accept the state it is in: shortlived, afflicted by ignorance, and thus threatened by many dangers beyond its understanding. It also accepts ‘*the inconclusive purpose of its walk*’: the fact that it is not fully conscious of the purpose of its movements; this leads it to try to make the most of each ‘*precarious chance*’ which the moment offers, doing the best it can within the ‘*allotted boundaries*’, the restricted possibilities which its present ‘*fate*’ allows it.

A little joy and knowledge satisfied
This little being tied into a knot
And hung on a bulge of its environment,
A little curve cut off in measureless Space,
A little span of life in all vast Time.

This limited ‘*instrument-personality*’, this ‘*little being*’ is ‘*tied into a knot*’, which cuts it off from the rest of the universe, but it is still connected with its larger being: ‘*hung on a bulge of its environment*’; it is just one ‘*little curve*’ separated from the ‘*measureless Space*’ of the surrounding universe. It experiences a tiny life-span, isolated for a brief moment in ‘*all vast Time*’ – so it has no choice but to be satisfied with whatever ‘*little joy and knowledge*’ it can grasp.

A thought was there that planned, a will that strove,
But for small aims within a narrow scope,
Wasting unmeasured toil on transient things.

This intelligence makes use of a power of thought that can look ahead and plan for the future; it has a power of will which sets aims to be achieved; but those aims are small, restricted within '*a narrow scope*', and that will has to spend enormous efforts, '*unmeasured toil*' in its attempts to gain results which do not last long.

It knew itself a creature of the mud;
It asked no larger law, no loftier aim;
It had no inward look, no upward gaze.

The poet says that this mind, this intelligence, is aware that it is '*a creature of the mud*', tied to the earth, and it does not look beyond that state. It cannot conceive of any '*larger law*' which would allow it more freedom, or of any '*loftier aim*' than the '*transient things*' its will strives so hard for. Its vision cannot look within, nor up to greater heights.

A backward scholar on logic's rickety bench
Indoctrinated by the erring sense,
It took appearance for the face of God,
For casual lights the marching of the suns,
For heaven a starry strip of doubtful blue;
Aspects of being feigned to be the whole.

The poet compares this emerging life-mind to a '*backward scholar*': not the brightest boy in the class, as he sits on his unsteady '*rickety bench*' at the back of the schoolroom. He is trying to support himself on '*logic*', an important tool of the reasoning mind; but he is struggling to master it. He is '*Indoctrinated by the erring sense*', convinced of what his senses tell him, although they are '*erring*' and mislead him so that he mistakes the surface appearance of things '*for the face of God*'; he mistakes the stars in the night sky for '*casual lights*', with little meaning or significance, unaware that each little pin-point of light may be a galaxy containing a billion gigantic suns. He imagines that the '*starry strip of doubtful blue*' above him is '*heaven*': the home of

powerful gods. To him, outer aspects of things seem to be their whole truth.

There was a voice of busy interchange,
A market-place of trivial thoughts and acts:
A life soon spent, a mind the body's slave
Here seemed the brilliant crown of Nature's work,
And tiny egos took the world as means
To sate awhile dwarf lusts and brief desires,
In a death-closed passage saw life's start and end
As though a blind alley were creation's sign,
As if for this the soul had coveted birth
In the wonderland of a self-creating world
And the opportunities of cosmic Space.

In a world inhabited by such beings, there is a bustle as in a busy market place where many exchanges of '*trivial*' – unimportant, insignificant – '*thoughts and acts*' are going on. These brief lives, these minds that are enslaved to the body they inhabit, seem to be '*the brilliant crown of Nature's work*', the best that she can achieve. Tiny ego-centred individualities exploit the world around them to satisfy – '*sate*' – their little lusts and desires for a while. They cannot see anything more to life than this brief passage in a body which is born only to die. To them this '*death-closed passage*' seems the beginning and end of their existence – as though for this alone creation has come about! As if for this the divine soul would choose to take birth in a body on earth, amidst this miraculous '*wonderland of a self-creating world*', constantly bringing forth new marvels, and all the limitless '*opportunities of cosmic Space*'!

This creature passionate only to survive,
Fettered to puny thoughts with no wide range
And to the body's needs and pangs and joys,
This fire growing by its fuel's death,
Increased by what it seized and made its own:
It gathered and grew and gave itself to none.

This being, the poet says, cared intensely only about its own survival. It is '*fettered*', as if fastened with chains, to '*puny thoughts*' that are small and weak and limited, and chained too to the needs and pains

and enjoyments of the body. Its life force is like a consuming fire: it takes and grows, but does not give itself to any other being.

Only it hoped for greatness in its den
And pleasure and victory in small fields of power
And conquest of life-room for self and kin,
An animal limited by its feeding-space.

The only hope of this little being is to be dominant ‘*in its den*’, its animal lair. It wants to enjoy and triumph in the limited areas that are available to it. It will try to expand the living space available to itself and its family, but cannot venture beyond the areas where it can find food.

It knew not the Immortal in its house;
It had no greater deeper cause to live.

This creature knows nothing about the immortal soul inhabiting its body. It lives in and for the body, and has no idea of any greater or deeper reason for it to exist.

In limits only it was powerful;
Acute to capture truth for outward use,
Its knowledge was the body’s instrument;
Absorbed in the little works of its prison-house
It turned around the same unchanging points
In the same circle of interest and desire,
But thought itself the master of its jail.

This creature with intelligence has a certain degree of power, but can use it only within limits. It is ‘*Acute*’: quick and clever at seizing hold of any useful truth ‘*for outward use*’, but its knowledge is no more than a tool of the body. That mind is ‘*Absorbed in the little works of its prison-house*’: fully concentrated on the needs of the body which is its prison. It is imprisoned by its little unchanging circle of self-interest and desires, but does not realise how it is subject to its longings and habits: the body is its prison, but it thinks that it is in charge: ‘*the master of its jail*’.

Although for action, not for wisdom made,
Thought was its apex—or its gutter’s rim:

It saw an image of the external world
And saw its surface self, but knew no more.

This creature is made for action, not wisdom, but '*Thought was its apex*', its highest point – but perhaps that highest point is nothing more than the edge of the '*gutter*', the muddy drain it lives in. This limited thinking entity is aware of the outer world around it, and of its own '*surface self*', but of nothing more than that.

Out of a slow confused embroiled self-search
Mind grew to a clarity cut out, precise,
A gleam enclosed in a stone ignorance.

Nevertheless, out of this slow, confused, entangled searching, Mind did grow and develop, achieved '*a clarity*' that was distinct, '*cut out, precise*': a gleam of light surrounded on all sides by '*a stone ignorance*' – the inertia and unconsciousness of Matter.

In this bound thinking's narrow leadership
Tied to the soil, inspired by common things,
Attached to a confined familiar world,
Amid the multitude of her motived plots,
Her changing actors and her million masks,
Life was a play monotonously the same.

This '*bound thinking*', although narrow, could give some leadership to the Life-force, but she remains tied to the earth, closely connected to a restricted familiar world. She keeps up her play of variety, her dramas, with all her '*changing actors*' and '*her million masks*', but her play remains '*monotonously the same*', there is no true change, no progress.

There were no vast perspectives of the spirit,
No swift invasions of unknown delight,
No golden distances of wide release.

Because of this clinging to the earth, this domination by matter and the lower forms of life, this mind does not perceive the '*vast perspectives of the spirit*'. It does not feel any sudden inrushes of unknown and unexpected delight. It does not experience any '*golden distances of wide release*' opening it up to brighter, higher and vaster worlds.

This petty state resembled our human days
But fixed to eternity of changeless type,
A moment's movement doomed to last through Time.

This limited and limiting state was something like our human life, but without any progressive development. What Aswapati is seeing is not an evolving world but an unchanging typical plane of existence '*fixed to eternity of changeless type*'. It has come into existence and will remain in existence, unchanged, representing a step in the ascension of the soul, '*A moment's movement doomed to last through Time*'. The life-mind has emerged and established itself, but Mind as such has many more levels of its self-expression to reveal. But the poet will not show these to us yet: He has more aspects of the Life-Worlds to show to us in the next four cantos before he will move on to show us more about Mind.

Existence bridge-like spanned the inconscient gulfs,
A half-illuminated building in a mist,
Which from a void of Form arose to sight
And jutted out into a void of Soul.

Aswapati perceives the whole range of all the planes of existence arching like a bridge over the dark gulfs of the Inconscient, like a huge half-lit building, swathed in mist. It is seen rising from a formless emptiness and jutting out into another emptiness: '*a void of Soul*'.

A little light in a great darkness born,
Life knew not where it went nor whence it came.
Around all floated still the nescient haze.

The Kingdoms of the Little Life appear as part of that vast pile. At this stage, Life is unconscious, unaware of where it is going and where it has come from. The thick haze or mist of Nescience is still floating all around it.

End of Canto Four



On Sunday April 15th a group of senior Ashramites and their care-givers visited Matrimandir and Savitri Bhavan before taking a lavish picnic lunch at Bharat Nivas – a very happy family occasion.

The English of Savitri

Volume 4

Book Ten – The Book of the Double Twilight

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SAVITRI SHABDAMRUT Volume 8

Gujarati translation by Shri Kirit Thakkar of Shraddhavan's *English of Savitri* talks on Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* covering all four cantos of Book 10 - The Book of the Double Twilight. As usual, the volume includes the original lines of *Savitri* along with Shri Pujalalji's verse translation of them and translation in prose by Shri Kirit Thakkar, followed by the Gujarati translation of Shraddhavan's explanations.

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

Savitri Shabdarnrut Circle

From 29th March 2018 the *Savitri Shabdarnrut Circle* in Baroda launched regular sessions for reading *Savitri* along with Shraddhavan's recorded reading followed by contemplation of the lines read. The group is meeting on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. Activities on the lines of Savitri Bhavan in Auroville have also been started on the suggestion of Shri Sudhaben Sundaram with the concurrence of Shraddhavan. To begin with, the group is arranging to set up a comprehensive Library containing relevant books on *Savitri*.

Savitri Encyclopedia Project

by Sebastian Nitzschke

In the past Savitri Bhavan published a concept paper on the vision of a *Savitri Online Encyclopedia*, an online platform providing not only a digital version of the text, but also online references and links to all kinds of information and interpretation available online and offline, referring to the different levels of the poem, such as the book as a whole, the books, cantos, sections, sentences, lines and words. This project is meant to provide a powerful platform for the future to gather, organise and publish the work of several researchers, collecting the various levels of information by Sri Aurobindo and Mother themselves as well as by students and scholars on *Savitri* past, present and future, making them accessible and directly linked to the relevant parts of the book. In this way the *Savitri Online Encyclopedia* could become a tool providing information and help in reading and understanding Sri Aurobindo's amazing work to readers and researchers of different levels of knowledge.

To bring this project one step closer towards reality, Sebastian, a volunteer at Savitri Bhavan since mid-January 2018, has prepared a draft for an appropriate online framework which is meant to provide the described features. The webpage is based on WordPress CMS and Avada Theme and published under the URL:

<http://encyclopedia.savitribhavan.org/>

The vision of the page is to provide information about the background of the book, the original Mahabharata story, a summary of the book in general and its 49 cantos, information on the main lines of interpretation found in the literature, as well as links and references to all kinds of online and offline resources. The core of the project will be a digital version of the 1993 Revised Edition of *Savitri* with the possibility to add pop-up comments at the level of cantos, sections, sentences, lines and words. On the level of words

an easy-to-read pop-up definition of all the more advanced English words will be integrated; also a news section and maybe a newsletter are considered, to keep readers informed about recent developments and share interesting insights on *Savitri*. A first draft of the ongoing work is already online, not yet providing a ready-to-use system, but giving a good first impression on the vision of the webpage and its facilities.

When finished, *Savitri* researchers from all over the world will be invited to contribute to the Encyclopedia. New materials will be selected, edited and put online by one or a few central editors taking care of the project. The wish is to establish a cooperative collaboration between researchers and editors to make the process effective and satisfying for both sides.

Anybody who is interested to support and join the ongoing work or wants to give feedback or suggestions is welcome to contact Sebastian at: savitri.encyclopedia@gmail.com

My Savitri Work with the Mother
by
Huta D. Hindocha

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

680 pages, ISBN: 978-887372-27-1

Rs. 520

Available from SABDA



Calendar of Events

March – September 2018

Regular weekly activities:

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

Monthly Activity:

7.15-8.15pm: Full Moon Gatherings in front of Sri Aurobindo's statue.

Exhibitions:

Sri Aurobindo: A life-sketch in photographs, in the upper corridor.

Glimpses of the Mother, texts and photographs in the Square Hall.

Ceramic Art Exhibition by students of the 'White Peacock' group from April 28 to May 5.

Meditations on Savitri: The entire series of 472 paintings created by the Mother with Huta from 1961-67 is on display in the newly extended Picture Gallery since June 21, 2018.

Special Events:

March

- 5 **Film:** *Auroville, The Golden Bond: Towards Human Unity*, made by Michele Decoust and Auroville International France in 2012.
- 12 **Film:** *Children of Auroville: Here and Now*, made by Doris and Francis of Auroville Video Productions in 2011.
- 19 **Film:** *Sri Aurobindo and The Mother: A New Yoga for Earth and Man*: video-talk by Dr. Alok Pandey in Greenville, South Carolina, USA in 2016.
- 26 **Film:** *The Yoga of the Earth*: based on extracts from the Mother's comments on passages from the first canto of *Savitri*.
- 28 **Exhibition:** *Ceramic Art Exhibition* by White Peacock's graduating group up to 5th May.

April

- 4 **Film:** *Journey of the Universe*: the epic story of cosmic, earth and human transformation written by the evolutionary philosopher Brian Thomas Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker.

- 9 **Film:** *Conscious: Fulfilling our Higher Evolutionary Potential*, made by Alan Baiss and Joseph Garcia in 2017.
- 15 **Visit of Senior Ashramites:** after a short introductory gathering, residents of the Ashram's care homes visited the new picture gallery and saw the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings.
- 16 **Film:** *The Silent Self*: video talk by Shraddhavan about Sri Aurobindo's first major spiritual experience in 1908
- 23 **Film:** *Four Great Aspects of The Mother: Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati*.

May No special events

June

- 21 The newly extended *Meditations on Savitri* picture gallery was inaugurated by Shri M.V. Chunkath, Secretary, Auroville Foundation.
- 21 **Film:** *The Yoga of the Earth*, based on extracts from the Mother's comments on passages from the first canto of *Savitri*.
- 25 **Film:** *Alexandra David-Neel*: This remarkable woman, born in 1868, was a close friend of the Mother in Paris and visited Sri Aurobindo in 1912 as well as meeting both the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas on her travels to Tibet between 1911 and 1924.

July

In this month a series of filmed interviews with Aurovilians by Narad were shown:

- 2 *Interview with Tency* who works at the Auroville Center for Scientific Research.
- 9 *Interview with Tim Wrey, Parts 1 and 2*
- 16 *Interview with Shraddhavan, Part 1: life and yoga*
- 23 *Interview with Sanjeev Agarwal* who works at Udavi school.
- 30 *Interview with Shraddhavan, Part 2: Savitri Bhavan*

August

- 6 **Film:** *Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga: Evolution Fast Forward, Part 2: Psychology, Cosmology, Transformational Practice*, by Sopanam, Auroville.
- 13 **Film:** *Journey to the Life Divine, Part I* : film created in the Ashram about the lives and work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother from their childhood up to November 24, 1926.
- 20 **Film:** *Evolution Fast Forward Part 3: Parts of the Being & Planes of Consciousness*.
- 22 **Talk:** *Book Ten : The Book of the Double Twilight* : Dr.Alok Pandey held the concluding session of his post-Darshan study camp.
- 27 **Film:** *Nirod-da: An Inspiration : Honouring the memory of Nirodbaran (1903-2006)*, by the Gnostic Centre, New Delhi.
- 28 **Visit:** Children of Deepanam School Auroville visited Savitri Bhavan to hear Shradhdhavan relate the story of Satyavan and Savitri.
- 31& Sept.1 *Veda Retreat on Agni in the Rig Veda, in the light of Sri Aurobindo*, led by Nishtha.

September

- 3 **Film:** *Integral Yoga: Sri Aurobindo & The Mother's vision of Supramental Consciousness and how Haridas Chaudhuri brought it to the West*.
- 10 **Film:** *The Mother : an Artist and Artistic Influence* by Mandakini and Rakhil.
- 17 **Film:** *Auroville, The Golden Bond: Towards Human Unity*, by Michele Decoust and Auroville International France, featuring the creativity of ten Aurovilians.
- 24 **Film:** *Vladimir Yatsenko: his life and yoga* : interview by Narad (Richard Eggenberger).



On Sunday August 19th, Savitri Bhavan received the Golden Chain Group of ex-Ashram school students for the first time. This group has been coming regularly to Auroville in the early morning on alternate Sundays to offer clean-up service, originally in the Matrimandir gardens and more recently also at Bharat Nivas. This was the first time that they came to Savitri Bhavan. We look forward to many future visits, where people connected with the Ashram and Aurovilians can joyfully offer their physical labour side by side.



On Wednesday August 22nd Dr. Alok Pandey held the concluding session of his post-Darshan Savitri Study Camp, held at the Beach Office of the Sri Aurobindo Society in Pondicherry from August 16th onwards, at Savitri Bhavan. His talk on Book Ten of Savitri was well attended and much appreciated.

The Dream of Savitri Bhavan

We dream of an environment in Auroville

that will breathe the atmosphere of Savitri

that will welcome Savitri lovers from every corner
of the world

that will be an inspiring centre of Savitri studies

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

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

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

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for the transformation
of the world

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