

Writings on *Savitri*

Overview Articles, Canto-Wise Reader's
Guide and Essays on Book One

A person wearing a white sari with their arms raised in a gesture of praise or devotion, set against a background of a sunset over a landscape with rolling hills. The sun is a large, bright yellow circle in the center of the sky, casting a warm glow over the scene. The hills in the foreground are rendered in soft, layered colors of blue, purple, and pink, suggesting a misty or hazy atmosphere.

Alok Pandey

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Guide and Essays on Book One

Alok Pandey

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*Dedicated to
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*

*This was a seed cast into endless Time.
A Word is spoken or a Light is shown,
A moment sees, the ages toil to express.
So flashing out of the Timeless leaped the worlds;
An eternal instant is the cause of the years.*

Acknowledgements

Every creation even as every creature owes itself to the Creator from whom all impulse, urge, inspiration to create and the power to create emanates. It is He who must be acknowledged first and last. This work too owes itself completely to the Light and Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. *Savitri* is Sri Aurobindo's gift of Grace to the world and it is only their Grace that can inspire us to write anything about it.

Yet as the impulse to create passes through many forms and consciousnesses, seen and unseen hands, including those of people from the past who created the means to print and circulate things, our gratitude to all these pioneers whose efforts have contributed to even the slightest of works.

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The final word of Wisdom always is Grace. It is her Grace to which all is offered with profoundest gratitude.

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Preface

If we take it that the *Vedas* are a revelation received in the silent spaces of the soul by the seers of Truth in their moments of contact with the Divine, then we cannot fix a term or limit to the scope of such revelations. The Divine is Infinite and therefore his ways, as well as his unfolding, are Infinite. Of course the fundamental truths of existence do not change, the foundations and the fount of creation also do not change, and if Truth were simply a static Reality then nothing more would ever be required except to reproduce the experience in the soul of man. But the Truth that we seek is not only a static Reality nor is it a fixed and finite one. It is Infinite in its very nature and hence it is but natural that as man evolves, his relation with and his experience of the one fundamental Truth of our existence is bound to evolve.

As we pass on from the mental to the intuitive and thereby to the supramental stage of evolution, we are sure to experience the same Divine in a more comprehensive way. After all, as is the consciousness so is our experience of Truth and it is only when our consciousness is not only imbued with but transformed with the very burning core of Truth that we can truly say that some finality has been reached in our vision. However, Truth being by its nature Infinite we can never really say that we have arrived at it in totality. Sri Aurobindo reveals it beautifully thus:

Parabrahman is the Absolute, & because It is the Absolute, it cannot be reduced into terms of knowledge. You can know the Infinite in a way, but you cannot know the Absolute.

All things in existence or non-existence are symbols of the Absolute created in self-consciousness (Chid-Atman); by Its symbols the Absolute can be known so far as the symbols reveal or hint at it, but even the knowledge of the whole sum of symbols does not amount to real knowledge of the Absolute. You can become Parabrahman; you cannot know Parabrahman. Becoming Parabrahman means going back through self-consciousness into Parabrahman, for you already are That, only you have projected yourself forward in self-consciousness into its terms or symbols, Purusha & Prakriti through which you uphold the universe. Therefore, to become Parabrahman void of terms or symbols you must cease out of the universe.

By becoming Parabrahman void of Its self-symbols you do not become anything you are not already, nor does the universe cease to operate. It only means that God throws back out of the ocean of manifest consciousness one stream or movement of Himself into that from which all consciousness proceeded....

Therefore to lust after becoming Parabrahman is a sort of luminous illusion or sattwic play of Maya; for in reality there is none bound & none free & none needing to be freed and all is only God's Lila, Parabrahman's play

of manifestation. God uses this sattwic Maya in certain egos in order to draw them upwards in the line of His special purpose & for these egos it is the only right and possible path.

But the aim of our Yoga is Jivanmukti in the universe; not because we need to be freed or for any other reason, but because that is God's will in us, we have to live released in the world, not released out of the world.

CWSA 12: 103-104

It is perhaps this that is indicated in the ancient Indian stories of the *Vedas* being stolen and rescued again. It is this that is the *dharmasyaglani* of the *Gita* wherein the eternal truths are either forgotten and mankind deviates from them or else their message is diverted and distorted as the dust of centuries accumulates over the pilgrim feet of mankind. That is why there is this need of the Avatara coming down to rescue these truths perverted by darkened minds and give it a new body in accord with the Age and the Time-Spirit. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother hint at this when they declare the nature of their work and mission, important aspects of which are:

- 1. To re explain the Sanatana Dharma to the human intellect in all its parts, from a new standpoint.*
- 2. On the basis of Vedic knowledge to establish a Yogic sadhana which will not only liberate the soul, but prepare a perfect humanity & help in the restoration*

of the Satyayuga. That work has to begin now but will not be complete till the end of the Kali.

3. *India being the centre, to work for her restoration to her proper place in the world; but this restoration must be effected as a part of the above work and by means of Yoga applied to human means & instruments, not otherwise.*
4. *A perfect humanity being intended society will have to be remodelled so as to be fit to contain that perfection.*

[This is part of a letter that Sri Aurobindo wrote in August 1912.]

Around the same time in the same year (May 1912), the Mother writes about the work She has to do:

This, therefore, is the most useful work to be done:

(1) For each individually, to be conscious in himself of the Divine Presence and to identify himself with it.

(2) To individualise the states of being that were never till now conscious in man and, by that, to put the earth in connection with one or more of the fountains of universal force that are still sealed to it.

(3) To speak again to the world the eternal word under a new form adapted to its present mentality. It will be the synthesis of all human knowledge.

(4) *Collectively, to establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the Sons of God.*

CWM 2: 49

Being the Divine Mother who had to take full charge of the execution, she naturally goes on to elaborate in great detail. But we can see clearly that the fundamentals of the program, the essential mission is the same for both of them, the twin Avatars, and all this even before they have met on the physical plane.

We see here that Truth has also a dynamic aspect and in its unfolding it brings out new forms of manifestation which we term as evolution without fully understanding its inner processes and the secret purpose. The new humanity, the perfect humanity, the sons of God, of which both speak as part of their work, is part of this unfolding.

No wonder then that soon after their first meeting on the 29th March 1914 they begin this work in a small way. A most important part of this work is *Savitri* which started in 1916. Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo did not publish it as part of the *Arya* which contained his regular writings on various subjects. While the *Arya* stopped after 1921, *Savitri* continued right up to the end of 1950 and came to be regarded by Sri Aurobindo as his most important work. Very clearly it is the new Veda for the future of man. Just as Sri Krishna placed the *Gita* in man's heart at the end of Dwapara, Sri Aurobindo placed in the hands and heart of man *Savitri* at the end of the Age of Kali, to lead

him towards the new Satya Yuga that was beginning to dawn upon mankind.

Of course, some would argue where is the new Satya Yuga? Much can be said about this. But for the moment we can simply say read *Savitri* and we would develop the vision to see it. *Savitri* is indeed the Veda given for the coming Age for man to navigate through the crucial passage from man to superman or from the mentalised humanity of today to the divine superhumanity of tomorrow. In one sense it is the story of the Divine Mother in her previous incarnation as Savitri. Yet a connecting link joins the attempt and effort of yesterday to that of today and tomorrow. For the sole purpose of this entire evolutionary journey, of creation itself, is a progressive divine manifestation. The Divine Mother as Savitri initiated the project in far back times during the Vedic Age. The Divine Mother as Mirra Alfassa took the project to its fulfilment, its grand culmination. The two stories are therefore closely linked and hence we see in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* the continuation of the ancient legend, the furtherance of the boons secured by Savitri for one Satyavan extending to humanity as a whole, at least to that section of humanity that is open and receptive to this new possibility that is being worked out for the earth's future. The key to this realisation is the Divine Mother in her present embodiment and what better way to open to her than the mantric words of *Savitri* itself.

We may say that *Savitri* is a combination of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's consciousness and therefore becomes a most

powerful means to bring us in a dynamic contact with the consciousness of the twin Avatars as one. Let us close this with these luminous words of the Mother about *Savitri*:

The importance of Savitri is immense.

Its subject is universal. Its revelation is prophetic.

The time spent in its atmosphere is not wasted...

CWM 13: 26 (10 February 1967)

Foreword

To write a Foreword to this excellent book is certainly an honour. For here are the writings of one who has truly opened his soul to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and offers selflessly all he has been given by Them. His vision has always appeared to me to be as vast as the sky and I feel he must almost have a photographic memory for he contains so much knowledge within himself and pours it out constantly to all who are willing to progress towards the Light.

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, the greatest work written in any language since the dawn of creation, is mantra and has the power to change our lives if read with humility and sincerity, attempting not to understand with the mind but allowing the words and lines to penetrate deep within, leading to a transformation of our nature and our eventual participation in the New World that has been brought to earth by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The Mother has written,

*Savitri, this prophetic vision
of the world's history, including
the announcement of the earth's
future.*



This vision given to us by Alok bhai (as he is known to me) in exemplary prose is one of the most profound works written on *Savitri*.

I remember the first time I met him and interviewed him on video about his life and work. He told me of his upbringing and his immersion in the stories and the true legends of ancient India and his thirst for knowledge and illumination from a very young age. Then too he spoke of his days as a doctor and psychiatrist and today is one of the key people in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram who attend to all who come. I have never found a hint of discrimination towards those who are truly seeking, whether on this path or another for he gives equally to all.

Some years ago I had an inspiration to begin a series I entitled ‘Explorations in Savitri’ and I asked Alok bhai if he would join with me in this divine venture, for any time we touch *Savitri* or read a line or two we are touching the Divine. Alok readily agreed and to date we have completed nearly 200 evenings in the series and have uploaded them on our YouTube channel, motherandsriaurobindo.

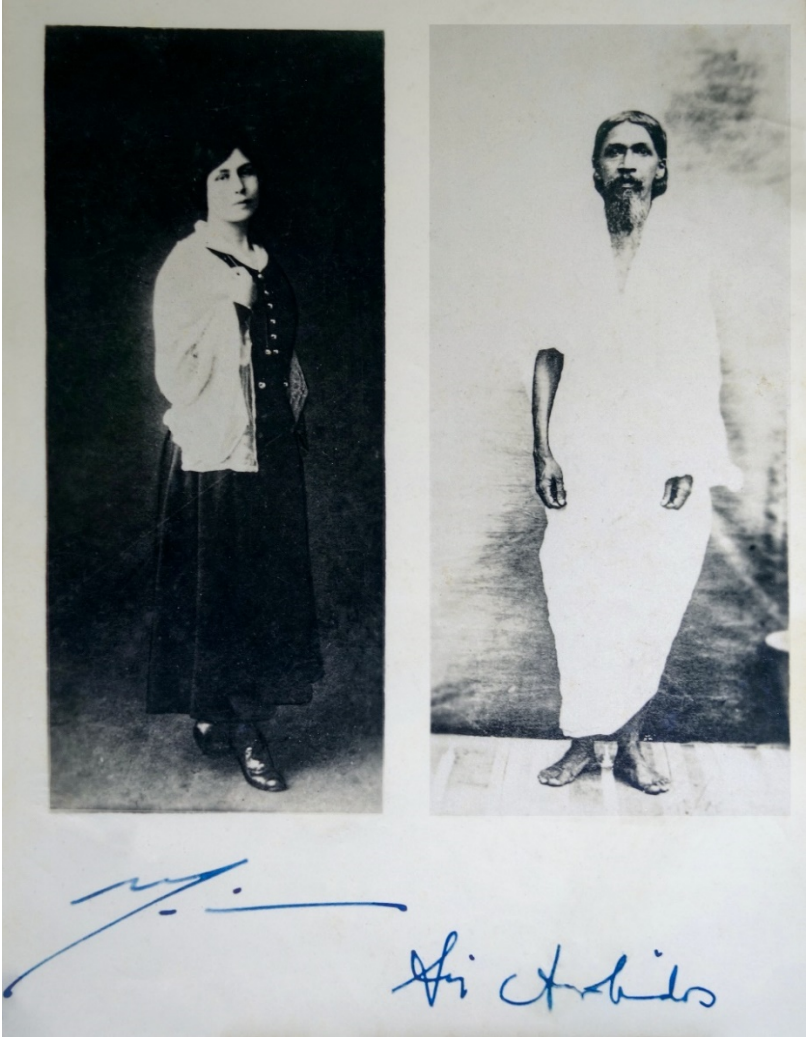
There is so much more I would like to add about my dear friend and special soul. When poetry was streaming down and eventually became a number of books I requested Alok bhai to write Forewords to some of the books and he very generously wrote a number of them for which I shall always be thankful.

Not only this but when I completed the book *Lexicon of an Infinite Mind* I wanted to write a companion to it and titled it

the ‘Supplement to the Lexicon’ and here Alok, Jhumur, Madhav Pandit and Tehmi were most generous in answering all my questions on terms in *Savitri*.

To cover in detail all he has written on *Savitri* would probably entail writing a book on his book! There is so much wisdom in it that fills each page. Granting that his knowledge is vast it is more the inner being I feel in his passages, aspects of devotion, aspiration, sincerity, and, especially, love.

Narad (Richard Eggenberger)



The Mother and Sri Aurobindo

OVERVIEW ARTICLES

Savitri – The Story of the Divine Mother

The Grand Epic of All Times

Savitri is the story of the Divine Mother. But since the Divine Mother has become the creation itself, *Savitri* is also the story of creation, in fact of all of us, since that is what we are in our secret self, — a portion of the Divine Mother who has entered into Time and Space to play with fate and circumstance. We have plunged into the play at her behest, with Her gracious assurance that She will be with us in this journey. Indeed, She is always with us as the sole omnipotent Goddess ever veiled, working from within, pushing things from behind towards their intended end. That destined goal bequeathed to earth and men is the transformation of earthly life into a life divine, of the human-animal into a divinised humanity and of matter into a spiritualised substance for the free play of the Spirit. This is the great and difficult task that the Divine Mother has undertaken upon herself to fulfil the Will of the Lord who stands behind creation. She hopes to fulfil it through the human instruments made ready through the long and tardy evolutionary process, instruments ready to surrender themselves to her Light and Love and Grace. Such a human instrument is Satyavan and all of us who, though struggling in the forest of Ignorance and

losing our celestial privileges and divine sight, are yet ready to lay all at her Feet for her sake and the joy of belonging to her. For this the human soul accepted the great adventure of creation and such is the real journey taking place behind the outer story of our outer life. The inner story is one of a progressive growth out of a limited and divided consciousness with its attendant darkness and obscurity towards a vast and illimitable consciousness of Light and Truth and Oneness and Love. We may say therefore that *Savitri* is the grand epic of all times, the epic of creation written by the Divine with matter as the page. But the story is not yet over. Its last pages are yet to be written. After the chapter on man in Ignorance, or man the slave, there is yet to be written the chapter on man in Knowledge, or man set free. Along with this epic journey and closely connected with it is the story of man rising from the stone and the plant and the bird and beast and climbing further to still greater heights of Supermanhood.

Though the Divine Mother has never left the earth since its inception and has always been there with her Grace and Light and Love to help and heal, yet at some crucial junctures of history when some major decisive work is to be done, She comes to the forefront assuming a human form and name to directly take charge of earth and men and not as She governs now through a veil of nature. Two are the veils She has woven around herself for this work, — a veil of darkness where She conceals herself as the dark Mother and a veil of Light where

She stands revealed as the radiant and resplendent Mother, — Diti and Aditi, as they were called respectively in ancient Indian thought and experience. Savitri is an incarnation of the Divine Mother in one such far back time when the Divine Mother came to the forefront of creation and took up the human quest and its unsolved questions and struggled to hew the ways of Immortality and to help the Light and Truth to grow and win over darkness and obscurity and falsehood that gain ascendancy at certain points of time. Such Divine descents are known in India as the Avatars who descend during certain critical moments of earth's evolutionary history. Sri Aurobindo saw that now again humanity has been going through such a critical evolutionary crisis, 'the Hour of God' and the Divine Mother had once again assumed a human body to lead and to deliver earth and humanity through this dark and suffocating passage towards a higher and greater Light. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo beautifully with his masterly hand links the two stories using the framework of the former tale of the Vedic cycle to pour in the inner truths of creation and earth and humanity as well as to reveal the deeper and profound truths of Her present incarnation.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo, the divine Poet, turns the legend of Savitri into a most powerful and evocative spiritual symbol of the epic of life and a drama of hope and courage and love that takes place in our life where the forces of Light and Love struggle in our human hearts and Truth wrestles with falsehood to carve a way for the Divine's victory. The stage of such an

inner conflict is upon earth and more specifically within the soul of man and the field of nature through which we move. The Divine Mother accepts the hard conditions of the ambiguous play and uses danger and difficulty and even death to eventually lead us towards the Eternal's Peace and the Immortal's Bliss. She shows and leads the way for humanity to follow through her own personal example. But for those who like Satyavan are strong and ready and willing to surrender to her Love and Grace, She happily carries their load, fighting for us in our battle against death and doom. Such is her Love, or rather the mystery of her divine Love that has woven the stars as a necklace and kindled the suns as jewel lamps in our passage through the night of human ignorance. Savitri is the song of victory, the victory of Love over death when the human soul has willingly and joyously given itself to her and accepted and acknowledged her Grace in its life. This is the mystic marriage of the human soul with the Divine, the marriage of Satyavan and Savitri, that assures us of the Divine's victory and the destined transformation regardless of fate and circumstance. Even death and disaster cannot stand in the way and become only a passage for the inborn strength of the human soul. Savitri is an invitation to this grand adventure that we are called upon to undertake, that all are called to undertake who are willing to renounce immediate success and the play of our little self, centred around the ego and the small plot of human life, for the sake of the True, the Right, the Vast, the Illimitable.

The Journey of the King-Yogi

There are two or rather three parts of the story. After initiating us into the central plot of the story that is centred around the incarnate Divine Mother, Savitri, in Book 1, Cantos 1 and 2, Sri Aurobindo, the divine Poet, takes us through a long journey that King Aswapati has undertaken to prepare the field for the Divine Mother's coming. King Aswapati is himself a being descended from the higher planes, an Avatar, so to say, whose work is to prepare the fields of nature and the earth for her coming. He prepares while the Divine Mother fulfils. But for this Aswapati must first identify with the human consciousness since then alone can he be a true representative of the human race and its sublimest aspirations as well as greatest difficulties. He must take upon himself the burden of the race that knows neither its aim nor the path. Accepting the dark and obscure human cloak he yet must labour to bring in it the Light of an undying Truth, the aspiration for immortality, the hope of a divine change in humanity. But first he must free himself from the mask of ignorance that he has assumed for the work.

Thus Aswapati's yoga is in two parts. First, he frees himself from the Ignorance that surrounds human nature and ascends to the higher possibilities that lie in wait for our humanity. Having seen these secret possibilities awaiting man's climb through a long-winding evolution, he must now undertake a long and arduous journey through all the ranges of Being to find the key to hastening this process of evolutionary transformation that is slowly working in the heart of the

spheres. Following this trail, King Aswapati arrives at the point where the worlds of form and name meet the formless essence of all things. But here he meets with a strange problem. All these worlds that he has travelled, the worlds of beauty and light no less than the fallen worlds of darkness and obscurity, seem to vanish into a nameless, formless Infinity that offers no support to the mind or heart of man to either know It or relate with It. A tremendous choice awaits him at this high point where all relativities simply vanish in the Absolute without leaving a trace. Is then there no issue in this world, no possibility of perfection of the race? Is extinction then the last word of the soul's adventure into Time and Space? But then it makes no sense as to why the adventure began at all. What secret need impelled the formless infinite Truth to assume a name and form and play in a limited Space and Time?

Even as Aswapati reflects on this he meets an even greater Truth. It is the Presence of a heart of Love, of Grace, of an omniscient, omnipotent Power that lays asleep within the Silence of the Infinite and yet has built the worlds with its single Ray. That Absolute Power residing in Absolute Silence is the Power and Grace and Love and Light of the Supreme Goddess, the Infinite Shakti, or simply, the Divine Mother. It is She who has built the stars and determined the drift of the galaxies and the emergence and dissolution of the universes by her sheer Will. It is She alone who has the absolute mandate and the power to change things here. Even as Aswapati is drowned in the rapture of eternal things filled with adoration

and wonder at the vision of that ultimate Supreme Glory, he is led into her secret heart where he witnesses a marvellous Creation, a collective life based upon Unity and Love, rooted in Truth and Oneness, full of Harmony and Bliss. Yes, this is the blueprint of the future, the possibility of a truly divine individual and collective life that Aswapati has been seeking. Here is the master key, the magic leverage for the golden change he has sought and aspired for earth and men.

The Divine Mother knowing Aswapati's aspiration cautions him that earth and men are not yet ready for this higher possibility. Men are still too much in love with their ignorance, too attached to the life of the ego, too much tied down to the laws and habits of their animal past and the human present to be able to bear this greater Truth and be transmuted by Its touch. Aswapati, in turn, prays that still She must come and change the scheme of things here by her lone power that alone is capable of the ultimate victory. Finally, the Divine Mother consents to incarnate upon earth and change the tardy evolutionary journey running through fixed grooves of fate and rigid lines of a limited nature tied down to the outposts of Ignorance. She promises to descend here and break the iron bands that prevent the higher possibilities from being born in man. Assured of her coming, Aswapati now steps into the background for the Divine Mother to come and do her Work. It is evident that King Aswapati of the epic poem is none other than the divine author Sri Aurobindo Himself and the experiences of Aswapati's journey are the experiences of Sri

Aurobindo in his blazing trail to seek the divine life and a divine humanity upon earth.

The Divine Mother's Advent

With this starts the second part of the divine adventure as narrated from Book Four onwards. The Divine Mother is upon earth in a human form. Though human in appearance, She is inwardly fully conscious of her divine mission. She has brought with her all that is needed for Her work. Her mind and heart are well equipped for this high divine purpose. The force of life in her draws a breath from the higher spheres. Her very body shares her divinity and is instinct with the beauty and joy of diviner worlds. Her Wisdom and Love knows no bounds. Above all, her Will is an omnipotent flame, an indomitable and invincible warrior that brings with it the strength of the Gods.

Thus armed with the mandate and the will to change the scheme of things upon earth the Divine Mother starts her human lila. As She grows her divinity shines more and more through the human cloak. Finally, the hour of destiny arrives and King Aswapati reminded of her divine mission by an inner voice, sends her into the wide world to search for her partner and mate who would share her work and mission. Travelling through the wilderness She finds Satyavan. A mutual inner recognition leads to their betrothal in the lonely forest; their marriage watched by the sun and solemnised by the chant of the hill-top winds. Savitri returns to the palace and declares her

choice. Here starts the ambiguous play of fate to which all earthly life is subject and which She has come to change. Narad, the heavenly sage, prophesies that though a jewel among men, Satyavan has but one more year to live. The ordeal starts as Savitri sticks to her choice and instead of changing her mind or blindly bowing down to fate, She sets about the difficult and onerous task of finding the way to change destiny. Unknown to all, in the quiet forest home of her husband, She engages in a silent tapasya that brings out her innate spiritual strength to the fullest. She finds and opens the way for man to find his soul and live in it and by it, for that is the first condition of conquering death and discovering immortality. But this would still be only half the victory. Savitri wants to find a way to make our very life and body share the immortality of the soul.

The fated hour arrives and Satyavan dies in her arms one fine day after axing the branch of a tree. Savitri, the tapaswini, follows him through the dark domains of Death debating with the dread Doom that afflicts all earthly life. Fearless and wise, She spurns all arguments of Death until eventually he too is surprised by Her wisdom and seeks to see if She has the power to challenge him. For then alone can She think of changing the law that Death has put in place. A moment of apocalypse follows his demand and the flaming divinity of the incarnate Mother is revealed to him with all her glories and powers. The dreaded shape of Death is eaten by her Light. His awful form

crumbles as he tries to flee and fly back to his den of Night. Satyavan comes back to life again.

Thus ends the story of the Mahabharata. But Sri Aurobindo takes the tale one step higher. But this one step is indeed a huge step which changes the story from an individual conquest to a collective one and brings out the full import of the legend and its future implications. Death itself is merely an instrument of the grand divine design. He is simply a mask that the Divine has assumed in his evolutionary aspect to spur the spirit of man towards Light and Truth through a narrow gate. If death were abolished suddenly upon earth a gross imbalance will be created. The chain that connects humanity with the rest of creation will suddenly be disrupted and creation will enter into a chaos. Savitri is well aware of this dangerous possibility of a premature abolition of death and suffering upon earth. She herself had cautioned Aswapati. But now She has put on the aspect of ‘the Will to change.’ Wisely, She asks the Supreme of whom She is the Shakti to transform the human consciousness sufficiently with an influx of the highest Consciousness so that mankind can share the liberty of the Spirit and earth be as rich and resplendent as the heavens. The boon is granted and the divine destiny assured to earth in a near-future towards which everything will now move with swift steps instead of the slow and tardy evolutionary pace. Happy with this boon, her mission accomplished, the Victory won, Savitri returns back to earth with Satyavan hand-in-hand.

Thus Savitri fights and wins the victory for us if only we can learn to surrender and give ourselves to the Divine Mother. This giving involves a complete trust and confidence in her, and depending upon this choice of giving ourselves to her, this choice of the Divine Mother in our life, a new curve of destiny begins to open out for us. It is interesting that Sri Aurobindo not only uplifts this sublime symbolic tale to a new level of understanding, He uses the framework of the story to pour down revelation after revelation until nothing is left unsaid of whatever essentially needs to be known about man and earth and the creation itself.

Interestingly, He takes the feminine in us, womanhood, to its highest possibility. That highest possibility of a woman is not to be a slave and serf, a nurse and pampered doll. The truth of womanhood is not exhausted even in the images of Durga and Kali, or of Lakshmi and Gauri, figures of strength and love, harmony and bliss. Nor do we find the essence of womanhood in the deep wisdom and detailed perfection that dwells in her silent intuitive heart. The truth of womanhood goes much farther, for she is upon earth in a symbolic human figure a portion of the Divine Mother herself. If she can awaken the Shakti concealed within her then nothing will be impossible for her and she can then confront all the difficult and dangerous questions of life by her own native strength and emerge victorious and stronger by the ordeals that life subjects us to. And not only the woman but all mankind carries this eternal Feminine, Savitri, within itself and if we can learn like

Satyavan to ‘lay all on her’ and worship and adore and love her with all our heart and being then nothing will be impossible for us anymore. Thus cries Satyavan to the struggling soul of man upon earth:

*“If this is she of whom the world has heard,
Wonder no more at any happy change.
Each easy miracle of felicity
Of her transmuting heart the alchemy is.” [723]¹*

Thus reveals Savitri to man the secret of a true and diviner life, the secret of immortal life and conquest over death:

*“Awakened to the meaning of my heart
That to feel love and oneness is to live
And this the magic of our golden change,
Is all the truth I know or seek, O sage.” [724]*

¹ Throughout this book, all passages from *Savitri* are quoted from the *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA)*, vols. 33-34, with page numbers shown in inline square brackets.

***Savitri* – The Song of the Infinite**

The Mantra of Transformation

Savitri, the mantra of transformation, as the Mother put it so powerfully and so beautifully, is regarded by some as the fifth Veda. In a sense, it follows the line of Vedic poetry where revelation mounts upon revelation and intuition is overleaped by intuition. The sounds, words, style, substance all touch a highest intensity of Truth and Beauty and Power whose ultimate result on the hearer and the reader, whether they understand the inner and inmost sense or not, is a delight, a reflection of the Delight that is at the background of Creation and at the Apex of all things. *Savitri* releases this Delight as the rhythms of the higher hemisphere of existence roll down through the sound symbols and word symbols into the sphere of sorrow and mortality. The result of this meeting is a transmutation of consciousness, a growing out of our present state of darkness and ignorance into Light and Freedom and Immortality.

The Mother has called *Savitri* a mantra of transformation. This is significant since each mantra brings us into contact with the deity whom we invoke and the power that it contains. *Savitri* invokes the Divine Mother herself and its power is to

open the doors of the future destiny bequeathed to earth and man by the twin tapasya of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It is indeed a mantra received from above by the soul of the Seer; a soul vision of truths witnessed by an immaterial sense. It opens us or even creates corresponding states within us. That after all is the real power of the mantra, that even if we do not fully understand its true meaning, — and when has man with his mind ever truly understood these profound truths — it still receives something of the Force contained within the word and sound symbols and undergoes a change by its inherent power. The mantra is like a capsule of Light opening up distant horizons to sight. This effect is described perfectly in *Savitri* itself:

*As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unutterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change;*

*He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:
Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech: [375]*

In a sense all of Sri Aurobindo's writings after his attainment of the silent Nirvanic consciousness in 1907 are mantric. They are the result of a 'spiritual seeing' and not the usual mental analysis through the labouring mind. The mind of the thinker in him was already transmuted into the mind of the seer and all of the *Arya* writings bear witness to this stamp of Light and Fire that courses through the words and sounds as they swim into our ken from a higher sphere of Truth-Light. But in *Savitri*, the attempt is to give this higher consciousness and the mantra that descends from there into the mind of the seer a most perfect rhythm and expression.

Savitri follows the trail of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. As He ascended to higher and higher planes and as the natural instruments underwent the transmutation in the wake of this ascension, Sri Aurobindo wrote and rewrote the divine epic from that newly attained state of ascension. Naturally, this continued right up to the very last days of his bodily sojourn. Therefore, *Savitri* is special among his writings. It is not just the seeing of the Seer and the revelation that accompanies this seeing but the outpouring of this higher seeing in the most perfect words and sounds that human speech can ever envisage. The expression is as close to perfection as the consciousness

experiencing it. Thus it contains within its word-body and sound-body the power to help us not only to come into contact with the state of consciousness that is expressed here but even more to actually ascend into that state. It has not only a revelatory power, the power to change our thoughts and understanding which revelation gives, but the power to transmute us as well; that is to say, it helps us to grow into that which it embodies, not just in thought and understanding but also in feeling, willing and the very body's sense.

Message of the Superconscient Fire

It is a Veda in another sense as well. For the truths revealed here are not those that are ordinarily experienced by our narrow range of senses but those that are beyond the limits of our mortal sight and mortal hearing and yet touch and fill everything that we sense and experience with a diviner experience:

*Releasing things unseized by earthly sense:
A world unseen, unknown by outward mind
Appeared in the silent spaces of the soul.
He sat in secret chambers looking out
Into the luminous countries of the unborn
Where all things dreamed by the mind are seen and true
And all that the life longs for is drawn close. [27]*

*A reporter and scribe of hidden wisdom talk,
Her shining minutes of celestial speech,
Passed through the masked office of the occult mind,
Transmitting gave to prophet and to seer
The inspired body of the mystic Truth.
A recorder of the inquiry of the gods,
Spokesman of the silent seeings of the Supreme,
She brought immortal words to mortal men.
Above the reason's brilliant slender curve,
Released like radiant air dimming a moon,
Broad spaces of a vision without line
Or limit swam into his spirit's ken. [39]*

That is why it is idle to understand it with the labouring intellectual mind and clamp its free rhythm to any known rhythms and metres. The mind can strive and sometimes this striving is a necessary helpful stage through which an aspiration to understand is kindled within it. But it is only when the labouring mind understands its inherent limitations and falls silent and opens upwards and inwards towards the very Source from where Savitri has descended opening to the consciousness of the Author himself that one begins to truly understand a little. This does not mean that the divine poem can neither be understood nor has any rhythm. That would be neither poetry nor truth. It simply means that we have to adopt another method and use other means to 'understand' it and enjoy its rhythm. Revelation has to be received, and with the humility and aspiration that one naturally feels when face to

face with a great truth. It is this that opens an inner door and the sense of the words and the rhythm of the sounds is revealed to us by the gods and the consciousness of Truth that has brought down the poem and given it a form of human speech and a birth among the mortals. Indeed, the mantric poem is a boon to earth that has been brought down through the arduous tapasya of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The best we can do is to be grateful to Them for this boon and receive it with a mind open to Light through aspiration and a heart open to Love through a seeking and longing for the Divine. Is this not the book of Love itself, the song of Delight, the message of the Superconscient Fire to which our ears are sealed and our hearts closed to its subtle intimations?

The Veda of the New Age

We can see how each time Sri Aurobindo withdrew from the immediate and the outward scene, He placed in the midst of seeking and suffering humanity something that would redeem him and carry him through the dark and perilous passage that one has to pass in the divine dispensation of things. Thus, when he withdrew from the scene of Indian Nationalism, he had kindled and awakened in the heart of the nation the living Presence of *Bhavani Bharati*, the guardian deity of India's destiny whom He invoked by recharging the mantra *Bande Mataram* with the strength of his love and sacrifice for the Indian nation in whose resurgence he saw the hope of the

redemption of all mankind and an important condition for the awakening of the world to a new and higher Light. Having established the settled will for freedom in the soul of a nation, he moved on to establish a settled will for another kind of freedom and another type of revolution in the soul and mind of humanity. Here too, once he had opened the path and worked out the major lines of advance, he withdrew behind the external scene, but not before installing the Divine Mother in the temple of the earth and amid an ignorant yet aspiring humanity. Finally, when the necessities of the work demanded that he withdraw one step further and work from behind the iron curtains of death where our earthly sight reaches not, he placed once again in the hands of the striving human race the magical mantra of *Savitri* to help, to heal, to carry the human march forward with a song of hope in its heart and a ray of the Supreme Light to chase away the darkness that hangs around our earthbound soul.

There is yet another similarity between *Savitri* and the *Vedas*. The theme of the *Vedas* is the epic of human ascension from the mind to a higher and supramental status of being; it is a document that reveals to us the human journey from the dark womb of things to the eternal Light. In *Savitri* too we have a detailed description of this epic climb, not only of the human soul but also of the earth nature from its first insect crawl to the most glorious of flights that is yet to come. In fact, the book starts with this dense veil of Night, this black pall of Inconscience that covers all things. It ends with the dream of a

greater dawn for earth and man. So too, the *Vedas* speak of the Dawn emerging after the battle with the forces of Darkness and Ignorance that hold earth nature in their powerful grip. In *Savitri*, these forces are typified in the being of Death whose compelling logic seems to stifle any will and aspiration for a divine life upon earth. But She conquers Death not only by the power of her mastering omniscient Thought but even more by her omnipotent Will. What is foreseen in the *Vedas* is here fulfilled in *Savitri*, — ‘*The end of Death, the death of Ignorance*’, to use lines from the book itself. Sri Aurobindo reveals in *The Secret of the Veda* about this Dawn, the bringer of illumination for earth and men:

Usha is the divine illumination and Dakshina is the discerning knowledge that comes with the dawn and enables the Power in the mind, Indra, to know aright and separate the light from the darkness, the truth from the falsehood, the straight from the crooked, वृण्ता विज्ञान. The right and left hand of Indra are his two powers of action in knowledge; for his two arms are called gabhasti, a word which means ordinarily a ray of the sun but also forearm, and they correspond to his two perceptive powers, his two bright horses, harī, which are described as sun-eyed, sūracakṣasā and as vision-powers of the Sun, sūryasya ketū. Dakshina presides over the right-hand power, daksina, and therefore we have the collocation dakṣiṇe dakṣiṇāvān. It is this discernment which presides

over the right action of the sacrifice and the right distribution of the offerings and it is this which enables Indra to hold the herded wealth of the Panis securely, in his right hand. And finally, we are told what is this secret thing that was placed for us in the cave and is concealed in the waters of being, the waters in which the Thought of the Fathers has to be set, apsu dhiyam dadhiṣe. It is the hidden Sun, the secret Light of our divine existence which has to be found and taken out by knowledge from the darkness in which it is concealed.

CWSA 15: 194-195

We have in *Savitri* these marvellous lines that are comparable in their splendour only to the inner Dawn that our forefathers once witnessed in their inner consciousness:

*The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink,
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.
One lucent corner windowing hidden things
Forced the world's blind immensity to sight.
The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.
Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first*

*Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns,
Outpoured the revelation and the flame.
The brief perpetual sign recurred above.
A glamour from unreachd transcendences
Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,
A message from the unknown immortal Light
Ablaze upon creation's quivering edge,
Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues
And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours.
An instant's visitor the godhead shone.
On life's thin border awhile the Vision stood
And bent over earth's pondering forehead curve.
Interpreting a recondite beauty and bliss
In colour's hieroglyphs of mystic sense,
It wrote the lines of a significant myth
Telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns,
A brilliant code penned with the sky for page.
Almost that day the epiphany was disclosed [3-4]*

Veda of the Future

The struggle between Darkness and Light, between Evil and Good or as the Vedic sages saw it between the gods and the titans, is not the whole truth. It is a passage, an important practical distinction that we can ill-afford at our present stage of evolution. Yet, in the end, the two seeming opposites stand reconciled in the vision of the All-Wonderful. The Player of

the flute, the divine Beloved of the gopis is also the slayer of Kansa and reveals himself as Time, the Destroyer on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The great and sole omnipotent Goddess hiding her heart of Beauty and Love appears before our ego-self as Kali, the fierce and the terrible; Rudra and Shiva are a single god! The Vedic epiphany describes the wonderful vision of the One who stands behind all things, the eternal seed and core of transient things, not only ‘things’ and objects extended in Space but also ‘things’ and events that unfold in Time. *Savitri* carries this vision of the One also to its ultimate grand culmination. There are passages of exquisite beauty and power and grace that bring out this vision of the One to our mist-laden eyes ever struggling to make sense of the evil that one sees within and around oneself. Our eyes see only division while Truth is supreme unity and sublime harmony. God and world, soul and nature, Spirit and matter are not two eternally separate but are two poles of a single unity:

*One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:
 Our errors are his steps upon the way;
 He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,
 He works through the hard breath of battle and toil,
 He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,
 His knowledge overrules our nescience;
 Whatever the appearance we must bear,
 Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
 When nothing we can see but drift and bale,
 A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.*

*After we have served this great divided world
God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right. [59]*

*All here where each thing seems its lonely self
Are figures of the sole transcendent One:
Only by him they are, his breath is their life;
An unseen Presence moulds the oblivious clay. [60]*

*The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has called out of the Silence his mute Force
Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush
Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep
The ineffable puissance of his solitude.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has entered with his silence into space:
He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;
He has built a million figures of his power;
He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone;
Space is himself and Time is only he. [67]*

The whole canto of 'The Secret Knowledge' is a grand synthesis, a tremendous divine reconciliation of the paradox called this world, a reconciliation not only in Knowledge, as attempted by the Vedic mystics and the great seer of the *Isha Upanishada* in their profound and bold utterance *Ishā vāsyam idam sarvam, yat kincha jagatyām jagat*, but a reconciliation also in Power (as the Tantric yogis attempted). This double

reconciliation of the static and dynamic sides of the One Reality is carried to its ultimate possibility wherein the seemingly two, God and the world, oneness and the multiplicity of creation, soul and nature, Brahman and Maya are reconciled in a grand and happy marriage of heaven and earth:

*He is the Maker and the world he made,
He is the vision and he is the Seer;
He is himself the actor and the act,
He is himself the knower and the known,
He is himself the dreamer and the dream.
There are Two who are One and play in many worlds;
In Knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met
And light and darkness are their eyes' interchange;
Our pleasure and pain are their wrestle and embrace,
Our deeds, our hopes are intimate to their tale;
They are married secretly in our thought and life. [61]*

One is reminded of the great and mysterious message of the *Isha Upanishad*:

6. But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught.

7. He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?

8. *It is He that has gone abroad — That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal.*

9. *Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone.*

10. *Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Knowledge, other that which comes by the Ignorance; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.*

11. *He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality.*

12. *Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Non-Birth, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Birth alone.*

13. *Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Birth, other that which comes by the Non-Birth; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.*

14. *He who knows That as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution of Birth, by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality.*

CWSA 17: 7-9

Savitri brings this greatest of all ‘formulas’, if formula there can ever be, of Truth, the highest wisdom ever uttered by the human speech, closer to us, not only to the mind but also to the heart and our very body’s self:

*The master of existence lurks in us
And plays at hide-and-seeK with his own Force;
In Nature’s instrument loiters secret God.
The Immanent lives in man as in his house;
He has made the universe his pastime’s field,
A vast gymnasium of his works of might.
All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,
Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;
Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time,
Immortal, dallies with mortality.
The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance,
The All-Blissful bore to be insensible.
Incarnate in a world of strife and pain,
He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe
And drinks experience like a strengthening wine.
He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts,
Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,
A luminous individual Power, alone.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has called out of the Silence his mute Force
Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush
Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep
The ineffable puissance of his solitude.*

*The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has entered with his silence into space:
He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;
He has built a million figures of his power;
He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone;
Space is himself and Time is only he. [66-67]*

Finally, we find in the lore of the Vedic seers an effort to grow into the Godhead through the law of sacrifice and mutual giving, — the seers offering sacrifice to the gods thereby increasing them and the gods pouring down all their riches in turn upon man to fashion in him a godlike strength and light and joy. *Savitri* takes this truth too to its greatest and highest possibility. Not just to grow into the likeness of the gods but to grow into the very likeness of the Divine, the Knowledge, Power, Freedom, Glory and Perfection of the Divine, the God who dwells secret within our heart. This is the wisdom that is secret to our mind and the ignorant groping of the senses, and yet it is this transcendent Wisdom that works secretly within all things, within earth and much more so within man who is meant to serve as a bridge between heaven and earth.

Pent up behind this ignorance is a secret knowledge and a great light of truth; prisoned by this evil is an infinite content of good; in this limiting death is the seed of a boundless immortality.

The Secret of the Veda, CWSA 15: 191

*The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,
One who is in us as our secret self,
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,
He has made this tenement of flesh his own,
His image in the human measure cast
That to his divine measure we might rise;
Then in a figure of divinity
The Maker shall recast us and impose
A plan of godhead on the mortal's mould
Lifting our finite minds to his infinite,
Touching the moment with eternity.
This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine.
Our life is a paradox with God for key. [67]*

The Mystery of Divine Incarnation

But there is yet something greater, the greatest of all mysteries known to man. It surpasses even the Vedic lore. The Gita speaks of it as a great mystery, *etad rahasyam uttamam*, the mystery of the Divine birth in Time, the assumption of a transient mortal body by the eternal Divine, the Immortal descending amidst our mortality, consenting to pass through the narrow gates of death and birth to redeem this sphere of sorrow by the Grace divine. Savitri, above all things, is the

story of the Avatara, the Divine becoming human to redeem humanity, ‘*paying here God’s debt to earth and man*’ as Savitri puts it. It is not just about the human ascension and the path of sacrifice that man must undertake to grow into a diviner mould. It is much more about the Divine’s descent, the sacrifice that the Divine undertakes to uplift man and earth. It is the other side of the story, as seen by the eyes of God and revealed to our souls by none else than ‘*the All-Wise who leads the unseeing world*’. This is the supreme value of Savitri, one that no poetry can surpass since it has flowed from the authentic experience of none other than the Avatara himself. It is the story of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s life, of that dimension that the human eyes cannot see. The Mother put it so succinctly:

Savitri the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision

About Savitri:

1) *The daily record of the spiritual experiences of the individual who has written.*

2) *A complete system of yoga which can serve as a guide for those who want to follow the integral sadhana.*

3) *The yoga of the Earth in its ascension towards the Divine.*

4) *The experiences of the Divine Mother in her effort to adapt herself to the body she has taken and the ignorance and the falsity of the earth upon which she has incarnated.*

Collected Works of the Mother (CWM) 13: 24

Thus we see that it is the story of earth, the story also of man, the inner story of the divine unfolding upon earth and in man. It is the story, the path, of all who have and continue to inwardly struggle and battle for the victory of a divine life upon earth. Many mystics and saints and yogis and sages will find some of their experiences documented here. In fact, in the third canto of the first book, one finds a detailed description of almost all the major spiritual experiences that mystic literature has recorded over the millennia. But that is only the starting point of a great and tremendous journey, one that has never been undertaken so far and yet it is the same journey that runs as an undercurrent of every life since creation began, — the journey of the Divine in matter and his progressive revelation through evolution, albeit in terms of matter, assuming many names and forms till at last it reaches that giant point where the glory hidden in our depths begins to shine out through the cloak of mortal man and the eyes of God look out through human eyes. But this too only serves for a yet greater start, a leap from one peak of realisation to another till that Reality is found in *‘whom the world and self grow true and one’*.

*This too must now be overpassed and left,
As all must be until the Highest is gained
In whom the world and self grow true and one:
Till That is reached our journeying cannot cease. [238]*

The Song of Hope

We see therefore that, not only in its conception and sense but also in its method and source, *Savitri* is a divine poem. Its power and purpose are not only to acquaint us with diviner things, of the ways divine, but to uplift us through its touch divine into higher and higher states of consciousness. That is why each time we read and re-read it, another and greater meaning begins to dawn upon us. We move as if from dawn to greater dawn. In the ever-enlarging circle of our vision, as we climb from hill to hill of an inner sight, we behold the beauty and the wonder of this creation, the deep utility of tears and the apparent justification of death and struggle and error and pain in a world that has issued forth out of the womb, not of some original darkness, but, as *Savitri* puts it:

*All here is a mystery of contraries:
Darkness a magic of self-hidden Light,
Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life.
Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face:
Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.*

*The inconscient world is the spirit's self-made room,
Eternal Night shadow of eternal Day.
Night is not our beginning nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we have hid
Safe from too swift a waking to world-pain.
We came to her from a supernal Light,
By Light we live and to the Light we go. [600-601]*

What greater song of hope can there be than this? In a world torn by inner and outer conflicts, collapsing under its heavy load, there comes in the persona of Savitri the Grace that saves, the Word of Light made flesh, the power of the all-creative Spirit, the sole omniscient, omnipotent Goddess '*of whom the world is an inscrutable mask*'. Leaning across the wideness of inner Space which is the home of her birth, she travels through the silence of Space entering the heavy and pain-laden atmosphere of earthly life. The sole purpose of this divine descent is to awaken matter to its spiritual Reality and earth to its supreme goal. Towards this end, there is another consenting player, — man, in and through whom this divine destiny of earth has to be realised. Man is the meeting point of the two poles that seem like opposites to our limited and dividing mental vision. On one side, we have the stamp of the Inconscience in every cell of our being. It takes many hues and colours: the seal of heredity, the defeatist murmur that ever rises to slay the faith, the whispers of the dark denizens that often steal into the chambers of our mind and speech and corrupt all that is good and beautiful and true by their foul

breath. Many are the masks of Death, many are its entry points into our lives. It can even assume divine looking masks that allure us to an other-worldly realisation of the Perfection we seek here upon earth as embodied beings. But this is only one side of the story of man's life, not the totality of his being. However much science and philosophy may deny or reason fail to grasp, there dwells within us the One who can create and destroy universes with a single breath. He is the evolutionary Godhead whose secret pressure keeps us moving forward despite ourselves. He is the hope of earthly life, the leader of the human march. It is He who brings down to earth by the power of his one-pointed aspiration and tapasya Savitri, the Light of the Supreme. He is Aswapati, the human father of Savitri but also the sole seer and the Lord of Yoga who brings '*down to earth's dumb need her radiant power*'. Man, the meeting point of the two in whom the play of contraries has taken a rather acute turn is Satyavan, the one who holds the truth somewhere in his secret depths. But now he has lost it, outcast from the glory that must be his, he struggles and stumbles upon this earth with his uncertain mind. The mind of man, blind and error-prone is not all his earthly climb can reach. There are shining summits of Glory and Wisdom to which mind can climb and from which mind itself is born. But entering an earthly embodiment, trapped by the senses that ever condition and limit and blind it rather than reveal the truth, it is ever striving to reclaim and rediscover the glory it has lost. This is represented by Dyumatsena, the human father of Satyavan,

the illumined mind that has here fallen blind. It must recover its lost sight and regain its celestial kingdom.

The Epic of Human Life

These are the four main characters of the drama of earthly life as it unfolds itself towards the future cycle. The divine Poet reveals this inner truth and symbolism of *Savitri* to us:

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man

and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life.

Savitri, Author's Note

We are told that this is not merely an allegory or a symbol but concrete and immense realities taking on a human shape. Their earthly drama, for which they came down in a particular epoch assuming a certain name and form, does not cease with a single victory. This first victory of which Savitri bears witness and is a record paves the way for other similar victories if we too can surrender our soul and self into the hands and being of Savitri and become the happy recipients of her Grace. This is the mystic marriage that our being waits for, the marriage of our earthbound soul with the heavenly Grace of which the All-seeing Sun and the gods are the sole witnesses and the earth itself the ground of the sacred ceremony. This eternal marriage of the Lord and his Spouse is to be enacted in many bodies and lives. But for that our nature must be lifted to its utmost possibility where the eternal Lord and his Shakti are one. Only the power of Aswapati, the Supreme Lord, and the Grace of Savitri, the Divine Mother, can achieve this hoped-for miracle in man. When this happens there truly begins a New Age and a new cycle of earthly life. Then is the being of Satyavan fulfilled, and then a new chapter of destiny opens for earth and one master-act changes fate. This master-act of which Savitri and Satyavan are the living example is the act of

luminous faith and surrender, even as Satyavan who recognising in the persona of Savitri the illuminating Grace of an All-transfiguring divine Love surrenders:

*“But thou hast come and all will surely change:
I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs
And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice.
The child of the Void shall be reborn in God,
My Matter shall evade the Inconscient’s trance.
My body like my spirit shall be free.
It shall escape from Death and Ignorance.”*

...

*“Even a brief nearness has reshaped my life.
For now I know that all I lived and was
Moved towards this moment of my heart’s rebirth;
I look back on the meaning of myself,
A soul made ready on earth’s soil for thee.” [406]*

*“Descend, O happiness, with thy moon-gold feet
Enrich earth’s floors upon whose sleep we lie.” [408]*

This great act of surrender to the divine Grace with an absolute trust is only for the great in spirit. This is the supreme wisdom, the wisdom that saves us from many a complication and takes us through the shortest and surest route towards this predestined great end. This is the supreme word of *Savitri*, the greatest and the wisest advice ever given to man, the advice of surrendering all he is and does to the Divine Master within or

the Avatar without, the two who are a single being; one unseen and hidden within our depths, the other standing before our eyes as the Leader of the human march through the great battle of life. When we thus surrender ourselves to the spirit of Savitri that is as living and real today as it was yesterday; when we approach her in the spirit of humility as a child would seek his mother not so much through the pride of the intellect but the door of love in our heart, then Savitri herself begins to reveal her mysteries. It is not a book that we read but try to enter into the atmosphere of a living and conscious Deity, the Being of the Divine Mother of whom Savitri is an embodiment, then She herself takes us by the hand through every passage and, carrying us in her arms helps us understand what we see and hear and sense and feel till the true Knowledge awakens and our soul and mind and body are thrilled by the rapture of the epiphany. She becomes then the Teacher and awakens in us the inner listener, the hearer of the divine Word which is seated within our soul. Nothing is impossible or difficult for one who has thus opened and given himself to Savitri, the living embodiment of Light and Truth and Love divine:

“Lay all on her; she is the cause of all.” [723]

The Mother reveals:

The direct road is through that — the heart.....Try and you will see how very different it is, how new, if you read with this attitude, with this something at the back of your

consciousness, as though it were an offering to Sri Aurobindo. You know it is charged, fully charged with consciousness; as though Savitri were a being, a real Guide. I tell you, whoever wants to practice Yoga, if he tries sincerely and feels the necessity, he will be able to climb with the help of Savitri to the highest rungs of the ladder of Yoga, will be able to find the secret that Savitri represents. And this without the help of a Guru. And he will be able to practice it anywhere. Savitri by itself will be his guide, for all that he needs he will find in Savitri.

*Sweet Mother: Luminous Notes: Conversation
with the Mother by Mona Sarkar: 51-52*

Savitri – The Story of Creation and its Goal

The Beginning of Beginnings

Savitri starts with creation itself, the moment before the coming of Dawn, the state of utter Night in which the divine possibility is hidden. It is the Divine's plunge into darkness that has allowed creation to be. Therefore, creation is a divine act. It is as much a spiritual fact as it is a material one. It is moving towards a great divine event, that is, the perfect play of the Divine in material terms, his full emergence in earthly life. This spiritual destiny is bequeathed to earth and its emergence is as certain as tomorrow's sun. Yet this journey is not without its peril and pain. Though inheritors of a divine destiny, our life starts from apparent darkness and the clouds of ignorance pursue us through the days and nights. Days collapse into nights and night becomes a passage for a returning Light. This is the opening scene of *Savitri*, this dark beginning of all things; the dark mother or the dark womb of things, *aprakritim salilam*, the ocean of Inconscience. Hidden in the womb of darkness is the Light Supreme. It must emerge with the passage of Time. This emergence in terms of Time and Space is necessarily sequential and creates the law of cause and effect.

In fact, there is no such inexorable law but simply patterns thrown out in Space and upheld by Time. Repeating themselves, they appear as laws. But all law is simply a habit and of all habits the most obstinate is death, this unfortunate tendency for all things to collapse into the dark and unconscious base. Yet because of the secret presence of Light within the core of this darkness, nothing can remain for long in this well of unconsciousness. Sooner or later it must be propelled upwards again; it must resume its godward toil towards Light, Freedom, Bliss, Immortality. This is the journey of life: out of darkness we still grow towards Light. This emergence, this first stir of growth towards Light is the experience of Dawn to a deeper sense within us, but the surface consciousness that is asleep and habitually in love with its obscurity feels it as a struggle and a pain. The cosmic riddle of Light sleeping within the womb of darkness becomes in the evolutionary journey a struggle and a tussle within the individual elements of creation. In man, this struggle becomes most acute because we stand at a threshold where we become, partly at least, conscious of our unconsciousness, and there also develops a conscious longing and an aspiration for Light which has been documented in the earliest dawns of humanity. This is the Vedic Dawn, the goddess who comes bringing illumination and the call to a greater adventure. Her coming opens doors to wide expanses, luminous riches and powers that were hidden within us but held back from our sleeping state. What is experienced, seen and felt in the physical world is also the story of our inner life and our spiritual growth. All this is

beautifully summarised in the opening canto, ‘The Symbol Dawn’:

*Intervening in a mindless universe,
Its message crept through the reluctant hush
Calling the adventure of consciousness and joy
And, conquering Nature’s disillusioned breast,
Compelled renewed consent to see and feel.
A thought was sown in the unsounded Void,
A sense was born within the darkness’ depths,
A memory quivered in the heart of Time
As if a soul long dead were moved to live:
But the oblivion that succeeds the fall,
Had blotted the crowded tablets of the past,
And all that was destroyed must be rebuilt
And old experience laboured out once more.
All can be done if the god-touch is there*

...

*One lucent corner windowing hidden things
Forced the world’s blind immensity to sight.
The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god [2-3]*

*A message from the unknown immortal Light
Ablaze upon creation’s quivering edge,
Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues
And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours. [4]*

Paradoxically, the master Poet also describes here the dawn that breaks upon the day when Satyavan must die. It is a bit paradoxical that dawn, the giver of hope and illumination, brings on this day the fateful stroke of an ‘adverse’ destiny. So it seems to man’s ignorant consciousness. But then how else will man evolve and new possibilities emerge but through the challenge of death faced by the immortal soul within us? Savitri, the Incarnate Divine, is the embodiment of this hope and strength that dawn brings. She must face and conquer the disillusioned heart of nature that awakes slowly to the call and the effort divine. She must face the grim resistance of the abyss that whispers in the human heart and wrestle with the fate that dodges all effort towards a greater climb. This is the mystery of mysteries, the Divine become human and thus taking upon himself or herself the burden of the ignorant death-bound human race:

*Too unlike the world she came to help and save,
Her greatness weighed upon its ignorant breast
And from its dim chasms welled a dire return,
A portion of its sorrow, struggle, fall.
To live with grief, to confront death on her road,—
The mortal’s lot became the Immortal’s share. [7]*

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

Unhelped she must foresee and dread and dare. [8]

All the fierce question of man's hours relived.

The sacrifice of suffering and desire

Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy

Began again beneath the eternal Hand. [10]

The Real Issue of Human Life

The second canto deals with the real issue of earthly and human life, their riddle and the resolution. The problem of life is not about survival and the procurement of food, shelter and clothing. Nature has already arranged for that. It has created means and mechanisms to ensure this bare minimum. The problem of man is that he is a dual consciousness, — an immortal soul within and a mortal, limited nature without. The inmost soul seeks for freedom and expansion, for Truth and Love and Joy, but the outer nature is limited and bound within a narrow range of possibilities. The cosmic forces do not allow man's nature to go beyond a certain boundary. This boundary that prevents us from knowing and relating with all that is outside this small frame is what is called ignorance. It is ignorance that ties us to the stake of suffering and pain and opens the doors to doom. It keeps us bound to the circle of birth and death repeating the same drama through blind laws and mechanical habits. We know neither our past nor our future, we know not all that surrounds us and all that stirs within us,

we know not the goal and direction of life. We live as blind men caged inside a box and the irony is that we do not even know it and even perhaps are content in this state. Such is the grip of ignorance upon our life! This ignorance pursues us wherever we go, in our homes and in marts, in isolated forests and solitary confinement, in the ascetic's cave and the mountain tops. It is the dress we wear and even when we discard this dark and unseemly robe for a while after death, we come back and wear the same or a similar dress again. The story of our life does not end with the death of the body. We return to complete the curve of energies we have let out in one life-time. All this must change and human life must be freed from the clutch of ignorance and death. The laws of earthly life must change and we must be able to live as a conscious being in a conscious world. Savitri, the incarnate Grace and Love, has come to change the law. Therefore, She must pass through the doors of doom through which earth's children pass. She must pay the tax of the Night in full for all of us who seek and aspire for a higher life. She must balance and settle the dark account for good so that man is rid of this karmic burden and can make the needed ascent out of this mortal state into the state of immortality. This is her great mission and divine Work. She comes to open the door to man struggling in the darkness of Ignorance, caught in the forest of life, his kingdom of glory lost and his celestial vision forfeited. She comes to open the door denied and closed.

But who or what brings down this Glory to earth? One is here who dwells within this mortal frame and yet is the All-knowing Guide. He is hidden behind his works, moving things and forces from behind towards the great goal, the leader of the evolutionary march. Yet sometimes he stands in front as the visible Godhead, the Avatar, the Divine's descent into humanity, the Supreme wearing the human mask, embodying earth's anguish and pain, carrying in his lonely heart the seeking and the longing that burns unseen within the human depths. He embodies this seeking and calls down the Grace and Love that alone can save. This is Aswapati, the seer and the *tapaswi* whose force of concentrated energy prepares the earth for the descent of Grace. He is the human father of Savitri and he is the divine seer who does the *tapasya* for man for the birth of the incarnate Grace amidst our blind and ignorant humanity. He prepares humanity to receive the mould of the future type. From the third canto onwards, we have a detailed description of Aswapati's Yoga that is done to open the way for this descent. He is the forerunner who opens the path, while the accomplishment is done by the embodied Grace. The first three cantos of his journey are reflected in Book One, Cantos Three, Four and Five. They reveal the path that Aswapati undertakes to ascend out of the human field of ignorance and journey through higher and luminous worlds that will be one day man's natural station. The experiences and findings of this most fascinating inner journey are described in great detail in these three cantos. This is followed up in Book Two ('The Traveller

of the Worlds') by an even greater detailed description of the different worlds, their energies and forces and beings as well as their role and influence upon earthly life and men. The whole cosmic field is seen and reclaimed for the work; the entire universe is mapped out. Nothing is hidden from his unsealed eye of Truth. One day man too shall have these experiences as naturally as he breathes and thinks today since the path for him has been cleared by the incarnate Divine.

The Divine Representative

Book One, Cantos Three, Four and Five concern Aswapati's individual Yoga. In this part, he is shown attaining freedom from Ignorance and uniting with the Divine, in both the static and the dynamic aspects of Ishwara and Shakti. In Book Two, he reveals the next step, the stage of universalisation. He discovers and unites with the Cosmic Divine in all his aspects and powers and on all the universal planes of the manifested worlds. Each of the triple lower worlds of mind, life and matter are described in their essence and their effects, their high peaks and low points; their glorious and their fallen states are mapped out. The vital worlds have their highest heaven described in Canto Nine, 'The Paradise of the Life-Gods'. But one must first take a dip into the purifying fire of hell which is a veritable battleground. It is only when the soul has successfully battled these ominous forces that it is ready for entrance into Paradise. Even as the vital worlds, the mind worlds also have their ascending peaks in the kingdoms of little Mind and then the

greater Mind. Of special importance to us is the way these planes and their forces have influenced earthly life that has so far evolved under the stress of these lower planes. Exploring these planes in their fullness, Aswapati's yoga takes him further to the Self of the Mind where thought becomes still and the word is mute. Great yogis have stopped here since it frees them from earthly grief and care. But Aswapati is not looking for any selfish personal gain, even the silence of Nirvana. He is on another trail, the search for the perfect solution to the cosmic riddle. Not a mutilated and half victory but the complete triumph, the fullest Perfection that reunites the body and soul and weds the earthly life to heaven's altitudes. Therefore, his journey does not end there. Passing beyond the flaming stairs of the higher worlds and the silence of the Self, he ascends further to the secret Source of all. He dives deep into the heart of the universe and discovers the World-soul that stands behind this ambiguous net of world-forces that we experience as so many cosmic systems or worlds. But not here can the cosmic puzzle be solved. It is the core of the manifested universe but there is beyond it the Unmanifest, and beyond the Manifest and the Unmanifest there is the secret Womb of Light, the Undivided Consciousness, Aditi, from whom all have emerged. He must find and knock at those gates, at the border where Form and the Formless meet. He must dare to enter the empire of the Sun even as he has faced and dared the dark, chill Night of Hell.

It is here that Aswapati stands compelled to a tremendous choice. He can, if he so wills now, plunge from this highest point into the utter infinity of God, the Absolute who is hidden behind the worlds of relativities. Thus have the greatest of yogis in the past used these gates of the Sun to pass to the Beyond never to return. None can come back having once entered through these golden gates. Aswapati too can plunge and vanish into this greatest of all Mysteries like so many others, undoing the entire thread of cause and effect, forgetting earth, forgetting Time and Space, forgetting man. However, as he looks down from that highest line he sees the struggling universe ascending through the long zigzag serpentine path created through the complex play of forces. On the other hand, looking into the heart of that Mystery he glimpses the Beauty and Light that await their hour to manifest below. They are there in the heart of the Unmanifest, ever-existing in an eternal dance. But here there is still too much of the play of division and darkness. Refusing the temptation to merge into the ineffable Bliss of Infinity, he invokes the Grace Supreme to come down and heal the earth's pain. The Great Mystery persuades him to leave this endeavour for a later time. It tests him with the offer of the highest status that any soul can seek for its individual Self. But by now, Aswapati has grown one with every heart. As a deputy of the aspiring world, he asks her Bliss, her Freedom, her Light, her Love for earth and men. This is the theme of Book Three. It is the state where Aswapati transcends the universe and is face to face with the Transcendent Eternal. But instead of merging and losing

himself into That, he rather aspires to bring down That Glory and Greatness into the earth play. The boon is granted and Aswapati returns with the great divine assurance.

The Embodiment of Divine Love

Time rolls by and the Supreme Mystery, The Divine Mother herself, is born upon earth as Savitri, his human daughter who is nevertheless born of the fire of Aswapati's tapasya and yearning. She grows up initially a stranger to earth's ways but soon gathers all things into her deep and divine embrace. After all, she is none else but embodied Love and Light and the supreme Grace that has consented to wear a human form. The birth and growth of Savitri is the theme of the fourth book, till she reaches that point in her life when she must consciously take charge of her Avataric mission and go out and summon the soul of Satyavan caught up into the net of death and ignorance like us mortals. The soul consenting to this divine work is just as important. It is the other self of the Divine Beloved who seeks the aspiring soul as much, and even more, as we seek the Divine. If her work can be done successfully on one symbol type, it can then be replicated and extended in the whole of human race. Who else but the Divine himself can play this difficult part as well? The Lord himself becomes Satyavan to lead the way and pass through death. It is by the coming together of the consenting and collaborating, the aspiring and

surrendered human soul with the divine Grace and Love that the divine life can manifest here upon earth.

This coming together of the human soul that, even though caught up in ignorance, recognises in a moment of the apocalypse, suddenly as it were, the Divine Mother and gives itself to her in a grand act of love and surrender that is described in Book Five. This act changes the very course of destiny which we see in Book Six, 'The Book of Fate'.

She must completely identify with all that is human, experience the grief that man experiences following the stroke of adverse Fate. Love and Fate are the two powers that together weave the life of man. In the deepest sense, they are the double term of that yoga which goes on subconsciously in earth where Love aspires to unite all things while Fate works to divide and separate. Outwardly we rejoice and suffer destiny, inwardly we grow and evolve through both towards a greater life. Love gives us sweetness and strength, Fate gives us wisdom and force. They are the two sides of the One Godhead. Book Five brings together the two, Satyavan, the aspiring soul caught up in the grip of Ignorance. Book Six reveals the secret truth of destiny and fate that follow each such attempt to redeem life and fill it with the sweetness and fragrance of divine Love. Book Five reveals how by surrendering ourselves to the divine Grace even fixed destiny can be changed. Book Six describes the process and the forces that weave Fate and how Savitri has come to change all that.

Book Seven begins with the human struggle that Savitri experiences, the sign of the Incarnate's perfect identification with our humanity. She suffers and struggles like an ordinary mortal and even questions the justification of fighting against fate. Why not simply accept the law and endure the stroke silently? But that is only for a brief moment. She has come with the mandate and armed with the power to change the law. Soon her deeper Self wakes up to the divine mission for which she has come down, to show the path to man that would eventually deliver him from all forms of ignorance including death. She is the path-finder who must open the sunlit way for man to follow in her divine steps. After all, that is why She had assumed the human form, to share the burden and to show the way. But where to find such a strength that can conquer death? The strength is within us, in the depths of our being. The true reality of our being is not the ego-self, that is but a mask put on for a certain purpose, but the inner flame of Truth and Love, the psychic being that evolves through life and death and rebirth. This she must uncover. Savitri takes this high recourse within and finds her secret soul. Once the soul is found her nature blossoms into a figure of divinity; her being becomes a temple and a camp of God pitched in human time. Having found the secret way, now lost to man, she universalises her consciousness and being so that whatever she has discovered in her own depths can be given to man directly through her touch. Thus armed she waits for the great work, the fatal stroke of destiny, the victory in the tournament with death.

The Wrestle with Fate

Book Eight describes the death of Satyavan in the forest and thus links us back to the story. Book One, Canto One had started with the day when Satyavan must die. Now we are brought back to that fateful day after covering the background and the foreground of the story. Satyavan must pass through death, for such is the term and the rule of the game for the conquest. There is a reason why death exists, why it has come into being, a function that it serves, a purpose that death fulfils in the grand scheme of things. Step by step Savitri must follow in his trail and step by step see and answer the objections of the god of Death to the sought after change in this cosmic law that governs all creatures and things upon earth. She must transform Death into the being of Love and Light that it once was. This can only be done by Savitri entering into his dark infinity, the shadow from where he emerges into the play, filling these unconscious spaces with her Consciousness. She must enter there and recover the Light that is hidden behind his inscrutable mask. She must lay bare with her flame of Light all his masks such as doubt, denial, distrust, fear, scepticism and all the rest. Books Nine and Ten describe this conflict with the being of Death. It is the unseen work, the yoga that Savitri undertakes to clear the path of immortality definitively for earth and men. She meets Death on his own ground and beats him at his own game. Eventually, Death tries to match his power with her. What follows is an apocalyptic vision in which the Incarnate Goddess thrusts aside her human veil and stands face to face

with Death. Unable to bear that powerful gaze, Death tries to make a hasty retreat calling upon all his occult source of power, but nothing helps. Light enters the dark abyss and eats up the body of Death. Eventually, he succumbs to her mastering power and gives up the hope to keep man forever in his iron grip, under his inflexible rigid law that would never allow the soul and nature, spirit and body, to be free and become one again.

Death dies or is rather transformed and in place of that dreadful form there emerges from behind the mask of terror and pain, the beautiful Godhead who had carefully and deliberately hidden himself in this mask so as to goad and prepare earth and mankind for this high consummation, the victorious emergence of man's innate and now hidden divinity through the coats of an ignorant nature. Now Savitri has accomplished this fact and shown that the hour has come for this great possibility to be realised upon earth. But the great and beautiful Godhead, who had robed himself in the veil of Night once again tries to charm and allure Savitri to ascend to the highest status of being along with her lover Satyavan. He concedes her the boon of immortality that she asks for Satyavan, but only as an extra-terrestrial realisation. He is the fourfold Being whose Glory is described in the Upanishads. He bids her ascend with Satyavan to some high heaven of Immortality and Bliss and live there for all eternity. But that would leave the old and dusty laws of earth unchanged. A

solitary victory cannot fulfil her mission. Not for herself but for man has she come down. The enchantment of the highest heavens does not ensnare her, for those were once her natural home and she had no need to come down upon earth and accept the burden and the ordeal of man if it was just to return back to where she came from. Refusing this offer, the divine lure of an individual realisation, Savitri remains steadfast in her high and divine resolve. Nothing can turn her away from her divine mission, the great work that her soul has chosen along with Satyavan, the soul of man, to establish here upon earth the life divine. The great and beautiful Godhead is pleased and accepts to grant her wish, but for that she must ascend to the utter oneness of the Infinite's embrace. This is the home of the mysterious fiat of the transcendent Will. The laws that govern us have their sanction there and it is only there that they can be changed. The moment arrives when the Incarnate Godhead is face to face with her own eternal Self. The doors of destiny are thrown open before Savitri. Hearing the sob of things in earthly life, She chooses carefully and wisely the eternal gifts for the magnificent soul of man upon earth. Book Eleven ends with the grant of these boons that Savitri has won for earth and man.

Now comes the close of the great and grand epic of the divine struggle and hope that takes place within the human breast. Earth is the field of this struggle and man's soul the main protagonist. But the central figure, the transmuting alchemist power is the Power and Grace and Love of the Divine Mother incarnate in the being and persona of Savitri. Satyavan

has merely consented to her working, he has surrendered himself in the safe hands of the Incarnate Mother, the power that alone can change all things. Meanwhile, as a result of the boons she has secured, not only does Satyavan return back to earth from the domain of Death, but his father Dyumatsena recovers his sight and his kingdom. In symbolic terms, it means that not only does the human soul escape the snare of Death but also human nature discovers the greater powers of celestial Sight now lost to the mind, and to that is added all the regal and royal riches that pour into nature and fulfil it with powers that have not yet manifested upon earth. The seers who witness this strange miracle are filled with wonder. Satyavan reveals the secret of this miraculous change even as the hearts of the seers who have gathered around her are filled with gratitude:

*If this is she of whom the world has heard,
Wonder no more at any happy change.
Each easy miracle of felicity
Of her transmuting heart the alchemy is.” [723]*

But Savitri reveals her secret in such marvellous simple words:

*“Awakened to the meaning of my heart
That to feel love and oneness is to live
And this the magic of our golden change,
Is all the truth I know or seek, O sage.” [724]*

Rejoicing they return homeward as night falls on the beautiful landscape where the great drama took place. But Savitri's heart is already moving ahead of Time towards a yet greater Dawn she seeks to bring down for earth and man.

The Lyric of Love that Waits through Time

In its deepest essence *Savitri* is the story of Love labouring in the heart of creation to bring together the two seeming opposites, — earth and heaven. It is therefore also our own story, the story of our soul, the story of our inner life no less than the story of our outer life, in its essence, of course, and as seen by the Divine's eyes. Repeatedly we find in *Savitri* our ignorant human view of things contrasted by the deeper and greater divine vision. This is another beauty of the divine poem that even in its highest flight it never loses hold of the earth. It is as if a benevolent Love is ever leaning down from its sublime heights to take account of the pain and struggle that the children of earth experience. We are a double birth, — our bodies are earth-born while our soul is heaven-born. That is the reason for our high unease. In the reconciliation of these two tendencies in us — the earthward and the heavenward — we have the key to the perfect harmony that we ever seek but never find. Either we end up abandoning the earth like the solitary ascetic in pursuit of Nirvana or the heavenly riches, or else like the average man we renounce all hope of a higher Truth and a higher life and stay within the limits fixed for us by nature. But Savitri comes as a bridge to bring these two together. She is the

golden bridge, the bridge of Light that links the two, — on the one side man's ignorant, painful world, and on the other side the griefless worlds of a shadowless Light and unending Bliss.

It is the message of hope, — the hope that comes through this wisdom that the world is in its core and essence divine. There is hidden within its anomalous appearances a Sun of Secret Knowledge and Truth; there labours in its silent depths an untiring Love; there lies behind its back an infinite Bliss and an infinite Power. All limitation is a temporary phenomenon, our ignorance is a passing phase, pain merely a stage in our further evolution. The night is simply an appearance; death is an appearance, a temporary self-concealment of life needed for its grand and mighty purpose. We are inheritors of a divine destiny and the Divine will see to it that this high destiny is restored to us. Truth, Bliss, Immortality are our inborn right. From our side we have to learn to trust the Wisdom that has gone forth into the world, we have to make the courageous act of a supreme surrender, we have to take a leap of faith. Then the supreme alchemist herself takes up the task of transforming us and remoulds our human nature into the divine nature and changes this earthly life into the life divine:

*At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate,
In their slow round the cycles turn to her call;
Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base.
Hers is the mystery the Night conceals;
The spirit's alchemist energy is hers;*

*She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God;
She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent,
The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
The joy that beckons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down.
All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.
All here shall be one day her sweetness' home,
All contraries prepare her harmony;
Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes;
In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,
Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain.
Our self shall be one self with all through her. [314]*

*But vain are human power and human love
To break earth's seal of ignorance and death;
His nature's might seemed now an infant's grasp;
Heaven is too high for outstretched hands to seize.
This Light comes not by struggle or by thought;
In the mind's silence the Transcendent acts
And the hushed heart hears the unuttered Word.
A vast surrender was his only strength.*

*A Power that lives upon the heights must act,
Bring into life's closed room the Immortal's air
And fill the finite with the Infinite.
All that denies must be torn out and slain
And crushed the many longings for whose sake
We lose the One for whom our lives were made.
Now other claims had hushed in him their cry:
Only he longed to draw her presence and power
Into his heart and mind and breathing frame;
Only he yearned to call for ever down
Her healing touch of love and truth and joy
Into the darkness of the suffering world.
His soul was freed and given to her alone. [315-316]*

***Savitri* – The Ancient Story**

The Ancient Legend

Savitri is an ancient Indian tale of conjugal love conquering death. The story, belonging to the Vedic cycle is, like many other such stories, clearly symbolic. It has been preserved in the memory of the race through tradition and ritual. Even though its deeper meaning often remains veiled to the common understanding, yet it points to a possibility of the future as well as inspiring us to live with courage, hope, love and faith. Unlike the later fatalistic thought that we see creeping into the Indian mind, *Savitri* (and other such tales of earlier times) show us how to face and take on the challenge of destiny. Destiny can be changed though not through wishful thinking or crying to evoke sympathy of the gods. The greatest Godhead, the Lord and Master of Existence, dwells within us and it is through his intervention that destiny can be changed. This is one of the powerful messages of *Savitri*.

The persona of *Savitri* is often regarded as the quintessence of ideal womanhood whose love has the power to change destiny and bring back the dead to life. The story is a stark contradiction to later Indian thought that became fatalistic. The Rishis of the Vedic Age however believed that man can change

his fate if he discovers the strength that resides within his soul. They had discovered a way to make this discovery which was for them the most important discovery, one that could change not only their inner orientation of life, their psychological being, but also impact and influence outer events and circumstances however challenging they may be. This indeed is the beauty of this story that it integrates our inner and outer life. Savitri's yoga is not done for her own sake, not for finding some peace or the silence of Nirvana here or in an after-life. It is undertaken rather to establish the supremacy of love over all else, to find the pathways to immortality even while surrounded by the shadow of death, to master the most external being and outer nature to the extent as to make it escape from the 'seemingly inescapable' law of death.

In the ancient story, the legend is narrated to King Yudhisthira, the eldest of Pandavas when he along with his brothers and wife is wandering through the forests. He has lost his kingdom in a game of dice through the cunning and deceit of Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritrashtra, the Kuru emperor. During their sojourn through the forest, the Pandava brothers meet the sage Markandeya, reputed to have won immortality. On seeing him, the eldest Pandava asks if there ever was one as unfortunate as his wife Draupadi, the princess of a royal lineage of King Drupada, who has been humiliated at the hands of the Kaurava brothers and has to now wander through the forest for no fault of hers. In reply, the sage narrates

the story of Savitri, who not only faces but overcomes an adverse fate.

Born of Fire

It is interesting to note the strange parallels between the story of Savitri and Draupadi. Both are born through a yajna performed by their father for a progeny. While King Aswapati, Savitri's human father, has performed the yajna to bring down a portion of the Divine Mother upon earth, King Drupada (Draupadi's father) performs the yajna to beget a child who would destroy his arch-rival (earlier a bosom friend) Dronacharya. Savitri is born embodying the Divine Mother's power of victorious Love. Draupadi is born embodying the Divine Mother's power of victory over evil, her Kali aspect. Both are warriors in their own right and are instrumental in changing the destiny of mankind.

Savitri is regarded as the ultimate word in chastity along with Lord Rama's wife Sita and seer Atri's wife Anusooya. On the other hand, Draupadi has been married to five men due to a strange twist of fate. Yet in her heart she bears only Krishna, her Lord and friend whom she calls during every crisis in her life and finds the needed response. Savitri is chaste in her body and soul, Draupadi is chaste in her inner being and her soul that is given only to the Lord. Both must meet the challenge of adverse fate despite their divine origin.

Savitri, when she comes of age, is sent forth by her father to find for herself a suitable mate. This is so much in contrast with

later day India, where conservatism took a strong hold of the mind, and women were made subservient to males. But in the hey-days of Indian civilisation women had an equal status. They composed the *Vedas*, excelled in arts and letters as well as participated in wars and the governance of kingdoms. Savitri, in the course of her journey, discovers Satyavan, the son of a blind king who has lost his kingdom and now lives on the forest verge along with his wife and son. Satyavan manages their life and his own as a woodcutter and yet he has developed a deep and profound inner knowledge through his daily contact with Mother Nature in her pristine purity. Savitri chooses Satyavan as her husband and returns back to the kingdom for approval of her parents.

The parents are happy to approve of her choice except for one big issue that they suddenly discover. Narada, the heavenly sage, prophesies that Satyavan, though a wonderful person will die in a year from now. Savitri, however, sticks to her choice and takes the challenge of adverse fate to try to change destiny rather than change her lover and beloved. Thus, she engages in a threefold austerity (tapasya of three nights as described in the legend). This gives her the power to confront Death when it arrives to take away Satyavan. She follows Death who repeatedly cautions her against such an impossible venture. However, soon enough he is touched by Savitri's persistence and is ready to grant her whatever boon she may desire except her husband. Savitri at first asks for the return of the sight and kingdom of Satyavan's parents. Having exhausted two boons,

for the last boon she asks for a hundred offsprings. Yama, the lord of Death, cannot refuse it since she has not breached the conditions as she has not asked for Satyavan's return to life. But now another dilemma, the dilemma of dharma grips the lord of Death, who in earlier Indian thought is also the king of Justice, Dharmaraja. How can Savitri beget a hundred offsprings if she does not marry again? The only way is to return Satyavan from the land of Death to earth. Pleased and impressed by Savitri's wisdom, he reluctantly changes his law for the sake of a greater law. His law is the law of death that once dead one cannot return to earth in the same body. But Savitri challenges this law by the law and power of Love that remains steadfast and one-pointed in her love for her husband. Thus, the story ends on a happy note. Savitri and Satyavan return to see their father's sight and kingdom restored, and all due to the strength and wisdom and love of one woman, Savitri.

A Symbolic Tale

This ancient legend preserved in the memory of the race through millennia is a symbol of the victory of Love over Death. Savitri, as the name suggests, is the supreme creatrix Power, bearer of the Sun's Light and Energy. Satyavan is the soul of man that carries truth within itself but is here entangled with the law of death that stifles all its dreams of beauty and truth and love upon earth. The father of Satyavan is the fallen state of nature, sightless and powerless. The desired offsprings of the last boon are the children of Immortality who shall

inhabit earth due to the dual labour and mutual love of the Divine and the human soul, Savitri and Satyavan.

Such is this powerful and significant ancient Indian tale which assumes a new and vaster significance with the Light shown upon it by the seer vision of Sri Aurobindo. Not only does Sri Aurobindo give us a deeper understanding but he also gives us a new Power to take upon the challenge of life and fight the battle against all that denies its divine right. According to Sri Aurobindo life is divine in its origin even though it struggles and has become severely limited in its expression here. This is partly due to the restrictions imposed upon it by the laws of matter and physical existence and partly due to the Ignorance of the lower nature that limits its power and will-to-be. But since it has leapt out from the Transcendent Itself, life is destined to eventually discover its inherent divinity and breaking free from the magic circle of Ignorance and conquering the laws of physical nature transmute this earthly life into the life divine. This is the story of the slow evolutionary emergence of life, a story yet not finished, a story so far half-written and its chapters often ending with a tragic close. Yet the last chapters of life are still to be written. Though already held in some divine conception, man is destined to be the part author or at least an instrument to complete this half-written tale, provided that he exchanges his surface egocentric conceptions and preoccupations of life with a new diviner conception and orientation. *Savitri* reveals to us the goal and

way to do so. It gives us the deeper Knowledge and the Power to participate in the great evolutionary adventure and fulfil our divine destiny.

The Two Who are One

Savitri is not just a book but a consciousness, an embodiment of Sri Aurobindo's Wisdom and Power that he had won through an intense and unprecedented tapasya (spiritual austerities). It is thus a prasada, a gift of Grace for mankind. Moved by a divine Compassion at the fate of earthly beings and a will to find the radical remedy for our lasting ills, Sri Aurobindo had engaged in an intense yoga that has come to be known as the Integral Yoga or the Supramental Yoga. Its object is not personal *mukti* or individual salvation (since that has already been done before) but a transformation of earthly life, here and not elsewhere, a radical change in our everyday living and not some beatific experience or an ecstatic realisation of the Beyond achieved through a withdrawal from life and its manifold activities. He had seen this possibility in the course of his own sadhana but aspired for the results of his yoga to have a wider scope. His individual yoga, therefore, turned into a collective yoga taking along with him more and more individuals as a representative humanity towards the great Future for earth that was lurking behind the present darkness. In the words of *Savitri*:

His single freedom could not satisfy,

Her light, her bliss he asked for earth and men. [315]

He reveals this wonderful Future waiting for us, nay being prepared for us through the present darkness and turmoil, thereby making *Savitri* a song of divine Hope. Thus it differs from other traditional spiritual scriptures that often promise a state of salvation to the faithful few but often predict a dismal end to the civilisation at large. To once again share some immortal lines from *Savitri* itself:

*Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne.
When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,
As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread
Of one who steps unseen into his house.
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
A Power into mind's inner chamber steal,
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors
And beauty conquer the resisting world,
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,*

*And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done. [55]*

Above all, *Savitri* is a song of Love. Love indeed is the central theme, the keynote message of *Savitri*. But this is not the love that humanity experiences, a brief turmoil in the heart or moments of high uplifting emotion and sublime passion that can hardly sustain itself.

Sri Aurobindo reveals to us the truth behind this legend:

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still, this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified

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

Savitri, Author's Note

Thus Savitri and Satyavan are not beings confined to a single body but immortal beings that take earthly form from Age to Age, in different places and climes assuming different names and forms. In our Age, they have come once again to us in the divine persona of Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother. As revealed in *Savitri* itself:

*O Satyavan, O luminous Savitri,
I sent you forth of old beneath the stars,
A dual power of God in an ignorant world,
In a hedged creation shut from limitless self,
Bringing down God to the insentient globe,
Lifting earth-beings to immortality.
In the world of my knowledge and my ignorance
Where God is unseen and only is heard a Name
And knowledge is trapped in the boundaries of mind
And life is hauled in the drag-net of desire
And Matter hides the soul from its own sight,
You are my Force at work to uplift earth's fate,
My self that moves up the immense incline*

*Between the extremes of the spirit's night and day.
He is my soul that climbs from nescient Night
Through life and mind and supernature's Vast
To the supernal light of Timelessness
And my eternity hid in moving Time
And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space.
It climbs to the greatness it has left behind
And to the beauty and joy from which it fell,
To the closeness and sweetness of all things divine,
To light without bounds and life illimitable,
Taste of the depths of the Ineffable's bliss,
Touch of the immortal and the infinite.
He is my soul that gropes out of the beast
To reach humanity's heights of lucent thought
And the vicinity of Truth's sublime.
He is the godhead growing in human lives
And in the body of earth-being's forms:
He is the soul of man climbing to God
In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance.
O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word,
The face of Truth upon the roads of Time
Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God.
While the dim light from the veiled Spirit's peak
Falls upon Matter's stark unconscious sleep
As if a pale moonbeam on a dense glade,
And Mind in a half-light moves amid half-truths
And the human heart knows only human love*

*And life is a stumbling and imperfect force
And the body counts out its precarious days,
You shall be born into man's dubious hours
In forms that hide the soul's divinity
And show through veils of the earth's doubting air
My glory breaking as through clouds a sun,
Or burning like a rare and inward fire,
And with my nameless influence fill men's lives. [702-703]*

The Mother reveals this truth in a direct and simple manner:

You know, mon petit, I said one day that in the history of earth, wherever there was a possibility for the Consciousness to manifest, I was there [Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of the Consciousness, I was there. March 14, 1952.]; this is a fact. It's like the story of Savitri: always there, always there, always there, in this one, that one — at certain times there were four emanations simultaneously! At the time of the Italian and French Renaissance. And again at the time of Christ, then too....

..... with the present incarnation of the Mahashakti (as he described it in Savitri), whatever is more or less bound up with Her wants to take part, that's quite natural. And it's particularly true for the vital: there has always been a preoccupation with organizing, centralizing, developing and unifying the vital forces, and controlling

them. So there's a considerable number of vital beings, each with its own particular ability, who have played their role in history and now return.

Mother's Agenda, June 27, 1962

But with this present incarnation of the Mahashakti (Mother referring to herself).... She is the Supreme's first manifestation, creation's first stride, and it was She who first gave form to all those beings. Now, since her incarnation in the physical world, and through the position She has taken here in relation to the Supreme by incarnating in a human body, all the other worlds have been influenced, and influenced in an extremely interesting way.....

It was always through Emanations, while now it's as Sri Aurobindo writes in Savitri — the Supreme tells Savitri that a day will come when the earth is ready and 'The Mighty Mother shall take birth'.... But Savitri was already on earth — she was an emanation....

They were all emanations, right from the beginning. So we have to say: 'With the present incarnation.' I have been in contact with all those gods, all those great beings, and for the most part their attitude has changed. And even with those who didn't want to change, it has nonetheless influenced their way of being.

Mother's Agenda, June 30, 1962

Savitri – The Book

The Diamond Script of the Imperishable

Savitri is best described in *Savitri* itself in these luminous words:

*The skilful Penman's unseen finger wrote
His swift intuitive calligraphy;
Earth's forms were made his divine documents,
The wisdom embodied mind could not reveal,
Inconscience chased from the world's voiceless breast;
Transfigured were the fixed schemes of reasoning
Thought.*

*Arousing consciousness in things inert,
He imposed upon dark atom and dumb mass
The diamond script of the Imperishable,
Inscribed on the dim heart of fallen things
A paeon-song of the free Infinite
And the Name, foundation of eternity,
And traced on the awake exultant cells
In the ideographs of the Ineffable
The lyric of the love that waits through Time
And the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss
And the message of the superconscient Fire. [232]*

These lines appearing at the end of Book Two, Canto Eight ('The World of Falsehood') are an apt description of the book itself. Their context of course is that the Yogi-King Aswapati has descended into the densest darkness of the nether worlds to discover the secret cause of the world's failure in all its upward efforts. But what happens as he descends into the very bottom, the last stronghold of the abyss, is that he suddenly touches upon an almighty spring of Love, a secret Wisdom brooding in the dark abyss that is suddenly released and carries him upwards in its mighty currents to realms of Beauty and Delight. The book *Savitri* also was started in its present form in 1916 when the world was descending towards the red heat of hell in the First World War. Its final birth of course was soon after the Second World War like a New Dawn appearing in the eastern sky after the bad dreams of the Night. The skilful penman fits beautifully with Sri Aurobindo who is the Master of the divine Word and uses it with such deftness and natural ease that only a mind hushed to the bright omniscience of the intuitive ranges of thought and beyond alone can do. Of course, it is well-known that Sri Aurobindo had realised the Silent Consciousness of Nirvana as early as 1907 even before his arrival to Pondicherry. Whatever he wrote henceforth was written or rather transmitted through this Silence from realms beyond Mind. Thus *Savitri* becomes a revelatory Scripture along the lines of the *Vedas*. It embodies the living experience and realisations of the author and hence can transmit to someone ready and receptive enough some glimpse of these higher states. To the man of literature, *Savitri* is sublime poetry.

To the aspiring yogin it lays bare the experiences and realisations, the beings and forces and energies one encounters on the journey towards Light and Truth and Immortality. To those who are open and seeking for guidance in their yogic journey, *Savitri* can be a wonderful guide on the routes of Infinity. To a seeker of Truth, it helps to reveal Truth in its entirety as it is beheld by a cosmic vision. To the God-lover *Savitri* enthralls the heart and soul as it brings nearer to us the divine persona of Savitri, a partial incarnation of the Divine Mother and through her story grants us the liberating touch of Her Love and Grace. Sri Aurobindo regarded it as his ‘most important work’ and appearing in two parts in 1950 and 1951 (soon before and soon after Sri Aurobindo’s physical withdrawal on 5th December 1950) it becomes at once his last message, the gift of his tapasya created as a labour of Love for earth and man. The least we can do is to read and reread it. Whether we understand it or not, the very act of reading it will bring us in touch with Sri Aurobindo’s Consciousness and like fire awaken us to his Light and Power regardless of our understanding. Even as a mantra reveals the deity and the hidden truth it embodies, *Savitri* too reveals her truth and the Godhead embodied within to those who can open through the simple act of faith with a will to know and discover what still lies hidden to our mind and senses, with an aspiration to walk the way opened to earth and man by the twin Avatars of our Age, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. To such souls, *Savitri* reveals itself as the story of Sri Aurobindo and the Divine

Mother written over the broad canvas of earth-life spanning across many lives from the very beginning of Time.

Sri Aurobindo's Gift to Mankind

We shall, by and by, touch upon different aspects and dimensions of this wonderful work of Sri Aurobindo, his labour of Love and supreme gift to mankind. Sri Aurobindo regarded it as his most important work. Indeed, it is the result of his divine labour that spanned through several decades and in a way, is his first and last work. The earliest draft was started during his stay in Baroda and the last bit corrected just before his physical withdrawal. Sri Aurobindo writes in a letter regarding the birth of the book:

I used Savitri as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level. Moreover, I was particular — if part seemed to me to come from any lower levels I was not satisfied to leave it because it was good poetry. All had to be as far as possible of the same mint. In fact, Savitri has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative. I did not rewrite Rose of God or the sonnets except for two or three verbal alterations made at the moment.

CWSA 27: 272 (29 March 1936)

Q: We have been wondering why you should have to write and rewrite your poetry — for instance, Savitri ten or twelve times — when you have all the inspiration at your command and do not have to receive it with the difficulty that faces budding Yogis like us.

*Nirodbaran, Correspondence with
Sri Aurobindo, 2nd series: 202*

A: Savitri was originally written many years ago before the Mother came, as a narrative poem in two parts, Part I Earth and Part II Beyond (these two parts are still extant in the scheme) each of four books — or rather Part II consisted of three books and an epilogue. Twelve books to an epic is a classical superstition, but the new Savitri may extend to ten books — if much is added in the final version it may be even twelve. The first book has been lengthening and lengthening out till it must be over 2000 lines, but I shall break up the original first four into five, I think — in fact I have already started doing so. These first five will be, as I conceive them now, the Book of Birth, the Book of Quest, the Book of Love, the Book of Fate, the Book of Death. As for the second Part, I have not touched it yet. There was no climbing of planes there in the first version — rather Savitri moved through the worlds of Night, of Twilight, of Day — all of course in a spiritual sense — and ended by calling down the power of the Highest Worlds of Sachchidananda. I had no idea of what the supramental

World could be like at that time, so it could not enter into the scheme. As for expressing the supramental inspiration, that is a matter of the future.

CWSA 27: 277 (31 October 1936)

Nirod-da recounts its finishing moments:

During the last four years, from 1946 to 1950, he laboured constantly on the unfinished parts and gave them an almost new birth, with the exception of The Book of Death and The Epilogue, which, for some inscrutable reason, he left practically unrevised.....

The revision of Savitri was going on apace with regular unabated vigour. Book after Book was getting done and fascicules of them released for publication. Some 400-500 lines of The Book of Everlasting Day were dictated on successive days, since we could not spare more than an hour a day for the monumental work and that too had often to be cut short to meet other demands. We were, nevertheless, progressing quite steadily. I marvelled at the smooth spontaneous flow of verse after verse of remarkable beauty. Once I had complained to him in my correspondence why, having all the planes of inspiration at his command, should he still labour like us mortals at his Savitri. Why should not the inspiration burst out like the “champagne bottle”? Now I witnessed that miracle and imagined that it also must have been the way Valmiki composed his Ramayana. At this rate, I thought,

Savitri would not take long to finish. On everyone's lips was the eager query, "How far are you with Savitri?"

But Savitri, as I have mentioned, was not his sole preoccupation. Many other adventitious tasks were thrust upon him and he did not say "No" to them out of the magnanimity of his divine nature.....

The work on Savitri proceeded as usual, but slowed down in pace, especially when we came to a mighty confrontation with the two big Cantos of The Book of Fate. Revision after revision, addition of lines, even punctuations changed so many times! It seemed like a veritable "God's labour" against a rock of resistance. At his time the Press sent up a demand for a new book from him. The Future Poetry was given preference and some passages which were meant to be dovetailed into the text of the chapters were written. But since he wanted to write something on modern poetry and for his works of modern poets were needed, orders were sent to Madras for them while whatever few books were available from our small library were requisitioned. As I read them out, he said, "Mark that passage," or "These lines have a striking image" — (once the lines referred to were, I think, from C. Day Lewis' Magnetic Mountain). He himself read out a poem of Eliot's to — I don't remember exactly which, and remarked, "This is fine poetry." In this way we proceeded. Since we had to wait for the arrival of the books, he said, "Let us go back to Savitri." His whole

attention seemed to be focussed on Savitri, but again, the work had to be suspended owing to the pressure of various extraneous demands. They swelled up to such an extent that he was obliged to remark, "I find no more time for my real work." When the path was fairly clear and I was wondering what his next choice would be, he said in a distant voice, "Take up Savitri. I want to finish it soon." This must have been about two months before his departure. The last part of the utterance startled me, though it was said in a subdued tone. I wondered for a moment if I had heard rightly. I looked at him; my bewildered glance met an impassive face. In these twelve years this was the first time I had heard him reckoning with the time factor. An Avatar of poise, patience and equanimity, this was the picture that shone before our eyes whenever we had thought or spoken about him. Hence my wonder. We took up the same two Cantos that had proved so intractable. The work progressed slowly; words, ideas, images seemed to be repeated; the verses themselves appeared to flow with reluctance. Once a punctuation had to be changed four or five times. When the last revision was made and the Cantos were wound up, I said, "It is finished now." An impersonal smile of satisfaction greeted me, and he said, "Ah, it is finished?" How well I remember that flicker of a smile which all of us craved for so long! "What is left now?" was his next query. "The Book of Death and The Epilogue." "Oh, that? We shall see about that later on." That "later on" never came and was not

meant to come. Having taken the decision to leave the body, he must have been waiting for the right moment to go, and for reasons known to himself he left the two last-mentioned Books almost as they were. Thus on Savitri was put the seal of incomplete completion about two weeks before the Darshan of November 24th. Other literary works too came to an end.

And significantly The Book of Fate was the last Book to be revised. What I deemed to be minor flaws or unnecessary repetitions, and thought that a further revision would remove them, appeared, after his passing, to be deliberate and prophetic:

*A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers ...
In that tremendous silence lone and lost...
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save...
She only can save herself and save the world.*

We know how true these words have proved.

*Nirodbaran, Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo,
4th ed (2010): 166, 185, 187-188*

Savitri for Sri Aurobindo was not a book to be started and finished but an unending tapasya. *Savitri* has accompanied his spiritual journey and as he went further and further, higher and higher into the realms of the Unknown, he modified *Savitri* to

further embody the states of consciousness that he experienced in course of his tapasya. Thus *Savitri* becomes an embodiment of Sri Aurobindo's Consciousness, his Will bequeathed to earth and men. We as earthly beings can share this Will and be aligned to it thereby hastening its hour of fulfilment. For one thing is certain that however long and whatever it may take, this Will divine implanted in the soil of earth and written in the scroll of man's destiny with the Divine's signature upon it is bound to fulfil itself. As revealed in *Savitri* itself:

*Even should a hostile force cling to its reign
 And claim its right's perpetual sovereignty
 And man refuse his high spiritual fate,
 Yet shall the secret Truth in things prevail.
 For in the march of all-fulfilling Time
 The hour must come of the Transcendent's will:
 All turns and winds towards his predestined ends
 In Nature's fixed inevitable course
 Decreed since the beginning of the worlds
 In the deep essence of created things:
 Even there shall come as a high crown of all
 The end of Death, the death of Ignorance.
 But first high Truth must set her feet on earth
 And man aspire to the Eternal's light
 And all his members feel the Spirit's touch
 And all his life obey an inner Force.
 This too shall be; for a new life shall come,
 A body of the Superconscient's truth,*

*A native field of Supernature's might:
It shall make earth's nescient ground Truth's colony,
Make even the Ignorance a transparent robe
Through which shall shine the brilliant limbs of Truth
And Truth shall be a sun on Nature's head
And Truth shall be the guide of Nature's steps
And Truth shall gaze out of her nether deeps.
When superman is born as Nature's king
His presence shall transfigure Matter's world:
He shall light up Truth's fire in Nature's night,
He shall lay upon the earth Truth's greater law;
Man too shall turn towards the Spirit's call.
Awake to his hidden possibility,
Awake to all that slept within his heart
And all that Nature meant when earth was formed
And the Spirit made this ignorant world his home,
He shall aspire to Truth and God and Bliss.
Interpreter of a diviner law
And instrument of a supreme design,
The higher kind shall lean to lift up man.
Man shall desire to climb to his own heights.
The truth above shall wake a nether truth,
Even the dumb earth become a sentient force.
The Spirit's tops and Nature's base shall draw
Near to the secret of their separate truth
And know each other as one deity.
The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze*

And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. [708-709]

If we can open ourselves to the consciousness of *Savitri* then the work will go faster and perhaps smoother. To hasten or slow down, to help it happen smoothly or temporarily hinder it through our hidden and overt resistances, is up to us. But in the end, either way, we shall only fulfil the word of a happy destiny for earth and men enshrined in *Savitri*. The transformative power of *Savitri's* word is also revealed in *Savitri* itself, as indeed of all mantric word:

*As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unutterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change;
He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:
Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,*

Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech: [375]

Savitri Veda

Introduction

Savitri, the epic poem of Sri Aurobindo, is regarded by many as a deeply mystical poem. The Mother revealed that the lines of *Savitri* are a mantra in their own right, a mantra of transformation, so to say. Sri Aurobindo's own letters written in response to queries from poet-disciples reveal to us the immense labour that has gone into the poem with the sole intention of bringing down the very highest rhythms of Beauty and Truth and Delight into a body of sound and word. The very fact that *Savitri* embodies the very highest rhythms of Truth, termed in Indian thought as the mantra, and is the manifestation of the Seer-Vision, the spiritual-occult vision and experiences of Sri Aurobindo who had entered the deepest and highest realms of yogic realisations, makes *Savitri* a Veda in its own right. For what we mean by the Veda is not just a set of four holy books, the most ancient and revered sacred texts of Hindu Thought, but a document of occult vision and spiritual experiences of seers who sought for the Truth behind appearances and had found it. They have left for us invaluable documents as a priceless treasure for all the children of earth,

regardless of their religion, to benefit from their discoveries by discovering and deciphering the Truth behind the texts.

This is however no easy task. Firstly, the language used is a rather archaic form of Sanskrit whose keys are not always easy to find. But even when one has found the keys, the texts themselves have been clothed in imagery that does not lend itself to an easy interpretation, a difficulty that even great scholars have experienced, not to speak of a common seeker. However, even if we have overcome these two challenges there is a yet another difficulty; there is the challenge of making the texts contextual so that the modern mind can connect with the profound truths contained within these wonderful texts. This is true not only of the truths contained but also for the path shown in the *Vedas*. Humanity has moved ahead much in its pursuit of Truth and it is difficult to imagine a life that the ancients lived and followed as part of their self-discipline and preparation for yoga.

It is for these reasons that many youths find a greater connection with the *Gita* with its stress on a psychological approach, rather than an occult and mystical one, as we see in the *Vedas*. Sri Krishna must have seen the necessity of recovering the *Vedas* from the state of obscurity and confusion in which their understanding had fallen, especially with a ritualistic interpretation and the emergence of more approaches than one towards the divine seeking. The *Gita* was his way of recovering the *Vedas* which is one of the many Works of the

Avatar. But humanity has moved yet further. The *Gita* itself was being turned into a religious scripture and with the fast-growing strides of modern science, new questions were besieging mankind at the beginning of the previous century. Arjuna's dilemma was largely a moral and ethical one. He hardly questioned the validity of spiritual experience nor was his mind caught up between the discoveries of material science and the ancient spiritual truths.

Our Age, endowed with new possibilities has also brought with it new challenges and difficulties. The Veda had to be recovered once again and put in a language more suited to our modern temperament. At the same time, this had to be done without compromising on the method followed by the Vedic seers, that is, of stating profound truths not merely as statements but as a powerful mantra that can act directly on the recipient, evoke in him the aspiration that moved the heart of the seer and inspire him to walk the Way giving all the needed guidance and Light and Power needed when we undertake the greatest of all adventures, — the search for Truth and Freedom and Bliss and Immortality. That mantra, that Veda is Savitri given to man by the Avatar of the Age, Sri Aurobindo.

Rescuing the Vedas

This is one of the works undertaken by the Avatar as is beautifully stated in this symbolic story which also reveals that the *Vedas* are more than a set of sacred scriptures. The real Veda is the Knowledge-Power, the Wisdom, *prajna prasrato*

purano that has gone into creation. It is the blueprint of the Divine embedded in the heart of all creatures and is revealed as we dive deep within our core and come in touch with our soul. The Vedic seers were some of the early mystics who experienced this Wisdom, though they mention the forefathers who paved the way for them.

There are therefore two ways in which the *Vedas* can be understood. The first and common sense, the one in which it is generally understood, is to see them as a set of four books that have emerged as the very Word of God, traditionally from Brahma whose Word is also associated creation. But this very parallel in the story of both the *Vedas* and creation emerging from the same Source would indicate, or at least suggest, that there is another Veda and it is that which is involved in creation itself, not as a book but as the Knowledge that is inbuilt in the very warp and woof of existence. The soul recovers this Knowledge bit by bit as it goes through the countless experiences life after life. This second sense of the Veda makes it a much vaster Truth, one that cannot be confined to any number of books and would remain inexhaustible even if one were to take into account all the soul-experiences and soul-moments of all beings who have so far entered into the great play of the Creation. It would also mean that even if the creation were destroyed, as indeed records suggest it had been, it would still emerge again since ‘Knowledge’ cannot be

destroyed. This Knowledge will invariably bring creation back into order.

Perhaps that is what is hinted at in the story of the very first Avatar in Hindu thought, the great Fish. During the great deluge (*pralaya*) everything is destroyed in its swell except the great King Satyavrata (significantly meaning one who holds to the Truth, — Truth is never destroyed) and those subjects whom he has placed in the great Arc. The Divine has come down as a Fish and steers the boat through the growing Waters. When questioned by the king as to what is its mission, the Divine-Fish, the Matsya Avatar, remarks that it has come down to save the Vedas! Surely it is not some set of holy books that were being rescued, but the Truth, the essential Knowledge that was being preserved for a New Creation that would follow the destruction of the old. One cannot but help remembering one of the experiences of the Divine Mother which is so very similar to this most ancient story that one may very well conclude that at least a certain section of humanity has just crossed over the great deluge. It is that section which clings to Truth and to the Divine. The rest is marked out for collapse sooner or later. Let us read through these experiences before we proceed:

It was as if the doors of destruction had been flung open. Floods — floods as vast as an ocean — were rushing down onto ... something ... the earth? A formidable current pouring down at an insane speed, with an unstoppable power....

Right at the end, there was a place where the water had to turn to run down — this was the Great Passage. If you got caught in that, it was all over. You had to reach this spot and cross over before the water came. It was the only place you could get across. Then a last plunge, and like an arrow shot from a bow, full speed ahead, I crossed over and there I was.

And once on the other side, without even a rise in ground level (I don't know why), it was immediately safe. And the current went on and on, waves upon waves, on and on, as far as the eye could see, but it was canalized here at the Great Turning; and as soon as it went past this point, the inundation was total, it spread out over something ... over the earth. And the current turned — it turned — but I was already on the other side. And down below, everything was finished, the water rushed down everywhere. Only, as soon as I was on the other side, it could not touch me — the water could not get across, it was stopped by something invisible, and it turned away....

The vehicle's path was not on earth, but up above (probably in interstellar regions!), a special path for this vehicle. And I didn't know where the water was coming from; I couldn't see its origin, which was off beyond the horizon. But it came raging down in torrents — not precipitously like a waterfall, but rather like a rushing torrent. My path passed between the torrents of water and the earth below. And I saw the water before me,

everywhere, in front and behind — it was so extraordinary, for it looked like ... it was everywhere, you see, except along my path (and even then, there was some seepage). Water speeding everywhere. But there was a kind of conscious will in this onrush, and I had to reach the Great Passage before this conscious will....

The vehicle and the forward movement are the sadhana, beyond the shadow of a doubt. I understood that the speed of sadhana was greater than the speed of the forces of destruction. And it ended in certain victory, there is not a shadow of doubt. This feeling of Power once I was firmly grounded there [in the 'square'], enough power to help others.

Mother's Agenda, July 23, 1960

One must rise above, surge forth into the Light and the Harmony, or sink back down into the simplicity of a wholesome, unperverted animal life.

But those who cannot be lifted up, who refuse to progress, will automatically lose the use of the mental consciousness and fall back into an infrahuman stage....

That part of humanity, of the human consciousness, which is able to unite with the Supermind and liberate itself will be completely transformed. It is moving towards its future reality as yet unexpressed in the outer form; the part very close to the simplicity of the animal, close to Nature, will be reabsorbed by Nature and thoroughly reassimilated. But that corrupted part of the human

consciousness, which through its wrong use of the mind allows this perversion, will be abolished.

That kind of humanity belongs to an unfruitful attempt — and will be eliminated, like so many other abortive species which have vanished in the course of universal history.

Certain prophets in the past had this apocalyptic vision, but as usual things became mixed, and along with their vision of the apocalypse they did not have the vision of the supramental world that will come to uplift the consenting part of humanity and transform this physical world. However, to give hope to those born into this perverted part of the human consciousness, redemption through faith was taught: those who have faith in the sacrifice of the Divine in Matter will automatically be saved, in another world — faith alone, without understanding, without intelligence. They never saw the supramental world, nor did they see that the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is that of an involution which will lead to the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself.

CWM 9: 300-301

Word of the New Creation

This divine Action of the embodied Divine, the Avatara, also takes the form of giving to the earth the New Word, the word

of a New Creation that would embody the dharma of the Age that is dawning upon earth and mankind. In one of her early notes She does mention this as one of her works, something that we also find in Sri Aurobindo's early statements, as we see in these quotes first from the Mother and then from Sri Aurobindo:

The general aim to be attained is the advent of a progressing universal harmony.

The means for attaining this aim, in regard to the earth, is the realisation of human unity through the awakening in all and the manifestation by all of the inner Divinity which is One.

In other words, — to create unity by founding the Kingdom of God which is within us all. This, therefore, is the most useful work to be done:

(1) For each individually, to be conscious in himself of the Divine Presence and to identify himself with it.

(2) To individualise the states of being that were never till now conscious in man and, by that, to put the earth in connection with one or more of the fountains of universal force that are still sealed to it.

(3) To speak again to the world the eternal word under a new form adapted to its present mentality. It will be the synthesis of all human knowledge.

(4) Collectively, to establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the Sons of God.

My future sadhan is for life, practical knowledge & shakti, — not the essential knowledge or shakti in itself which I have got already — but knowledge & shakti established in the same physical self & directed to my work in life. I am now getting a clearer idea of that work & I may as well impart something of that idea to you; since you look to me as the centre, you should know what is likely to radiate out of that centre.

1. To re-explain the Sanatana Dharma to the human intellect in all its parts, from a new standpoint. This work is already beginning, & three parts of it are being clearly worked out. Sri Krishna has shown me the true meaning of the Vedas, not only so but he has shown me a new Science of Philology showing the process & origins of human speech so that a new Nirukta can be formed & the new interpretation of the Veda based upon it. He has also shown me the meaning of all in the Upanishads that is not understood either by Indians or Europeans. I have therefore to re-explain the whole Vedanta & Veda in such a way that it will be seen how all religion arises out of it & is one everywhere. In this way it will be proved that India is the centre of the religious life of the world & its destined saviour through the Sanatana Dharma.

2. On the basis of Vedic knowledge to establish a Yogic sadhana which will not only liberate the soul, but

prepare a perfect humanity & help in the restoration of the Satyayuga. That work has to begin now but will not be complete till the end of the Kali.

3. India being the centre, to work for her restoration to her proper place in the world; but this restoration must be effected as a part of the above work and by means of Yoga applied to human means & instruments, not otherwise.

4. A perfect humanity being intended society will have to be remodelled so as to be fit to contain that perfection.

CWSA 36: 177-178 (from a letter to Barin)

Imagery and Symbols

Savitri has many unique elements in it, both poetic as well as mystic. One such element is the use of imagery. Mystic literature, especially Vedic literature has made deft use of imagery, both to conceal as well as to communicate the experience! The Vedic seers often used imagery and words in such a way as to conceal the truth from the uninitiated. However, the truth could be decoded as it were by those who were initiated into the deeper mysteries of the Spirit. Both language and images were used for this purpose by mystics world-over. How else can one communicate experiences that belong not only to another domain but also to another dimension of existence? Our language fails since it has evolved largely to convey and communicate our normal experience

encountered in our ordinary every-day living. It is because of this difficulty that mystics often become silent as they go deeper into the wonderlands of the Spirit.

However, the Vedic seers did attempt to communicate and express it for the sake of those who may follow after. Sri Aurobindo very much does the same. But the beauty of Sri Aurobindo's expression is that the images used are often contemporary and it is easier to relate with them in our own times. Vedic imagery is, if one may say so, a bit dated since the flow of time has moved forward. That is one reason why the essence of the *Vedas* got progressively lost and had to be revived each time.

Another aspect is with regard to the language. Sanskrit is no doubt a wonderful language but it does not yet have a large outreach. Besides, even those who have studied the language well often find it difficult to connect with the language in its past forms. After all, languages also evolve and change as mankind evolves. There is much difference between Latin and modern English, though several roots may yet be found. A person well versed with modern English need not be equally a master in Latin. Sanskrit must have undergone several layers of shifts in the process of human evolution since its ancient origins making it difficult to connect with.

This is even more so when it comes to deeper states of consciousness often clothed in images of life that the Rishis of yore experienced around them. Often we find in the *Vedas*

images that are taken up from natural surroundings and natural elements such as ocean, river, mountain, bird, cow, bull, horse, wolf, lightning, fire, day and night. Now Sri Aurobindo has with all the ingenuity of a Master kept some of these images that are still part of our everyday experience or where they correspond to mystic vision. But other images have been changed to suit the modern mind and its repertoire of experiences. We can take a few examples of each type.

The images of the sun and the river:

*A fit companion of the timeless Kings,
Equalled with the godheads of the living Suns,
He mixed in the radiant pastimes of the Unborn,
Heard whispers of the Player never seen
And listened to his voice that steals the heart
And draws it to the breast of God's desire,
And felt its honey of felicity
Flow through his veins like the rivers of Paradise,
Made body a nectar-cup of the Absolute. [236]*

The image of fire:

*We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead's touch
In golden privacies of immortal fire.
These signs are native to a larger self
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives
And a diviner Presence moves the soul;*

*Or through the earthly coverings something breaks,
A grace and beauty of spiritual light,
The murmuring tongue of a celestial fire. [48]*

*A treasure of honey in the combs of God,
A Splendour burning in a tenebrous cloak,
It is our glory of the flame of God,
Our golden fountain of the world's delight,
An immortality cowed in the cape of death,
The shape of our unborn divinity.
It guards for us our fate in depths within
Where sleeps the eternal seed of transient things.
Always we bear in us a magic key
Concealed in life's hermetic envelope.
A burning Witness in the sanctuary
Regards through Time and the blind walls of Form;
A timeless Light is in his hidden eyes;
He sees the secret things no words can speak
And knows the goal of the unconscious world
And the heart of the mystery of the journeying years. [49]*

Modern images describing the Rakshasic and Asuric Maya:

*Then in Illusion's occult factory
And in the Inconscient's magic printing-house
Torn were the formats of the primal Night
And shattered the stereotypes of Ignorance.
Alive, breathing a deep spiritual breath,*

*Nature expunged her stiff mechanical code
And the articles of the bound soul's contract,
Falsehood gave back to Truth her tortured shape.
Annulled were the tables of the law of Pain,
And in their place grew luminous characters. [231-232]*

We could go on multiplying the examples but that would be a subject in its own right. For the moment it is enough to draw a quick comparison between the images used in the *Vedas* and in *Savitri*, — the similarities and new additions.

A Complete and Integral Realisation of Truth

There is however another even more important factor with Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* which I would say is a *Veda* in its own right. On the one hand, *Savitri* contains practically all the major important realisations of the Vedic mystics, on the other hand, each of these experiences has been carried to their utmost fullness and given an ampler scope. This makes it easier for us to connect with the experience itself through the door of everyday life opening before us. Take the example of the famous realisation of the Vedic mystics, *ekamevadwitiyam*, the One without a Second. To the ancient experiences of the Vedic mystics, he has added new realisations. There are passages where the expression seems to be as if straight from the *Vedas*. For example:

*There was no second, it had no partner or peer;
Only itself was real to itself.*

*A pure existence safe from thought and mood,
 A consciousness of unshared immortal bliss,
 It dwelt aloof in its bare infinite,
 One and unique, unutterably sole.
 A Being formless, featureless and mute
 That knew itself by its own timeless self,
 Aware for ever in its motionless depths,
 Uncreating, uncreated and unborn,
 The One by whom all live, who lives by none,
 An immeasurable luminous secrecy
 Guarded by the veils of the Unmanifest,
 Above the changing cosmic interlude
 Abode supreme, immutably the same,
 A silent Cause occult, impenetrable,—
 Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone. [308-309]*

But Sri Aurobindo's vision being integral, he is not content with any one-sided realisation. Hence we see him further including the other side of the same realisation to complete it. This totality and integrality heal the division we see often in the post-Vedic period wherein lines were drawn between which one is higher, — the Vedantic or the Tantra, Buddhist or Illusionist, and many others which find a perfect place in harmony with each other in *Savitri*. For example:

*Even while he stood on being's naked edge
 And all the passion and seeking of his soul
 Faced their extinction in some featureless Vast,*

*The Presence he yearned for suddenly drew close.
Across the silence of the ultimate Calm,
Out of a marvellous Transcendence' core,
A body of wonder and translucency
As if a sweet mystic summary of her self
Escaping into the original Bliss
Had come enlarged out of eternity,
Someone came infinite and absolute.
A being of wisdom, power and delight,
Even as a mother draws her child to her arms,
Took to her breast Nature and world and soul.
Abolishing the signless emptiness,
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless hush,
Piercing the limitless Unknowable,
Into the liberty of the motionless depths
A beautiful and felicitous lustre stole.
The Power, the Light, the Bliss no word can speak
Imaged itself in a surprising beam
And built a golden passage to his heart
Touching through him all longing sentient things.
A moment's sweetness of the All-Beautiful
Cancelled the vanity of the cosmic whirl.
A Nature throbbing with a Heart divine
Was felt in the unconscious universe;
It made the breath a happy mystery.
A love that bore the cross of pain with joy
Eudaemonised the sorrow of the world,
Made happy the weight of long unending Time,*

*The secret caught of God's felicity.
Affirming in life a hidden ecstasy
It held the spirit to its miraculous course;
Carrying immortal values to the hours
It justified the labour of the suns.
For one was there supreme behind the God.
A Mother Might brooded upon the world;
A Consciousness revealed its marvellous front
Transcending all that is, denying none:
Imperishable above our fallen heads
He felt a rapturous and un stumbling Force.
The undying Truth appeared, the enduring Power
Of all that here is made and then destroyed,
The Mother of all godheads and all strengths
Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme. [312-313]*

There is also the grand unity shown between the two aspects of the One:

*He is the Maker and the world he made,
He is the vision and he is the Seer;
He is himself the actor and the act,
He is himself the knower and the known,
He is himself the dreamer and the dream.
There are Two who are One and play in many worlds;
In Knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met
And light and darkness are their eyes' interchange;
Our pleasure and pain are their wrestle and embrace,*

*Our deeds, our hopes are intimate to their tale;
They are married secretly in our thought and life.
The universe is an endless masquerade:
For nothing here is utterly what it seems;
It is a dream-fact vision of a truth
Which but for the dream would not be wholly true,
A phenomenon stands out significant
Against dim backgrounds of eternity;
We accept its face and pass by all it means;
A part is seen, we take it for the whole.
Thus have they made their play with us for roles:
Author and actor with himself as scene,
He moves there as the Soul, as Nature she. [61]*

Finally, the experience is made more dynamic and living and real with reference to our everyday life. For example:

*One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:
Our errors are his steps upon the way;
He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,
He works through the hard breath of battle and toil,
He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,
His knowledge overrules our nescience;
Whatever the appearance we must bear,
Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
When nothing we can see but drift and bale,
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.
After we have served this great divided world*

God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right. [59]

I wonder if there is one single book where we find in a harmonious synthesis all the diverse spiritual experiences found in the *Vedas*, the *Tantra*, as well as other mystic literature. There are, for example, vivid descriptions of what is generally and loosely called Self-realisation and in all its facets and levels at which one can have it. There are all the experiences that yogis have when their inner being opens to the Divine, visions and lights and hearings and subtle sounds, the taste of nectar, the smell of subtle forces, the touch and perception and many other countless experiences through which certain lines of traditional yoga climbs towards its goal. There is the highest Vedantic experience of the One without a Second in which all can dissolve never to return again. There is also its complementary experience wherein the yogin experiences all things in the Divine, the Divine in all and the Divine as all. There are experiences of the Jivanmukti state, of the ecstatic bhakta absorbed in adoration mystical. There is an elaborate description of the Kundalini experiences and the highest reach of Tantra in the vision and adoration of the Divine Mother.

There are many others and many more than what has ever been known or experienced, for example, the experience of the transforming descent. Not only all these different experiences are documented here but they are each put in their due place, taken to their absolute fullness and finally connected with our

everyday life. That is why I feel that *Savitri* is a miniature *Veda* (and much more) in its own right.

Besides, the language is both contemporary and brought close to our life. All this makes it easier for us to connect with *Savitri* than with the *Vedas*. It needs no special skills in language except a bit of poetic ear. Most of us are fairly familiar with English and in times to come it will be even more so. The ancient terms have been given a new scope and brought nearer to our mind. It is as if the entire essence of all that has happened in the spiritual history of mankind were brought together in a single book for posterity. Is that not rescuing the *Vedas* in the real sense? Of course, Sri Aurobindo also wrote about the Vedic texts and his original insights born of authentic spiritual realisations help us decode the Vedic texts much more easily. But in *Savitri* he goes beyond the ancient texts and reveals the yet unwritten *Vedas* that remained so far still hidden inside the human heart or scripted secretly in earthly matter and material forms.

The Supreme Mystery

This is however only one part of it. There is here, in *Savitri*, that which we do not find in the *Vedas*, that which is hinted in the *Gita* and developed to some extent in the Puranas. It is the mystery of God's birth in Time, termed as the supreme Mystery by the *Gita*. The average Vedantist finds it difficult to believe that God can be born within the limits of Space and Time and confine himself to Name and Form since by 'definition' He is

beyond these. Sri Aurobindo deals with this secret at several places, in his numerous letters and particularly in *Essays on the Gita*, for example. It is one of the central pillars on which His Yoga stands. But in *Savitri* it is brought out with great force and lucidity. In fact, *Savitri* is the story of a past incarnation of the Divine Mother. Sri Aurobindo connects it to the present and the future by using this framework to connect it with the Divine Mother's present incarnation. But the possibility and purpose of Avatarahood itself are brought out in these marvellous lines of sublime poetry:

*The master of existence lurks in us
 And plays at hide-and-peek with his own Force;
 In Nature's instrument loiters secret God.
 The Immanent lives in man as in his house;
 He has made the universe his pastime's field,
 A vast gymnasium of his works of might.
 All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,
 Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;
 Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time,
 Immortal, dallies with mortality.
 The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance,
 The All-Blissful bore to be insensible.
 Incarnate in a world of strife and pain,
 He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe
 And drinks experience like a strengthening wine.
 He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts,*

*Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,
A luminous individual Power, alone.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has called out of the Silence his mute Force
Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush
Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep
The ineffable puissance of his solitude.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has entered with his silence into space:
He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;
He has built a million figures of his power;
He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone;
Space is himself and Time is only he.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,
One who is in us as our secret self,
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,
He has made this tenement of flesh his own,
His image in the human measure cast
That to his divine measure we might rise;
Then in a figure of divinity
The Maker shall recast us and impose
A plan of godhead on the mortal's mould
Lifting our finite minds to his infinite,
Touching the moment with eternity.
This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:*

His human portion, we must grow divine.

Our life is a paradox with God for key. [66-67]

The purpose of all this is not to draw some detailed and scholarly comparison of the Vedic texts and *Savitri*, nor even to compare the realisations of the Vedic seers with those contained in *Savitri* which its author had. It is simply to point out that a blind belief in Vedic texts, and that too, relied upon by the interpretation offered by pundits is to turn the greatness of this vast and catholic scripture into another dogmatic religious text. Rather we need to look upon the *Vedas* as a text that is still to be completed and will always remain to be completed since by its very nature there is always something more to be realised when we enter into contact with Infinity. Just as creation and earth and humanity are evolving, the *Vedas* too are bound to evolve bringing out new secrets that were hidden in the heart of the One, new Knowledge contained in the bosom of the Infinite. Let us close on this note with some more lines that reveal this truth.

The first passage refers to the soul-vision symbolised through Satyavan:

A foster-child of beauty and solitude,

Heir to the centuries of the lonely wise,

A brother of the sunshine and the sky,

A wanderer communing with depth and marge.

A Veda-knower of the unwritten book

*Perusing the mystic scripture of her forms,
 He had caught her hierophant significances,
 Her sphered immense imaginations learned,
 Taught by sublimities of stream and wood
 And voices of the sun and star and flame
 And chant of the magic singers on the boughs
 And the dumb teaching of four-footed things.
 Helping with confident steps her slow great hands
 He leaned to her influence like a flower to rain
 And, like the flower and tree a natural growth,
 Widened with the touches of her shaping hours.
 The mastery free natures have was his
 And their assent to joy and spacious calm;
 One with the single Spirit inhabiting all,
 He laid experience at the Godhead's feet;
 His mind was open to her infinite mind,
 His acts were rhythmic with her primal force;
 He had subdued his mortal thought to hers. [393-394]*

The second passage is a beautiful and true description of what the Veda really is, — the outflowing of intuition, ‘the wisdom embodied mind could not reveal’, ‘the paeon song of the free Infinite’, ‘the ideographs of the Ineffable’, ‘the lyric of the love that waits through Time’, ‘the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss’, ‘the message of the superconscient Fire’.

*The skilful Penman's unseen finger wrote
 His swift intuitive calligraphy;*

*Earth's forms were made his divine documents,
The wisdom embodied mind could not reveal,
Inconscience chased from the world's voiceless breast;
Transfigured were the fixed schemes of reasoning
Thought.*

*Arousing consciousness in things inert,
He imposed upon dark atom and dumb mass
The diamond script of the Imperishable,
Inscribed on the dim heart of fallen things
A paeon-song of the free Infinite
And the Name, foundation of eternity,
And traced on the awake exultant cells
In the ideographs of the Ineffable
The lyric of the love that waits through Time
And the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss
And the message of the superconscient Fire. [232]*

A BRIEF CANTO-WISE
READER'S GUIDE

A Brief Canto-Wise Readers Guide – Introducing the Main Characters

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life.

Savitri, Author's Note

We can see in the Author's Note above the main characters of the epic. Out of a plethora of stories and legends in Indian mythology, this particular story has been chosen by Sri Aurobindo because it seems to be best suited for communicating his supreme revelations. It is replete with symbols of universal significance. It provides a scope for Sri Aurobindo to express his own and the Mother's inner journey, the experiences and realisations that they had and their work and mission upon earth. Aswapati's experiences are none other than Sri Aurobindo's. Similarly, Savitri's experiences are none other than the Divine Mother's in her present full incarnation as the supreme Mahashakti. The story of Savitri and Satyavan is an early attempt of the Divine Mother to realise an individual possibility which She along with Sri Aurobindo have come to realise at a collective level. Thousands of years were needed for humanity to be prepared to reach this level wherein a larger collective effort can be made. Sri Aurobindo reveals this truth and the subtle reason why this project of Savitri has been taken up now at a larger collective level:

The psychic being is more than a spark at this stage of its evolution. It is a flame. Even if the flame is covered by mist or smoke, the mist or smoke can be dissipated.

CWSA 35: 33

The Mother also reveals it thus:

...with the present incarnation of the Mahashakti (as he described it in Savitri), whatever is more or less bound up with Her wants to take part, that's quite natural.

Mother's Agenda, June 27, 1962

When asked again whether the Mother hadn't been active on earth since the beginning of time and not merely 'with the present incarnation of the Mahashakti', She replied:

It was always through EMANATIONS, while now it's as Sri Aurobindo writes in Savitri — the Supreme tells Savitri that a day will come when the earth is ready and 'The Mighty Mother shall take birth'.... But Savitri was already on earth — she was an emanation.

So they were all emanations?

They were all emanations, right from the beginning. So we have to say: 'with the PRESENT incarnation.'

Mother's Agenda, June 30, 1962

In other words, the story of Savitri and Satyavan is their own story, the first part of which took place in far back times. Through the ages that followed they were busy preparing the earth for this greater possibility. Now the hour has come to realise its final part. That is why he hints in the above Author's Note that the characters are real and living and not just symbols or personifications of qualities. It is their own story covering millennia, going into the past as well as into the future which Sri Aurobindo could see through the *trikaladristi* (triple time

vision) developed by the Yoga, which has been revealed in and through *Savitri*. Savitri then is the Divine Mother's incarnation. She is an embodiment, in a human form, of the divine Light, supreme Love, divine Grace to save earth and mankind. By taking a human form She works upon matter and material existence so that it may become plastic to the Spirit and thereby ready to manifest the Divine even here upon earth. That is the meaning of Satyavan's return to earth after the passage through death. Immortality in its inner essence has been achieved by the Vedic Rishis by discovering within them the consciousness of immortality and the immortal Self in man. But physical immortality is yet to come. It will come when matter is also fully ready to receive and manifest the divine Light. It is being prepared and the day is drawing near when man's body shall be transmuted and freed from the clutch of death even as his soul was set free from Ignorance in far back times. These are two mighty steps of the same divine project undertaken by the divine pioneers.

Aswapati, as we are told, is the tapaswi, the Lord of Tapasya, who prepares earth and humanity to receive the Divine Mother. It is his tapasya that makes the impossible possible by the intervention of the Divine Mother consenting to assume a human form.

Aswapati represents the Divine Avatara who bring down the Light and Grace of the Divine Consciousness upon the earth. His wife represents nature that is still untransformed and for whose redemption Aswapati, the seer and yogi, seeks the

divine Grace. Savitri is born to them as an embodiment of the New Consciousness to build a New Creation out of the old. Her human mother can then be regarded as the old nature just as Savitri represents the New Consciousness.

Satyavan, of course, is none other than us, the true Self within us, the human soul which in its deepest reality is none other than the Lord himself who has worn a diminished form for the work he has to do with matter. It is through many such Satyavans waking up to this deeper possibility that the divine life can be manifested upon earth. Therefore, he is another central character in the cosmic poem.

It must be mentioned, however, that Satyavan represents the human soul that has already reached a certain degree of development wherein it is seeking a greater truth that can reconcile earthly life with the Divine. Savitri has come to him leaving behind others who are either seeking their own salvation or are satisfied with their spiritual experiences and realisations and seek no further. Satyavan on the other hand is the type of humanity that is seeking to reconcile earth and the Beyond and not discard one for the other. Such a type of humanity is specially chosen by the Grace for the building of the divine life upon earth.

Dyumatsena represents the mind of man. Though it fathers the soul within (most often it is through the mental intelligence that people start their journey towards the soul) yet in itself it is unable to know the truth of the soul. It has fallen blind and

because it is blind to the deeper riches of life it has lost its kingdom of glory and joy.

Narada is the divine Messenger. Once a human being he has arrived at the status of a demigod whose main work is to hasten the divine advent upon the earth by awakening mankind to the love and glory of the Lord. He represents the man who by the power of bhakti can ascend to the status of the gods and thereby mediate between the human being and the Divine.

Death is the main opponent in the epic who represents the dark Inconscience resisting and opposing the evolutionary march of mankind towards a divine life upon earth. The fullness of the divine life upon earth means that a section of humanity shall escape from ignorance and death completely and live in Freedom and Delight impelled by Truth and moved by the divine Love and divine Force within them. The presence of even a handful of such human beings transformed into a divine superhumanity is enough to tilt the balance of earthly life for the rest towards a more harmonious and beautiful and truer life upon earth. Death jealously wants to guard his reign at first by denial of the Divine and then later he admits the Divine but believes him to be an impersonal state that is remote and indifferent to earthly life. He wants the earth to remain in the grip of his iron law of Ignorance with its consequences of suffering and pain. He does not want the law of Truth to be established which is the law of divine Compassion, Benevolence, Harmony, Peace, Oneness and Love.

Of course, there are many other characters in *Savitri* who come and go in their proper places and their work and their roles are revealed. Finally, we have the ultimate vision of the Supreme and the Divine Mother herself beyond which there is none else and none other.

A Brief Canto-Wise Readers Guide – Part One

Part One comprising Books One, Two and Three deals with Aswapati's tapasya. The first two cantos of Book One set the background of the epic by introducing us to Savitri, the main protagonist of the poem. We are also told about her work and her mission. But from Book One, Canto Three onwards the story runs in a flashback mode. We are introduced to Aswapati, the human father of Savitri, who undertakes a tremendous tapasya to beget a child who would come to earth as a saviour Grace. From this point the story goes into great details of Aswapati's tapasya. Part One ends with Book Three, Canto Four whereby Aswapati secures the boon from the Divine Mother who promises to descend upon earth to redeem earth and man.

Book One

'The Book of Beginnings' gives us the background of the story. We are introduced in this book to the theme of the epic. This theme runs along two lines. There is, of course, the outward story of Savitri and Satyavan as has been narrated in the Mahabharata. But this is only an outer framework for a world

of inner truths and revelations to be poured in. We are introduced here to the two main characters of the epic. The first, the central character around whom the story develops is Savitri herself. She is the Divine Mother who has assumed a human body and has incarnated upon earth to save the soul of man out of the clutches of ignorance and death. Her experiences which are described through the epic are the experiences and realisations of the Divine Mother in her present human birth as Mother Mirra Alfassa whom Sri Aurobindo installed in the sacred seat of his tapasya as the Mother. In this human birth, she has taken up the same work that Savitri had undertaken in far back times as a partial incarnation of the Divine Mother. What was then an individual human possibility has been taken up as a collective possibility. What was then the work of saving the soul from the clutches of ignorance and death has been extended now to the work of transformation of death itself and of human life into a life divine.

Here we are also introduced to Aswapati, the human father of Savitri. He is the divine representative upon earth. He is that portion of the Divine who has chosen to descend upon earth from time to time, bring down a greater light and thereby carry on the march of human civilisation forward step by step. In India, such conscious descents of the Divine are termed as Avatars. Here again we see that Sri Aurobindo pours his own revelations and realisations through the journey of Aswapati. In the Mahabharata, he is the human father who undertakes

tapasya to beget Savitri as an offspring. Here we see Aswapati undertaking an even more arduous tapasya to bring down the Divine Mother's Grace and Love. After securing a boon from the Divine Mother that She will undertake to complete the unfinished task, Aswapati, the forerunner and the divine representative in man, steps behind the scene and leaves the field for her to continue the work. We see the same in the lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother wherein Sri Aurobindo foresees a divine possibility for earth and men, he prepares the field and then hands over the charge of the New Creation to the Mother to continue the work.

Savitri, in this way, becomes not only Sri Aurobindo's supreme revelation imbued through and through with his consciousness and power but also the inner biographies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. By linking the life of two divine beings and their work in the hoary past with their present incarnation and work, they indicate that it is a never-ending saga of the Divine working in matter and upon earth for the eventual divinisation of earthly life. The story begins in far back times, and continuing through the ages in different forms and under different names arrives now at its grand culmination and fulfilment. This is the great promise and assurance of *Savitri* thereby turning it into a prophetic poem of the future, a divine document of life as seen with the eyes of the Divine, and a mantra of transformation to help man in his journey towards the divine life. All these fundamental truths are revealed in

‘The Book of Beginnings’ which begins with the opening scene of creation itself.

The first two cantos provide us with the background of the story. They introduce us to the day when the epic event of Satyavan’s death and return is to take place. The next three cantos are a flashback that takes us back to the very beginnings of Aswapati’s quest, his experiences and the purpose of his tapasya.

Canto One

The symbol ‘dawn’, as the name suggests, is the symbol of creation that is arising out of the darkness. The everyday return of dawn is a symbol of creation emerging each time after *pralaya* in the ever-recurring cycles. It is also the backdrop of the great epic struggle of man and the divine help given to him at every crucial stage by a conscious intervention of the Divine. The stage of this divine drama is the earth and its oblivious fields. The ‘night’ is the darkness that precedes creation and engulfs it again and again, resisting the efforts towards the Advent of Light. But dawn returns and labours to uplift earth and man constantly. Of course nothing is completely lost. There is a progress and each return carries within it the memory of past attempts thereby hastening the process. Savitri is this Dawn incarnate bringing hope and Light into our mortal world from the high realms of Immortality.

The dawn described here is the dawn of the day when Satyavan is destined to die. But there is Savitri who has come

to earth bringing the dawn of hope and the possibility of leading earth and man to a New Creation. Savitri as the daughter of the Sun is the Dawn that brings illumination and with her touch new things begin to be born. The daughter of the Sun also means that she has chosen to renounce her heavenly home and enter into these obscure fields for bringing the illumination to earth and men. This sacrifice of the Divine in matter, to redeem matter is one of the great secrets known as the Avatara or the divine Advent which is what saves the earth from being swallowed up completely into the gulfs of Night. Yet this Light from the Beyond stays only for a brief while. Man is not ready and earth rejects the boon of undying Love. She prefers her routine orbit along the old familiar paths, the change of seasons that respond to the touch of the sun from afar. A moment's guest she arrives, lavishes her divine gifts to resisting earth and then fades away from mortal sight. This is how the movement of Dawn ends. However, even in the passing and the fading she has done the work she came to do. She has sown upon earth the seeds of Light. She has filled the heart of earth and man with a sacred longing. She has pushed back the frontiers of ignorance for the few who are ready to hear the call and wake up the will to conquer and tread the sunlit path.

Canto Two

Here we are introduced to the central theme of the book, that is to say, the purpose and mission of Savitri's incarnation. She

has come down to earth and assumed a human form, taken upon herself the burden of the flesh and of a race that is not only blind but in love with its blindness. It is an act of divine Compassion, divine Love and Grace that leans down to earth so that the path may be opened for man to escape the law of death and the iron bondage of material nature that holds such a strong grip upon his life. That is why the Divine has to assume a physical body. Otherwise, there is no need to take a body at all since the Divine already dwells in all beings and is their secret mover and guide even though the world knows it not. She has come to change the laws, which are merely patterns of energy that material nature habitually and mechanically follows in set grooves. She has come armed with the power and the mandate to do so. It is to work directly upon matter that the Avatar assumes a body. It is this final conquest over matter leading to its progressive divinisation that is suggested by the bringing back of Satyavan from the land of the dead. A class of yogis become aware of their immortal part and hence living in that can live immortally if they wish to. Some even discover the secret of living long by imposing upon the body the law of another dimension. They grow old but continue to live in the same body, but it is not a change in the law of bodily life itself. It is a temporary suspension under certain special conditions by an individual. Savitri, on the other hand, has come to change the law. It is not just about discovering the immortal element within us but of transmuting the very body so that it too can escape the law of disease, disintegration and death. It is important to understand this subtle distinction otherwise we

miss the tremendous importance as well as the extraordinary difficulty of Savitri's work. This is the work she has come to do, the work that only the Avatar charged with the mandate can undertake.

Canto Three

With this canto the actual story begins. The canto starts by revealing to us the secret of Savitri's birth in a single powerful line. Thereby we are introduced to Aswapati whose tapasya prepares the way for the advent of Savitri. Aswapati himself is an Avatar. He is the Divine who has consciously and deliberately plunged into matter to spearhead the evolutionary process. On the one hand he is the representative, the Eternal's delegate of the Divine upon earth. On the other hand he is also the leader of the human march. Through the long journey passing through many births he has inherited the anguish and the aspiration of the earth. In him this aspiration has reached that great point wherein the human opens to the Divine and a new influx from higher states of consciousness begins to pour into his life.

All this is described in this canto, the psycho-spiritual transformation that comes through an opening to deeper and higher states of consciousness. The process is not described here but the first results. What we see here are the results of entry into higher states of consciousness and the pouring in of these forces and energies from beyond which open doors to a new and higher possibility. This process of progressive

widening and heightening and deepening eventually leads him towards the state of freedom which is coveted by the yogis. His soul is now completely freed from the grip of the lower nature. It becomes a witness of the field. It has emerged out of the magic circle within which man is bound. It is also revealed how with this emergence out of the fields of ignorance into the Light new faculties awaken in us. Latent powers and means of knowing and working arise and change the entire perception and response to the world. These experiences are descriptive of the beings of the future who will embody the New Consciousness.

Canto Four

Here we have a description of the discoveries made by Aswapati as he soars beyond the boundaries of Ignorance. He has now access to the secret Knowledge that is embedded in the heart of Time. It is secret because our mind and senses cannot access it. The key to this Knowledge is in our soul and by opening its doors we can step into this magic space. Or else we have to soar beyond the limits of our mind, shed the ego-self entirely and then glimpse it. Aswapati discovers the mystery that has hidden itself in the mask of matter and ignorance and death. He discovers the immortal fire whose purifying tongue blazes in the night of our ignorance. He discovers the source of all sweetness and bliss which resides within the depths of our inmost heart. He discovers the truth of earth and her journey and the appearance of man and the

tremendous task, the divine destiny bequeathed to him. He discovers the inner lines of forces that govern man's existence and the means he is given to navigate through this complex maze. He discovers the Truth that is hidden in the dense Night and awaits its hour of emergence. He discovers the play of soul with nature with the earth as stage and life and death as passage and events and circumstances as the conditions of the play. He discovers the triple poise of the One Divine, the secret of God's birth in Time, the mystery of the great incarnations, the divine Advents that take place from time to time to transform matter and with it the earthly life. He discovers the secret sense of man's life and the goal of his journey spanning through many lives. He discovers the very purpose of creation and the path we must take to fulfil this great intent that is hidden in the heart of nature. In short, Aswapati discovers the Veda, or rather the missing pages of the Veda, the unwritten pages to be disclosed through the agency of Time.

Canto Five

Aswapati has already arrived at what is generally termed as the goal of most yogas. If he wants he too can take the last plunge and dissolve into the infinity and eternity Beyond escaping thereby the great cycles of birth and rebirth and the tremendous earthly labour. But now a new aspiration awakens in him. This aspiration is to make the entire field of nature and its instruments of the body and mind fit vehicles and perfect expressions of the Truth that he has glimpsed on the peaks of

nature. But nature is not an individual thing however much our ego-self may look at it like that. Nature is universal. The individual ego catches hold of a small wave from that enormous sea and thinks it to be its own. The soul is the true individual but nature is always universal. Aswapati's being has grown into this universality and hence he must now go further no more as an individual soul alone but as a representative of the human race.

As thus he rises with this new aspiration to make the entire field of nature match the greatness and glory that his soul has glimpsed, Aswapati experiences a vast and powerful descent. This experience is unexpected, swift and sudden and takes his entire being with surprise. It is something new and has never happened in the field of yogic experience so far. Yoga is an ascension out of darkness and ignorance and death towards Light and Truth and Immortality. But this descent opens unexpected fields of possibility. Not only the soul but nature itself can taste the nectar of the divine Bliss. The very cells of the body can discover their divine possibility and be freed from the grip of ignorance and death. It is the possibility of liberation and transmutation of nature itself thereby creating the possibility of a divine life in a divine body. This realisation now begins to draw closer and closer to Aswapati. He has a choice, — either to go ahead and complete the journey alone or else to take mankind along with him. The choice is made spontaneously. He must embark in search of this transforming power for the earth and man. A new journey therefore begins,

a journey beyond the last frontiers of cosmic Space and Time, a journey that must take him to the seat of the very highest Power whose touch can redeem the earth and man.

Book Two

Book Two is a vivid and detailed description of the journey that Aswapati undertakes as the traveller of the worlds. This journey is undertaken as a representative of the race. It is undertaken since it is his mission to change the fabric of lower nature into terms of the higher. But first he must understand thoroughly the material with which the warp and woof of our present creation in ignorance is made. He must take full cognisance of the forces and energies that act upon it but are hidden within it either as patterns of the past or as possibilities of the future. He must understand the beings that influence it, the titans and the gods who labour and wrestle for possession of the earth and human beings for their own agendas. He must search with the spiritual fire all the corners of his being for the hidden key to the change that he seeks to bring about in creation.

This longest book is a vivid description of the lower triple worlds of mind and body and life until Aswapati reaches the last summit of this manifestation. He has to go further beyond to bring a greater force from the unmanifest Transcendent. But that is the subject of Book Three. In this book, we are taken on a detailed tour of the peaks as well as abysses and plain grounds of the different layers of mind and life and matter. In the

process, we are also given a glimpse of the evolutionary process and the layers that have emerged so far.

He climbs from plane to plane through the triple worlds of matter, life and mind. He explores each of these worlds, sounds their peaks and depths, fathoms their dark abysses, enters into the various kingdoms and domains they have formed, meets with the beings and forces of these worlds and thereby discovers a whole evolutionary plan through which the human soul passes in its ascension. Then going beyond the last limits of the mind he enters into a state of vast impersonality in which the One Self is reflected as the moon in a calm placid lake. This is however not the end of his journey. Looking for a way he dives deep into his being and discovers there a passage of wonder and delight. It is the centre of the world, the World Soul where souls reach after death to sleep awhile and return back to the great adventure. It is through this wonderful realm that he finds the path to the beyond. He reaches where the World Mother awaits the human soul to receive it as it arrives through all the struggles of the evolutionary journey. It is She who opens the doors by her Grace for Aswapati to go beyond. Thus Aswapati arrives on the borders of the supramental world after a long and tremendous journey. He must now enter and find the Power that can transform earthly life.

Canto One

There is a ladder of consciousness within and without through which the soul moves in its evolutionary journey. The rungs of

this ladder are the various universal planes of consciousness. But it is within too, in the subjective spaces of man through which he has climbed so far in his evolutionary adventure and is yet to climb further. This ladder has been laid out as a result of the initial involution through which the Spirit plunges itself into the sleep of Inconscience. However, all evolution is the result of the forces and energies of the planes of consciousness that constitute the steps of this ladder pressing towards the material world for manifestation. Its rungs constitute the levels of ascension through which creation climbs to arrive at the very source and origin of creation.

Canto Two

Behind this gross material world as we perceive and experience it there are worlds whose matter is different. It is subtle, so to say, and our present sensory apparatus is not designed to perceive it. Hence we believe it does not exist. But behind these gross senses there are subtle senses now completely lost due to habitual ways of perceiving. These subtle senses can be awakened through yoga and it is thereby we begin to discover worlds behind worlds, worlds beyond worlds hidden to our sight. It is through these subtle senses awakened in Aswapati and through his power to bring his consciousness out of the imprisonment in this gross material frame that he makes these discoveries.

Subtle matter is in fact true matter. What we call matter is the result of a further plunge into Inconscience which gives it

grossness and rigidity. But subtle matter has a different quality. It is supple and light. The kingdom of subtle matter is a world where beauty of form predominates over everything else. It is this subtle sheath that carries the soul further after death while the gross body drops off. Our original blueprint of form is here. This subtle matter also provides a protective envelope around our gross physical body and if kept intact, it can safeguard us against many illnesses. In the hierarchy of planes it is the last rung of determinism where events decided in the higher planes above are given their final touches before precipitating upon earth. This is the first kingdom through which Aswapati must pass. It is in this sheath that he can travel further leaving behind the gross body.

Canto Three

Passing through states of subtle matter, Aswapati now enters the Life-worlds. It is a vast and complex domain teeming with energy and motion of various kinds. Of course, life is everywhere, in all domains, but here one finds its native domains which are not modified as in other planes by the corresponding level in which it manifests. In Canto Three we find that Aswapati glimpses it in its totality as one would see an entire mountain range before undertaking the great climb. He sees that the fount of life, its origin is in the divine worlds. In fact, life is a power of the Divine that came here to save matter from its state of dullness and inertia. It awakens in matter the dreams of greater possibilities and higher worlds and

energises it to rise higher towards its own divine home. These divine worlds are seen by Aswapati while still on this side of the two hemispheres. They are worlds of Beauty and Bliss, worlds where sorrow could not reach nor any trace of suffering touch its high gods. It is a world where power is governed by truth. The beings of these high and mighty worlds are full of a luminous force. The worlds are their playthings and Time and Space their playfields. Aswapati sees this world and hears its call of bliss but cannot find the gate to enter there. He wonders why life which is divine in its origin has become this struggle and suffering here.

Canto Four

The power of Life that came here to save has become imprisoned in the moulds of matter and must slowly find release. But in this return it must not go back alone but carry matter along with it. Each step of the ascension is a transformation of matter by the corresponding powers of the level of consciousness that seeks to emerge. This is the tremendous journey of life that starts with one infant step. These infant steps expressing themselves in the living forms of plant and animal creations and with the rudimentary mind of primitive man are the first hazy steps through which consciousness seeks to recover itself. As a result of its pressure the first forms of life emerge upon earth from the mud and the little cell and climb through bird and beast to half-animal man.

Canto Five

Canto Five is a continuation of Canto Four. Instead of describing the world of little life and its effects we are shown the beings who stand behind its formation, the drama they enact upon earth as a stage with man and animals as their blind, unwitting instruments. It is important to understand what the godheads really are. A godhead is an impersonal and universal being who can manifest itself through a number of gods and goddesses. Behind these forces and energies stand beings who are like nodal centers for the projection of these forces in the world of forms. Each being, each force tries to enter and take hold of the material world. In fact, these are the forces that have initially stirred matter from its sleep and hence have a natural hold and feel it their right to continue their play with matter. But with the coming of thinking man new forces come into play thereby curbing their unbridled puppet show with early primitive humanity. Though they still exercise quite a hold upon man leading to much needless suffering their action gets modified by the mind and the emergent soul in man. Yet the final remedy is not even with the thinking mind but with something deeper within man. The true remedy starts when we have found our soul. It is then and only then that this dream of nether life with all its untoward consequences and shadows cast upon fate begins to end.

Canto Six

There is a greater life as well, the life of emotions and higher strivings as is revealed in all men who have climbed a little above the ordinary pitch of an average man. This higher vital now begins to stir and wake up in man. A new phase of evolution begins with the stir of these higher movements. There is the birth of idealism on the one hand and ambition on the other. The passion play begins, a struggle and clash and battle and victory become the way of life. Heroism is born that can immortalise itself even through death. Or a spirit of sacrifice where all is lost and given away in a moment of exalted emotion. High climbing moments of music and painting and art take birth in man and it seems that he is touching the hem of a heavenlier life and breathing a diviner air. Then unable to climb beyond a pitch it falls back towards hell and takes the sting of suffering and the sharp prick of emotional pain. This greater life is given to dream rather than to realise. It can build beautiful rainbow worlds of its own imagination and stay in them as if they were true and real. Yet it cannot go beyond a point and man's soul cannot rest in this magical but limited space forever. To do so would mean to move forever in a never-ending circle of joy tinged with sorrow and suffering loaded with the dream and longing of a future joy that never arrives. It is a dream world, an intermediate world that gives the illusion of the ultimate Truth but it can at best glimpse this Truth through a magic glass and only momentarily so. The illusion wears off and with it the dream ends. Therefore

life must go further to find its true origin, its purpose and its goal.

Canto Seven

Aswapati experiences this domain of greater life, sees its mighty godheads who seek to build heaven here, even if for a moment. But its heavens never endure. Like sandcastles built upon the shores of Time they fail and collapse in the dust out of which they were made. This now Aswapati seeks to discover, the reason why life cannot climb uninterruptedly towards its divine home. What is it that pulls it down again and again into the abyss. The mystery must be found in the abyss itself and hence towards the abyss he turns now his gaze. He descends into the night to know its heart and the source of its strength. Layer by layer he enters the dark gloom of the primal Night, meets its dangerous forces whose glance itself is fatal and whose lethal touch is a fascination and a death. These forces are spread out everywhere as the dark underbelly of creation. It is the subconscious and the inconscient in man, the dark ambiguous base out of which creation seems to emerge and into which it has the tendency to collapse. Its influence has entered everywhere, in religion and politics, in law and justice, in administration and organisation. Even virtue and righteousness have been turned under their influence into a misleading light that leads towards hell while claiming to climb towards heaven. All the scripts of life and all the lines of nature

they corrupt and pervert filling this world with disorder, chaos, disintegration, evil and pain.

Canto Eight

Aswapati now turns his gaze to find out the beings who govern this world, the queen of this dark and lonely kingdom where all walk alone covered with the fierce masks of a hard and rigid ego. Here were only deception and cruel pain. Neither friendship nor pity could find a place here. Truth had turned into falsehood, Peace into inertia, Bliss into suffering, Consciousness into unconsciousness, Life into death. It was the shadow of the infinite One and hence tried to mimic and imitate the Reality that it endlessly denied. These hostile influences can enter man's heart and, overpowering his nature, kill him inwardly. Faith is slain and the high climbing flame of aspiration is quenched. The soul forfeits its divinity and leaves the earthly sphere suffering a severe fall while the mind and body are left as an empty shell to live awhile and die. This is the dark hell through which all must pass on their road to heaven. This all must dare and face and endure who wish to discover the Light that never fades and the Love that endures forever. The only thing that helps when one crosses these dark and dangerous realms is the Name of God and the twin powers of courage and faith.

And yet there is hope as Aswapati discovers. In the heart of darkness there lies the great Being who has hidden himself in this ambiguous cloak. This deceptive mask of terror and pain

that he has wrapped around himself is only to hasten man's progress towards the Goal that is already imprinted within his soul. There is a Wisdom working silently even in the Night that prepares us for a greater Dawn. There is a Love that labours under the most impossible conditions to bring even there the superconscious fires. Death and tragedy are a secret rapture's mask awaiting its sudden disclosure and the shock of joy at this discovery. Falsehood is the tortured shape of Truth and hell is the short cut to heaven's gates. It is the test of a purifying fire through which the soul must pass in its upward curve. Having battled with the forces of Darkness, having endured the wounds of Time, having remained steadfast in faith despite the challenges posed by heaven and hell, the soul is ready for going further.

Canto Nine

The average soul remains tied to the lower vital life with its almost exclusive focus on food and pleasure and the wants of the body. Those who rise to a greater life enter another kind of illusion, more subtle with nobler aspects but still an illusion nevertheless. It can colour our world with fancy and fantasy with the help of dream and imagination pushed by strong ambition or idealising sentiments. But it cannot build anything of lasting value here upon earth. Therefore arises the need to go through the red heat of hell that breaks these illusions and purifies us through suffering and pain. The heroic soul goes through this inner battle with courage and faith and hence gets

admittance to the Paradise of the Life gods. It is the highest point to which the vital can rise and rest awhile. It is a realm of pure desire where the heart and the sensual being are healed through currents of delight that sweep through this world. It is a world where the bliss that made the worlds spills into a limited but exalted space midway towards the heights that reach out to the very Highest. It is a world of intoxicating sweetness and joy, the highest heaven of certain religions. But the soul seeking for perfection must go further. This too must be renounced and the journey must continue until the very Highest is found in which God and World grow true and one. Hence Aswapati moves further in his journey.

Canto Ten

A new journey begins, a new mountain climb. Aswapati has moved out of the vital worlds, seen its heights, sounded its abysses. Now he starts his climb through the mental worlds. At first, he enters the kingdoms and godheads of the little mind. It is the world whose forces have formed our thoughts up till now. Here too we find a triple layer. First comes a thought based entirely on the sensory input. It is the physical mind that depends upon the sense data and builds its conclusions upon this shaky foundation. Then there is the vital mind, a mind of imagination that gives thought-forms to desires and fantasy. Finally arrives reason proper that tries to reach out to the skies but falls far short. All its conclusions remain in the end inconclusive. Its search for truth, its effort to build a perfect

world remains incomplete since it has neither the means of arriving at true knowledge nor the vision to comprehend the totality of things.

Canto Eleven

There are other levels of the Mind that are yet to manifest openly upon earth. They have manifested in the seer and yogi sometimes, or in the man of genius. These are the realms of the spiritual mind ascending through which we can acquire higher faculties of knowledge than our reason can even conceive. Here too we find the triple realms of higher mind, illumined and revelatory mind and the intuitive mind. These are high and wide realms of thought where one begins to glimpse some reflection of Truth. It is these realms and their large luminous forces that mould the mind of the seer and the sage. High though these realms are and great though the knowledge that they wield, yet they cannot arrive at the ultimate Truth. Nor can they know the ways of the Divine Mother and the tremendous purpose that moves within her heart. They cannot fathom the meaning and purpose of this universe emerging out of Nothingness. The ultimate Mystery remains even for these high gods a mystery.

Canto Twelve

Climbing through the summit of thought Aswapati now enters the realm of Ideas where the forces of Truth are unleashed like a phalanx of rays from the body of Light. These are the heavens

of the Ideal where one can arrive at either by reaching the apex of the Mind worlds or else by diving deep into the heart and opening the psychic centre within oneself. It is the Swarloka of the Vedic seers where the first rays of the sun are seen in their original glory and splendour. It is the first step taken towards creation in this lower triple world. Each Idea-force is a godhead there who tends towards an expansion of its own unique and independent universe. It calls the human soul to rise towards these sublime heights which demands the sacrifice of all we cherish here. These are the great gods of the Overmind and each is absolute in his own right. Yet at the summits of this splendour and the light all these godheads were joined and united in a single harmonious concert of radiant powers.

It is the Overmental world where the Ideal is born and then descends through various layers and degrees in human consciousness. This world stands as it were upon the very summits of the mind. It is the highest plane of mind where Idea weds with Idea around the sacred Fire. The different aspects of Truth are here each standing by the side of other, together in a state of unity. In the splendour of the original Light they stood around the One parent Truth that was seen and felt and known through a very thin, almost transparent reflection. Overmind is the home of the Ideas that built the world. It is not the origin but its splendour is such that it is easy to mistake it for the ultimate Truth. So far it is these godheads who have managed the creation. They receive their impulsion from above and then create a world with its knowledge and power. But the ultimate

Source, the Origin is further beyond the last summits. It is towards this that Aswapati now turns his steps, but not before he receives their luminous powers as gifts on the way.

Canto Thirteen

Here cease the limits of mind. It is the great dividing line and emerging beyond it one experiences the complete stilling of all mental conceptions and cognition. Even the highest conceptions appear illusory and a travesty of Truth that appears at this plane as something bare, impersonal, cold and aloof, something that has nothing to do with form and names that are mere constructs of the mind. Even at its highest, they are still constructs and nothing else. Thought, sense, the heavings of the heart and the will and passion cease there in a mute silence. All is plunged in the nirvana of a vast impersonality, formless, causeless, a state of escape into vacant Nothingness. It is not the state of pure Existence but Its reflection in the mind substance. Not here however can be found the final remedy for the cosmic enigma. This state can give the much-needed peace and a static liberation to the individual but cannot solve the enigma of earth and its journey. Here is not the origin or the clue to the great mystery of creation. Here one finds a static liberation where Power is held back and Knowledge shines upon the world without limits and dividing lines. It is a oneness impersonal and bare in which the yogis striving for nirvana enter and can stay.

Canto Fourteen

Many have stopped their search here and declared that there is Nothingness at the base of the world. They have declared an indifferent witness watching over the works of time as the ultimate and obviously paradoxical Truth of creation. But the seeking soul of Aswapati must strive further. He has arrived at the impersonal Infinite but where is the divine Person who hides behind the impersonal? Where is the Godhead of the Gita, the Purushottama who is beyond the personal and the impersonal, the universal Godhead and the World Mother? Where is the passage to the yet greater Beyond? Even as Aswapati stands on these pure and bare summits an answer comes to his seeking and he is pulled inwards as it were into the secret tunnel that leads to the World Soul. There he discovers a most blissful state where divine Peace and Rapture are joined in a single Being, a beauty and wonder and charm of the Cosmic Divine. Here is the place where the souls return after death, enter a state of reconstituting sleep for a while and then return back to continue their adventure of birth in Time and Space. Here he meets the Cosmic Divine in his twin poise of Purusha and Prakriti, Ishwara and Ishwari, whose trance of blissful union sustains the world. Here he has the most enthralling vision of the World Mother whose steps determine the journeying of the stars and the unfolding of Time. The Divine Mother as the Cosmic Power knows the secret aspiration in Aswapati's heart. Seeing her Aswapati just throws

himself at her feet and surrenders completely at her feet. It is She who then opens the gates to the Beyond for Aswapati.

Canto Fifteen

The doors of the Ineffable have been opened for Aswapati by the Grace of the Divine Mother. Already he can now experience a new cosmic state arising within him. He has become one with the Cosmic Being, a universal or a world-personality who is now one of the first seers who guide creation on its destined paths. Even before entering the Beyond he starts experiencing the influx of a greater Light and Power arising from a state of utter unity where the lover, the love and the beloved, the knower, the knowledge and the known become one. It is the original plenitude where one can discover the omniscient Wisdom that has gone into creation opening for man a thousand pathways to the One. This state borders the Overmind and the Supermind. It is the line where the two hemispheres, the lower and the higher parts join. This he must now cross to enter the Beyond.

With this attainment, we see that one part of Aswapati's journey is over. For what lies further he must wait for the supreme fiat of the mysterious Reality beyond.

Book Three

This is the penultimate phase of Aswapati's tapasya which is now no more as an individual but for the whole race. He has

arrived at the doors of the Transcendent, the unknowable Supreme. The four cantos here describe his experiences as he enters this supreme realm from where none returns. This is the great door, the last exit point. Souls that pass into the Beyond do not come back to tell their experience. They are out of the world play. It is the region of the Unmanifest. It is a domain whose forces have not yet entered the cosmic play. It is from here that Aswapati must bring down a new possibility into the cosmic field so that humanity may embody them.

We can look at the three phases of his journey in the following way. In the first phase, described mainly in Book One, Aswapati realises the Immanent Divine within creation. It is an individual realisation. In Book Two we see him entering the universal planes until he realises the Cosmic Divine. In Book Three we see him entering the Transcendent Divine whose Will is yet to manifest in creation. Aswapati enters here as a cosmic being, a representative of the human race to bring down into creation something that has not yet manifested which yet has the power to change the scheme of things here. He must bring it and establish it in the creation. Once this is done then the Cosmic Divine will manifest it through the complex workings of Time. The four cantos describe this step by step.

Canto One

Aswapati stands at the doors of the Unknowable. The Unknowable cannot be known by the Mind. It can be known

only if It so chooses to reveal Itself to us. One has to wait with endless patience, wait upon the Grace at the peaks of creation. Aswapati feels the wonderful Presence of the Transcendent Divine but it is not possible to behold his splendour nor hold it for long. Touched and uplifted by the direct rays of the Sun, bathed in the supramental vibrations natural at these summits, he finds himself entering into the higher hemisphere of existence. Here he must leave aside all mental constructs and conceptions, all the imperfect means that nature has so far evolved to manifest certain truths but very imperfectly so. The world as we know and experience it is a distortion of Truth. It is not what it is meant to be. This illusion is not an unreality but a distortion of the Reality. It is this that Aswapati is impelled to set right. But one cannot enter into this realm of Truth without shedding all the scales of distortion and limitations. Only Truth can remain in this realm, not even its representations. All must be left behind, either to end in the Stillness profound and ineffable or to be newly made in the mould of Truth. But at first, Aswapati has the experience of the Silent Purusha, *Ekamewadwitiyam*, the One Infinite who is the occult cause of creation and yet is beyond it. He is Self-born and uncreated yet is the source of all things.

Canto Two

Is this still and silent Self the end of our search? Is this state that cancels nature and world and receives the soul in the bosom of a vast Nihil the last and final step of this great

tremendous journey? Is dissolution into the One Reality that transcends the individual and the cosmos, what is called Moksha, the goal of human existence? Aswapati now stands between this state hanging between the eternal Yes that has sanctioned creation's paradox profound and the eternal No that cancels it. His will is for the redemption of creation. Even as he thus waits, he experiences the nearness of the wonderful Presence of the Divine Mother who takes into herself world and nature and soul. She is the key to resolving the enigma of the Night and the paradox of creation. It is her alchemist touch that can transform all things. It is She for whom he has come seeking all the way. It is She alone who can change this earthly life into a life divine thereby freeing earth and man from the clutch of falsehood and ignorance and darkness and death. This marvellous Presence fills Aswapati with rapture and ecstasy. Now all other longings have ceased within his heart and there is only one cry left. His being now grown boundless and wide aspires for the entire race. Only one seeking is left now and it is to fill this earth with her Presence and Power to heal and help man advance towards its highest destiny. Darkness must vanish completely from earth. All must be filled with her Beauty and Glory and Peace and Harmony and Bliss.

Canto Three

The touch of the Divine Mother brings about a last and mighty transformation annihilating all resistances hiding in the subconscious parts. His very body and nerves begin to undergo

a change as of the last remnants of the ego are gone. Infinity opens its doors upon him and the original superconscient Power begins to pour its radiance and splendour upon his being. He discovers the secret Oneness that begins to widen into innumerable multitudes centred around the One Self. These are the worlds of Truth where there is no division or separation. He is led into this new Life based on unity in diversity. Here all is consciously linked to all in a matrix of spiritual oneness. All here is centred around the Truth, Light, Peace, Harmony and Bliss of the Divine Mother. It is a marvellous creation, the original plan or blueprint of creation before it fell into ignorance, error, division and pain. Here is the divine Perfection which is not static but a dynamic dance around the One and based on oneness. Contrasting to this are our worlds where ignorance and knowledge, truth and error, joy and sorrow weave the texture of our lives. Aswapati now aspires to bring down this greater higher divine world into our ignorance so that the earth may be transformed by it.

Canto Four

Responding to the one-pointed aspiration of Aswapati to bring down here a greater diviner world, the Divine Mother appears on the threshold of his subtle yogic vision and envelops him. Overwhelmed by her vision his entire being is thrilled. His very body and cells are touched and awake to the superconscient Delight. The Divine Mother has heard his cry and has come in response to his call. At first, She dissuades Aswapati from

asking this boon of boons. Earth is not ready and man may not be able to bear the impact of the power of Truth once released upon earth. Aswapati persists in his aspiration seeking the Divine Mother's direct intervention and Advent to prepare the earth and sow in it the seeds of Light and Truth and Immortality. Finally, the Divine Mother consents to come. She has granted Aswapati that She herself will come down assuming a human form and change the law of doom into a law of everlasting Truth and Love.

With this boon the first part of the epic closes. Aswapati's tapasya is over and now he must wait for the fulfilment of the boon for which he has asked.

A Brief Canto-Wise Readers Guide – Part Two

The second part of the epic is centred around Savitri's journey from birth until she undertakes the yoga for earth and men. It runs through Books Four to Eight. The last book reconnects us to the day when Satyavan must die. In describing the birth and growth of Savitri, also revealed is the mystery of the divine Advent. Through Savitri's yoga we are also shown the essential outline, the main steps of the yoga for earth and man.

Book Four

The Divine Mother is on earth. She has consented to come down as the saviour Grace for earth and men. She has come down in response to Aswapati's tapasya as a boon granted to him. This book now describes Savitri's birth and growth until she is ready take up her mission for which She has accepted her human birth. But this mission is a joint venture of God and man. It is the human soul through which the task of transformation of earthly life is done. The soul of man must open and respond to Her Love. Then only can the scroll of destiny written for man thus far be changed. This book closes

with Savitri going in search of her partner, the soul that is ready for this great adventure of life.

Canto One

The first canto describes the birth of Savitri. But first earth must prepare itself to receive the Flame-child who brings with her a new epiphany. We see here a beautiful, vivid and symbolic description of the seasons: summer, the rains, autumn and spring. The earth moves through the first three before spring brings new hope and fills the earth with joy and beauty and love. This passage of seasons in sequence is significant of how the human soul must pass through the stage of effort, of purification, of a one-pointed still concentration whence withdrawn within itself it must prepare for the advent of a New Creation. Then the time arrives and earth itself begins to change. She is in a state of joy, the joy of the New Creation.

Savitri arrives but unlike the ordinary human birth this is a conscious birth. She is the Divine Mother who has prepared the body and mind that will be fit and ready to receive her. She brings with her the new possibilities for earth and men. By assuming a human body she opens the door in matter itself for the New Creation and the new possibilities to take roots there. But first she herself must bring them out from her depths into the forefront of her human life. Though divine from her childhood this divinity within her must progressively manifest with her inner and outer development. She has brought with

Her a new Consciousness and by her very birth has started infusing it into matter. While on the one hand matter must receive, absorb and assimilate this new Consciousness, on the other hand, Savitri will have to adapt Her Consciousness to matter and its stifling power. It is through this mutual adaptation that the soil of earthly matter will be made ready to receive the New Creation.

Canto Two

The incarnate Divine wearing a human shape grows amidst men. Though Divine she has consented to assume a mortal human cloak and identify with our humanity. Yet something of her divinity could still be seen and felt through the human cloak. In a sense, we are all divinities wearing a human cloak. The difference, however, is that we do not remember it whereas Savitri is a conscious birth. She is not compelled but has chosen to take upon herself a human body and be as one of us.

With the development of her body, the inner being presses upon the surface and new faculties begin to develop. New forms of manifestation begin in the fields of art, music and painting. New thought and new ideas in the fields of philosophy, science and poetry begin to take shape and form. As Savitri grows and moves amidst her circle of friends and shares her gifts, none is yet ready to receive them. The Divine assumes a human shape and seems to walk like one of us, yet inwardly he is far and above. Few can see beyond the outer form, fewer are ready to receive the touch and evolve. Still

fewer are ready to follow the path that is opened for man. They sometimes felt and sensed the divinity within her but when she stooped and came close to them they could not bear the touch at such close quarters. Of course, there were a few who felt the touch upon their soul. They opened and gave themselves to her as a flower to the sun. But none could she find who would be the partner in the game divine. Therefore she stood alone amidst all the faces loved and all whom she helped and who were silent recipients of her grace and love.

Canto Three

While Savitri is growing, her human ways safely guarding and nurturing the divinity within her, Aswapati, her human father, hears a voice in the subtle ether exhorting him to send his daughter to find the deeper purpose for which she has come. She must explore the world and find the one who will share her work. Aswapati is reminded of the work that his daughter has come down for. It is him who has asked for the boon as a result of which the Divine Mother consented to come down in the form and persona of Savitri. Now that her being has developed and the fragrance of her divinity and the radiance of her love is spreading all around, she must find her ideal partner and mate. It is with him that she is destined to fulfil her work. In seeking her partner and mate she is also seeking the human type that is best suited for Her work, the one She has come to save and change or transform into the higher type. She must find the humanity ready for being transmuted into the godlike humanity

of the future. This is her mission since, as the voice reveals to Aswapati, *‘the gods are still too few in mortal forms’*.

Canto Four

Savitri ventures out into the wide world, leaving the safety of her father’s palace and searching for the humanity that carries within it the material for the future type. This is her quest, the quest for her partner in this game divine, one who is like her a soul of fire and love, one who seeks to unite heaven and earth, God and world in a single consciousness and being. In the course of her quest, she meets various types of human beings, — ascetics and sages, *tapaswis* and renunciates. Great though they are they have already followed a particular line of yoga and are not suitable for the work of the future. They hear her luminous wisdom and feel drawn to her but are unable to surrender and open to her influence. They are seekers after knowledge but the bud of love has not blossomed in their hearts. Love and surrender are the keys that can open the doors of the future that Savitri brings but of this type of humanity she is yet to find one. Hence her journey continues. At the close of this wonderful book that describes the birth and growth of Savitri she reaches the point whence her mission can begin to take shape.

Book Five

Book Five, ‘The Book of Love’ and Book Six, ‘The Book of Fate’, come almost in the middle of the epic and beautifully

connect to the central theme. 'The Book of Love' is about the meeting of Savitri and Satyavan that leads to a chain of events woven by destiny. It is this chain that Savitri has come to disrupt and free man from the iron bonds of ignorance that hold him back and ties him down to the wheels of fate. This is one of the most wonderful books and full of the beauty of love. It reveals the secret of this greatest power that moves human life and weds creation to the Creator and the human soul to the Divine. It is divine Love that can win the victory over all forces and transform all things into their secret divinity. Therefore guided by this Love Savitri goes out in search of her divinely human partner. Satyavan is introduced here. He is the human soul tied right now to the bonds of ignorance. Savitri is the divine Power, the divine Grace manifested as Love that has come to save him. Their relationship is symbolic of the Divine and man whose coming together marks the opening of a new door and the emergence of a new possibility for earth and mankind.

Canto One

Here we see a most beautiful and gorgeous description of the place where Savitri and Satyavan meet for the first time. It is a forest verge amidst the mountains where her chariot has wandered driven by the unseen hands of fate. It is a place pristine and pure, unspoiled by human thoroughfare. This magnificent spot of earth, filled with the grace, beauty and charm of early earth has been chosen by destiny for the union

of the two who would walk hand in hand, heart in heart, hereafter. There is a time and place foreseen for everything, even though the play seems random to us. Something within that knows secretly guides our steps and leads us to the place where we should be at a given moment. So too Savitri, leaving behind the regal places, the luxurious courts and the cool serene ashramas, moves on to the beautiful but thinly inhabited forest verge. There, amidst that silence and secrecy, she meets Satyavan, the partner of her dreams.

Canto Two

Savitri has gone in search of her ideal partner and mate in this great game of life. In the course of her journey, she has met mighty kings and brilliant sages. She has come across hero warriors and world-shunning recluse ascetics. These are the highest possibilities that we see manifest in our humanity. But perhaps for this very reason, fixed to their glory and the type of humanity they represent, they are not ready to give up everything for the sake of the new and the unknown. But now coming across the forest verge she meets Satyavan. Here she finds the ideal type of humanity who can be a partner in her game divine. He is simple, humble, full of natural trust and surrender. Noble and generous. he is open to the Wisdom that dwells in nature. Satyavan is indeed a rare jewel. Nurtured by the silences of the forest that has been a witness to the Ages, he has grown in wisdom by reading the unwritten Veda of life. He is in search, an inner search, for the Light that can reconcile all

the Beauty that the earth can behold and all the Truth-Light that the heavens can pour. As yet he is unable to find the key to this mystery, the mystery of the marriage between heaven and earth. Here she meets him and in one moment weaves affinity through the gaze. The mystery of Love is born between Savitri and Satyavan.

Canto Three

Here they meet and recognise each other looking through their soul. Though they seem to have met for the first time now, yet they have together enacted the great drama of life in different forms and names, wearing different guises. This soul recognition holds within itself the key to the future. The senses and the surface mind forget, even the heart's memory is lost as we take on a new body and start the journey of life afresh. But the soul keeps the imprints of the past and the possibilities of the future. So do Satyavan and Savitri meet in a moment of the soul. They are wedded before the Sun of Truth in the forest itself. Their soul, the Truth embedded within it, the Divine within, is their witness. No other ceremony is needed. Nature has set the stage for this heavenly betrothal. Savitri now hastens back home after the choice has been made to share this joy of meeting with her father.

Book Six

'The Book of Love' is followed by 'The Book of Fate'. It is a stand-alone book where one can find explained the whole

tangle of fate and the wheels of destiny as they silently approach our lives creating a web through which the soul must move in its chequered walk. Yet a secret Help is always there and if we know how to entrust our lives to the Divine with faith and confidence in the Grace then He takes upon Himself our burden and fights our battles. This is what Satyavan has done in a moment of destiny and thereby brought in another force, a kind of intervention in the fixed grooves of destiny. All the secrets of fate are now unveiled before us in this wonderful book as Sri Aurobindo unravels for us one knot after another, layer after layer, in which destiny comes packaged to us as the events and circumstances of life.

Canto One

Generally, the face of fate is concealed to human beings. This is so because we have our role to play in the workings of fate. But were we to know it while still labouring in ignorance we may well not play out our part with the perfection and fullness that is needed for our progress. After all, the wheel of fate is only meant to drive us towards the one inevitable goal of our life. But this journey can sometimes be terrible and dangerous. It may be needed for our growth that we scale some impossible mountain peaks with abysses gaping below our feet, where each step is a death or a new life. But Savitri is a missioned Force whose very work is to stay the wheels of doom and to show to man how he can change his destiny.

In this canto, Narad the divine sage comes to Aswapati's palace as Savitri returns from her quest. The fate of Savitri and Satyavan is at once revealed before his subtle vision. After some hesitation, he reveals it to Savitri's mother, the queen, that even though Satyavan is a jewel amongst men, he is ill-fated. His father, a blind king in exile, has lost his kingdom, and Satyavan himself has only one more year to live. While Aswapati, the seer king knows that even what seems adverse to our ignorant eyes serves a divine Good in the cosmic scheme, the queen is disturbed by the decree of fate. She asks Savitri to return and reverse her choice. But Savitri insists. She prefers to stand by the choice she has made in a moment of the soul, even if it seems to be erroneous to the pragmatic mind, rather than follow the dictates of the practical reason. She remains firm upon her choice leaving the queen quite helpless before the fast-approaching gloom that draws upon her dearest daughter's fate.

Canto Two

What then is fate? Is it a tribunal of justice distributing decrees of reward and punishment meted out to the human soul to keep its feet steady in the right direction? Or is it some mysterious fiat of an arbitrary Creator who enjoys our suffering and pain so that we can turn to Him in supplication? Or is it an evolutionary mechanism devised for the human soul to grow through experience and learn through failure and fall? What is the necessity of suffering and pain in the grand scheme of

things? Above all, who chooses our fate, — some gods who weave it for us or our soul that must go through certain experiences and hence chooses its curve of destiny based upon its intrinsic need? And what about the great ones, the shining seers, the Avatars who also suffer when they take a human body? These and many other questions, in fact, all possible questions that man has conceived or has not yet conceived have been raised by Sri Aurobindo through the Queen, mother of Savitri, in this canto. Then the master Poet, the seer of *Savitri*, the Lord of Yoga, the incarnate Divine, Sri Aurobindo goes about answering them one by one through the words of Narada, the demigod, in this remarkable canto which stands alone in its own right. This book and this canto close by connecting all these threads to the narrative of the Savitri story and why she too must go through the sting of suffering and the challenge of death.

Book Seven

Savitri has accepted the challenge of destiny. She stands firm by her soul's choice. Unlike weak souls that are looking for every possible door of escape out of this world of sorrow and pain, Savitri like a heroic soul chooses to confront destiny. In doing so she must confront the enigma of death and all the forces that weave the circumstances of our life. But how does she equip herself to accept the challenge, to face and even change an adverse fate? She cannot do it simply as a freak miracle for that would be at most a personal victory. We have

been told that She is an incarnation of the Divine Mother, the very source and embodiment of all powers. She has not come here just to intervene in some personal destiny and change the course of things. For that She need not descend and take upon Herself the burden of the flesh. She must instead show the way to man, something that man can and must do to escape the consequences of the primal ignorance that haunts him like a shadow and dodges his ever-forward steps. She must open the doors of a higher possibility, a collective possibility through a seemingly individual victory. It is for this that Savitri now must equip herself. The way she follows to empower herself to take on the challenge of destiny is what is revealed to us in ‘The Book of Yoga’. It is also the path shown to man that he too must undertake to free himself from ignorance and unconsciousness and falsehood and death.

Canto One

We see here the human side of Savitri. Yet this human love carries a sweetness that comes from the joy of perfect giving and receiving in love. Savitri experiences this joy of togetherness. But she also knows the doom that is closing in upon them. Only a brief-lived happiness is given to her. We see here Savitri experiencing the human states we go through until we eventually accept that we shall always remain pawns in destiny’s hands. Savitri experiences in her human persona the ordeal and the joy and the grief whose shadow looms large upon her future days.

The Avatar must start the path from where man is and lead him to where he can reach. He comes to build the bridge. But for that he must first of all understand the human experience in grim earnest. It is only if becoming like man he can show the way to his higher self that his work is validated. Man can then take the lead and follow God's example. Otherwise, Avatahood would serve no real or lasting purpose except for the faithful few. He becomes human so that the human can become divine. He can then ask humanity to become like him. If he has not felt the pain of humanity, then it is idle to show the way out. Therefore Savitri too must feel the pang in the human heart, the pang that follows every joy as a shadow, the pain of separation after the joy of earthly union. Savitri has come to change that. Love must be the victor over death.

Canto Two

She too, like weaker souls, can accept this state of being subject to the laws of fate and submit to the decree, snatching whatever short time she can of her share of joy. Or else she can, as the women of yore, steadfast in love, shed her mortal coil and follow her beloved to the domain of death. But Savitri has come to build perfection here and not elsewhere. Therefore she is cautioned by her divine Self that is right behind the veil of her human self. She is shown how her choice will affect not only herself but the future humanity that will follow her example. She asks her greater divine Self what she must do to fulfil her mission of setting a new divine example for earth and

men. What then is given to her is a whole program of yoga that she must undertake. This program is like a brief compendium of Savitri's yoga and for all who would wish to bring down the divine life here upon earth.

Looking within as a witness of her nature she sees how our nature is filled with all kinds of forces right from mountain peaks with beautiful landscapes down to the abysses. All the world forces and possibilities lie hidden in man. Our past lives in us long after it is dead and our future waits as in a bud a tree. Our evolution starts with darkness and moves slowly towards light. A time comes when something in us begins to consciously aspire for Light and Love and Truth and Beauty and Good. But darkness is not slain. It continues to linger within us and casts its shadow from time to time. All this Savitri observes; this entire field of nature she has come to change. She knows that this change cannot be done by mere human effort. A greater Power must descend and transform earthly life. But for that greater Power to come down, the first thing needed is for our secret soul, the psychic being, to come out and step freely into the human play.

Canto Three

Armed with a tremendous and intense aspiration, Savitri forces her way through the inner gates that bar our consciousness from entering within except in some rare moments of dream or trance. She passes from level to level, from the world of matter to the world of life and then onward to the world of mind. Each

of these levels offers to her its gifts and its resistances. It is easy for the traveller to the inner kingdoms to become lost in one of these states and wander for long in some intermediate zones thinking that he has arrived. But Savitri's one-pointed aspiration and the sincerity of her being safeguard her from these subtle and occult dangers that lurk within. Savitri refuses to rest there and presses further onward towards the mystic cave, pointed out to her by the luminous gods that emerge from her soul reaching out to the world as beautiful thoughts and feelings and helpful, luminous, benevolent energies.

Canto Four

Pressing further she arrives at the first three emanations or luminous powers that emerge from the soul. These are the powers that support the physical, vital and the mental nature from behind the human scene. They are cosmic powers and their workings help man to endure the suffering and pain during our earthly sojourn, to battle against darkness and fight against all that resists the advancing soul, or they release streams of true knowledge and wisdom embedded within our soul to lead us towards Truth and Freedom and Immortality. But the human ego has usurped and misused these energies and powers and forces of nature given for assisting his evolutionary journey into a means to satisfy his vain ambitions and for expanding the empire of his ego. These triple soul-forces are also sometimes known as the three gunas or modes of nature, *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*. These powers have their divine origins

as powers of peace and endurance (which changes into *tamas*), luminous force and strength (*rajas*), wisdom and balance (*sattwa*). Savitri observes each of these luminous powers and their corresponding shadows but rests not there. She must move further on.

Canto Five

At last she arrives at the doorsteps of the heart's mystic cave where the soul is hidden surrounded by a wall of mystic fire. A deep humility is her state as she stands upon the threshold waiting to cross and enter the temple of divinity within, crossing the door of fire. This fire guards this seed of divinity in us so that it remains safe and untouched from the outer world's corrupting influences. Even though something of the soul flows out into our outer life, even though something of it identifies with the outer cover of man, yet inwardly it remains untouched, itself alone. This must be first uncovered and made to conquer nature so that all our mental, vital and even physical movements can be directed and governed by the soul. This is the crucial first step towards the conquest over death. It is to discover one's immortal soul and to let it govern our nature rather than leave the ego to govern it. Savitri enters this sanctum sanctorum where the inner divinity resides and fuses with her soul. What follows is a tremendous experience. All her subtle centres, the chakras as they are called, open up under the influence of the soul and their energies pour upon her. Each centre opens and gives to her nature a new uplift. All begin to

refine and soar upwards under the influence of the psychic being. The Kundalini Shakti is now fully awake and aroused from her sleep in matter and prepares her for the mighty work she has come down to accomplish. Wonderful though this state is, yet it is an individual victory. She has come for the world and hence her journey cannot stop here. She must discover the last secret.

Canto Six

Savitri is now living in a blissful inner state, conscious of her soul and by its puissance uplifting everything that surrounds her. This is the first psycho-spiritual transformation that she has undergone. But for her mission more is needed. She must reclaim her universality and transcendence. She must enter the last secret. She must dwell in the supramental world as in her natural home. Not only the soul but also the nature must be free and discover its Godlike stature. The great Shadow, the Inconscient that lies at the back of all things, comes to deviate her from the missioned path. It is the voice of Night that is chased away by the voice of Light. Now she must completely rid herself of every trace of the ego so that the Supermind could find a place in a vast and infinite consciousness. Savitri listens and absorbed in a witness state, enters the sheer stillness and impersonality of the Absolute, the state of Nothingness, the Nirvana that annuls everything. She becomes one with infinity and eternity.

Canto Seven

Realisation of the impersonal Brahman is not enough for the transformation and the complete conquest over death and fate that Savitri seeks. It sets the soul entirely free and if it wills the soul can through this state merge into the Nirvana of the Beyond and be done with birth and death and care. But Savitri goes beyond to reach to the still greater transcendence, the Supreme One who is there behind life and nature and each and every element. Savitri now enters that cosmic Being and the Transcendent Supreme who alone has the Power to redeem this fallen life. Having arrived at the state of Nothingness she becomes everything. Thus equipped she is now armed with the knowledge and the power to face the forces of fixed fate and take on the challenge of unconscious death that pulls down everything back into the abyss.

Book Eight

This book comprised of one single canto cryptically titled Canto Three seems a natural extension of Cantos One and Two of Book One from an earlier draft. It was titled Canto Three with reference to these first two cantos. However, *Savitri* was extensively expanded, especially the yoga of Aswapati and Savitri. Hence this canto kept getting pushed back further and further but the title remained unchanged.

Canto Three

Savitri is prepared to confront the riddle of man's life. She is ready and armed to meet death. She knows the fated day and hence goes with Satyavan into the forest to keep a vigil. The fated moment nears and the god Death arrives as an ominous formless shadow and snatches the soul of Satyavan from his body. There is a description of the process of physical death. But Satyavan has made a grand act of surrender to Savitri even as he slips into the dark trance of death. This free and glad surrender of his being was the first act that he had done when he saw Savitri. This is the last rite at the moment of death. Savitri now follows the steps of Death into his dark lair.

A Brief Canto-Wise Readers Guide – Part Three

Part Three is the penultimate part of the epic. If Part One is seen as Aswapati's yoga and Part Two as Savitri's yoga, then Part Three can be rightly seen as Savitri's yoga for earth and man. In this part, Savitri finally takes on the challenge of Death and annihilates it. Before this happens she has already secured the boons for Satyavan as described in the original legend. However, Sri Aurobindo extends it further to include the boon she must ask and receive for the earth and human race. By doing this Sri Aurobindo not only extends the scope of the epic but also hints at the continuation of the work initiated by the Divine Mother in her incarnation as Savitri into this present birth. All this is the subject of Part Three extending from Books Nine to Twelve.

Book Nine

Here we see Savitri walking with Death through the realms where darkness prevails. She walks into the pit, the abyss of inconscience to bring there too the Light and Truth. This journey is not just to rescue Satyavan out of the clutches of Ignorance and Death but also to convert Death. In the original

story the dialogue between Savitri and Yama ends up with Savitri reminding him that he is not just *yamaraja*, the great restrainer of man's hopes and aspirations, but also *dharmaraj*, the ordainer of the law of Truth. He has forgotten this law of Truth and seems to be now acting as if under a mechanical impulsion of the inconscience whereby every upwards effort must be resisted and denied. Its pull prevents the human march and Savitri is here to change that. She is here to replace the law of death with the law of Truth and thereby restore dharma. The law of Truth has to be given to mankind not just to renew it but also to upgrade it according to the demands of the evolutionary power in each Age.

In the pitiless heart of Death Savitri installs the power of Love and thereby transforms him, compelling him to feel the beauty of Love. We may say that this conversion of Death that we see in Books Nine and Ten is the most important part of the work without which life's attempt to divinise will always be thwarted with enormous difficulties. In other words, death here is not just the death of the body but the death of all human effort towards beauty and light and love. It is this falsehood looming always like a shadow over human life that deviates his march and distorts and perverts the oracles of the gods. It inflicts man with a living death wherein he forgets to look into his soul and fails to aspire. Physical death is a relatively small event compared to this inner death that man suffers from. Yet the conquest over physical death is the final symbol of the completest victory since it is in matter where the power of the

inconscience is most deeply lodged. The body seems to be entirely governed by mechanical laws that refuse to change.

Canto One

Here we see Savitri entering the black pit of inconscience, the very home of Death from where he derives his strength. It is the realm where Death is all-powerful and for a moment it seems that all light is extinguished. Yet this is an appearance, a dark asuric maya that veils the Light. Savitri rekindles it bringing hope once again reminding Death and the soul of man that Night is not our beginning or end. We come from the Light and to the Light we go. Night, darkness, death are passages of our great journey, steps that lead us towards reclaiming our divinity and immortality. Death tries to frighten and dissuade her, he tries to snatch away her strength and light and hope. But Savitri the fearless yogini advances in her Kali mood awakening gradually in her the power that would win the victory over Death.

Canto Two

Savitri has entered the pit of darkness. This is from where Death draws all its strength. Towering as a being of darkness, Death exhorts Savitri to return back since there is no other god than he. Yet observing Savitri's courage to enter the dark void, he offers boons as if to placate her will. He restores King Dyumatsena's sight and his kingdom. Savitri receives the boons but refuses to turn back without bringing back with her

the soul of Satyavan. Death now starts twisting the eternal truth and proclaims himself the one true God. He tries to tell her about the transience and futility of all human life and love. He alone is eternal and there is none else. But Savitri has known her soul. She has realised the Divine and knows who she is. She rather throws the challenge back to Death and questions his so-called knowledge which has no true basis to it. Death tries to trick her by throwing the bogey of knowledge that does not sanction love. Savitri calmly replies that true knowledge is a state of oneness and what better means to arrive at it but through love.

Book Ten

There are twilight realms where life and death meet. The first twilight realm is the dawn or daybreak when the gods of life are in the ascendance. The night seems to fade here for a while but only to return. These are realms of the vital and mental worlds through which the soul of man passes in its journey after death. The second twilight realm is the dusk where light is fading and night is in the ascendance. It is the realm of earth or *martyaloka* as it is called. Here Death reigns. Yet Savitri chases him into his lair and wins the victory.

Canto One

Savitri has survived the eternal Night and follows Death further. At first, he along with the soul of Satyavan circuits through the vital and mental worlds. Here they are met with

shining spaces and lustrous gods. It is the heavens built by the idealistic thought of man. Behind the mask of Night, there lurks the Light. Darkness and Night are a veil that hides our true truth. We are children of Light, we live by the Light and go to the Light. This is the great truth that is revealed here.

Canto Two

Death disdains the gods of the mental and vital worlds calling it all a snare. He discards the ideal as a malady of the mind sown in the human heart by the gods. He disdains love as merely a chemic product of matter, a temporary hallucination of thought and feeling that can never last. Death proclaims himself to be the one and ultimate Truth and his gospel of the futility of human life and love as the only thing that one must know. He proclaims that it is in his being and nowhere else that souls find rest and peace. Savitri stands steadfast in her love for Satyavan and refuses to let love die or accept a lesser fate of transient happiness by turning to another man or even a god. Her will firm as a rock demands from Death Satyavan and Satyavan alone.

Canto Three

A long debate follows on twilight's ground where light and darkness are locked together. Savitri shows to Death that the world is still in the making and she demands Satyavan so that together they can build a greater world. It is her turn now to show him what he has missed. Savitri reveals to him that he is

seeing only one side of earthly love as already corrupted by his poisonous breath. She reveals to him the secret plan of God for earth and man and the beauty and radiance that still kisses humanity and invites it to higher things. Death partly concedes or is rather impressed by her brilliance and grants her the boon of beautiful and strong children in whom she can find joy and who take care of her as she grows old. But he bids her to return alone. Savitri then reminds Death that she loves only Satyavan and therefore if she returns alone his boon will not fructify. Death refuses once again.

Canto Four

Savitri now meets Death on the ground where consciousness dips towards earth. The dreams and ideals born in the heavens live only awhile before they vanish from earth. Death once again tries to convince Savitri of the futility of it all. He admits now the possibility of some impersonal void that human beings experience as a god but denies it any true power to intervene and change the course of things. He advises that she should quit this dream of a divine life upon earth as it is nothing else but a bondage. Instead, she should seek knowledge that would set her free from this bondage so that she too could escape into the silence of Nirvana. Savitri reveals to him instead the grand plan for earthly life and how this reign of darkness is going to end and this dream of a perfect divine life is bound to be established. Death tries to resist one last time and questions Savitri if she has the power to change things here upon earth.

There is a moment of apocalypse and Savitri reveals to Death her divine Form. Death is unable to bear the pressure and dissolves in her Light. He abandons his will to capture the soul of man forever in its net. Instead, he is transformed into an instrument of life and light to goad man's soul upon the path of Truth. With the end of Death the path is opened for the victory of the human soul here upon earth over ignorance, falsehood, suffering and pain.

Book Eleven

Death the mask is slain and in its place there emerges the fourfold Being whose glory no vision can describe. It is He who is the One Supreme beyond whom there is none other. It is He who as the Supreme Consciousness and Wisdom initiates creation. It is He who works in the atom and the clod as the intelligent Will. It is He who has built the worlds and determines the movement of the stars.

Savitri is now offered a permanent place in the worlds of eternal manifestation where there is neither night nor darkness nor suffering. She can stay here forever with Satyavan. But once again she refuses the offer that leaves earth to its dubious fate. She wants the soul of Satyavan to be her eternal companion upon earth to build perfection here battling against tremendous powers and the stiff resistances and oppositions of earth nature. Her individual victory must be shared by all. Seeing her firm resolve and unshaken determination to save earth and mankind, the Supreme takes away from her even the

worlds of shadowless light and meets her in his highest status where the boon she has asked for earth can be granted. Savitri asks all that would make earth divine and help mankind march towards a divine life. The boons are granted and the ways opened for earth towards a luminous and golden future. The boon of boons, that is to say, of transforming earthly life into life divine is granted and with that Savitri returns to earth holding and guarding the soul of Satyavan as a priceless treasure between her hands.

Book Twelve

All the threads are now gathered together to close the epic. King Dyumatsena has regained his kingdom and his sight. They come to the forest to find that Satyavan is still with Savitri in her lap as if he has woken up from a dream. He senses that something tremendous has happened while he lay asleep and knows intuitively that it is all because of her that things have changed so dramatically and the gods of fortune have smiled upon all of them. In passing Savitri reveals the great secret that we are here to learn, the greatest of all secrets: the truth of love and oneness. They return back to the palace but Savitri holds the dreams of a yet greater future within and nurtures it as a closely guarded secret in her bosom.

WRITINGS ON BOOK ONE

An In-Depth Summary of Book One

‘The Book of Beginnings’, as the name itself suggests, lays the broad foundations of the story itself. The story in essence is the story of creation itself and the Divine Mother’s Advent that rescues earth and men from the darkness that has enveloped it. The story, therefore, starts with a description of this fathomless darkness. However, within this darkness, concealed as it were, there is the entire creation itself in a seed state, involved within it, so to say. But even more importantly there is within it the Divine Presence struggling to emerge out of this immense darkness. We are not told here how this darkness has come to be and how creation has plunged into this dark and obscure state. This truth is revealed to us later in the poem. Here we are introduced to this dark beginning of all things and the progressive advent of Light.

But this chasing away of darkness by the Light is itself a symbol of the Divine Mother’s Advent. Her coming is to chase away darkness and ignorance and death from earth that afflicts the fate of humanity and retards its Godward progress. Thus, we are introduced to Savitri in the very first canto itself, as an embodiment, an incarnation of the Divine Mother in far back times. In the very next canto we are also told about the purpose

of Her incarnation which is to save man from his present predicament and the dangers that arise from the state of consciousness he finds himself in. Thus, the story becomes at once ancient as well as contemporary, in fact, perennial, since this danger of the collapse of creation into a state of darkness and chaos haunts earth and mankind in every cycle of creation. But She brings divine Hope, Light, Harmony, Order, Peace and above all Love. Indeed, through the story and the experiences of Savitri Sri Aurobindo gives us not only a glimpse but brings us into contact with the vast and luminous consciousness of the Divine Mother in Her present incarnation. Her own story becomes the symbol of a larger story taking place upon earth.

*Thus trapped in the gin of earthly destinies,
 Awaiting her ordeal's hour abode,
 Outcast from her inborn felicity,
 Accepting life's obscure terrestrial robe,
 Hiding herself even from those she loved,
 The godhead greater by a human fate.
 A dark foreknowledge separated her
 From all of whom she was the star and stay;
 Too great to impart the peril and the pain,
 In her torn depths she kept the grief to come.
 As one who watching over men left blind
 Takes up the load of an unwitting race,
 Harboursing a foe whom with her heart she must feed,*

...

Apart, living within, all lives she bore;

*Aloof, she carried in herself the world:
Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,
Her strength was founded on the cosmic might;
The universal Mother's love was hers.
Against the evil at life's afflicted roots,
Her own calamity its private sign,
Of her pangs she made a mystic poignant sword.
A solitary mind, a world-wide heart,
To the lone Immortal's unshared work she rose. [8-9]*

After a brief introduction to the Divine Mother in Cantos 1 and 2 of this Book of Beginnings, the scene shifts into a kind of flashback revealing to us the background of this marvellous Advent. It is the tapasya of Aswapati, the human father of Savitri, who brings down Her Advent as a boon. At the end of a long and perilous journey, the yogi-seer Aswapati stands face to face with the Divine Mother and seeks Her direct intervention in earthly life which is packed with suffering and pain. In this first book we are also introduced to Aswapati as the forerunner and pioneer of the race who embodies within himself the aspiration and the anguish of humanity and seeks a way out of the impasse in which we are caught. It is a long and arduous tapasya, possible only to a divine representative assuming a human form, as King Aswapati indeed is. In 'The Book of Beginnings' we are introduced to some first important steps of Aswapati's yogic journey. We are given a glimpse of the state and steps that mark King Aswapati's freedom from

the general state of ignorance to which humanity is subject. We are also given a glimpse of the secret knowledge to which he is admitted having freed himself from the clutch of earthly mind and senses that hold us captive to the state of ignorance. Finally, we are given a glimpse of the New Consciousness and the new Yoga of supramental descent that awaits its hour of manifestation. As this New Consciousness begins to descend into Aswapati bringing with it new and divine possibilities Aswapati renounces his individual realisation in favour of a much vaster change for earth and humanity as a whole.

Here comes the luminous close to the first book, the rest of his journey being described in Books Two and Three. Thus we see that once again the story is given a contemporary touch echoing through its pages the life of Sri Aurobindo himself, the vast labour undertaken by him, the arduous tapasya he engaged in, the purpose and goal of his Yoga.

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

*His birth held up a symbol and a sign;
His human self like a translucent cloak
Covered the All-Wise who leads the unseeing world.
Affiliated to cosmic Space and Time
And paying here God's debt to earth and man
A greater sonship was his divine right.
Although consenting to mortal ignorance,
His knowledge shared the Light ineffable.
A strength of the original Permanence
Entangled in the moment and its flow,
He kept the vision of the Vasts behind:
A power was in him from the Unknowable.
An archivist of the symbols of the Beyond,
A treasurer of superhuman dreams,
He bore the stamp of mighty memories
And shed their grandiose ray on human life. [22]*

Book 1 Canto 1

Book One, Canto One has two main passages. The first passage, which is the very beginning of the book, describes through a succession of images the coming of Dawn amidst the Night. As the name of the canto itself suggests this is a symbol of a yet deeper reality. The Night here is the state of inconscience in which creation is plunged. However, this Night is not an absence but only a self-concealment of Light. Even in this utter darkness the seeds of creation are there waiting for

their hour to sprout again. Touched by the Light they would spring up and bear their bloom. It is also revealed to us that this effort at creation is not the first one. Possibly it is another cycle of creation that is about to begin after an earlier civilisation has been plunged into darkness, what is called a *pralaya* in Indian thought and conception. During this dissolution of a whole cycle of civilisation, the structures and superstructures are pulled down into the dust of Time. Yet something remains. All is not finished. The soul of a civilisation, the memory of its collective effort remains as a seed state buried in the darkness in which everything has collapsed. But with the coming of Light there is an awakening of hope and effort amidst the torpor and drowse that accompanies the dissolution. All this makes the epic poem so very contemporary especially as we stood recently at the doorsteps of yet another collapse during the two great Wars and the widespread collapse of age-old institutions.

But there is hope; in fact, there always is hope because there is the Divine. Hidden in the depths of inconscience even as blazing above the distant horizons there is the Divine Presence. Just as light descends to awaken life once again, so too the Divine Consciousness descends upon Earth to awaken the souls and bring rescue to the Light hidden in the secret heart of Night. The first passage ends with this hope as also with the hint of the first divine descent into creation that comes to rescue and save. The second passage now reveals the truth behind the symbol Dawn. Savitri, an incarnation of the Divine Mother, has come down amidst the darkness of Ignorance to bring there

Light, Truth, Peace, Harmony and Joy. Here too we see a progression, an initial resistance of the Night unwilling to yield to the growing Light, but eventually the Light grows stronger and more intense until even the darkest corners are suffused with the glow. It spreads and is diffused, so to say. So also the divine Advent meets with the resistance of humanity but slowly the magic works and in the inner battle of man's soul with darkness and doom, Death is conquered and the way is opened for a new step in the great journey.

The canto ends poignantly on the note that '*This was the day when Satyavan must die.*' It had started with the state of utter darkness thus, '*It was the hour before the Gods awake*'. Thus we know now where the story is poised and we have been given a hint about its end which is an inevitable victory of the Light. But now the battle must be faced in grim earnest, the resistance of Darkness and Death and Night must be negotiated and conquered, the soul of man called Satyavan rescued from the clutch of ignorance and pain. Savitri, the Divine Mother, is here upon earth to fight and win this battle for man.

*IT WAS the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge. [1]*

All the fierce question of man's hours relived.

*The sacrifice of suffering and desire
Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy
Began again beneath the eternal Hand.
Awake she endured the moments' serried march
And looked on this green smiling dangerous world,
And heard the ignorant cry of living things.
Amid the trivial sounds, the unchanging scene
Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate.
Immobile in herself, she gathered force.
This was the day when Satyavan must die. [10]*

Book 1 Canto 2

In Canto 2 we are given a brief summary of the story and its central theme which is the conquest of Love over death and fate. This Love is of course not the usual passion that human beings experience but a Power that descends from high to save creation. This Power has incarnated in Savitri who has come down to save Satyavan, the human soul entangled in the forest of human life and the laws of karma and all the forces of Ignorance that hold this earth and humanity a captive and slave. Savitri descends to change the law by accepting its burden upon herself. Therefore we find in this canto a constant contrast drawn between the human soul caught in the net of darkness and ignorance and the being of Savitri who has come to share the burden of the race and to save. Outwardly she too seems to share the same human fate as others but inwardly there is a vast difference. She refuses to accept the law of doom and chooses

to fight and change the law that is rather too harsh upon the human soul still journeying in the darkness of the Night.

The first long passage (page 15) brings us in contact with Savitri's being and the challenge that she faces assuming the human body and hence the human fate. Sri Aurobindo reveals to us through the eyes of Savitri the tangled knots of fate and the forces of Ignorance that keep the soul captive. But Savitri is born to save. She has brought with her the supreme Power of transformation, that is to say, Love. It is not love as we understand it but Love in its divine form, in its pristine purity and power. She is an embodiment of this Love. That is why she has accepted this burden and is capable of saving the race against the law of death.

The second passage contrasts our human life with Savitri who is now armed for the struggle. The Divine is ever ready to help but there is something in our nature that not only refuses but even actively revolts against the divine touch. This too must be faced and tackled for it is this that prevents man's advance towards a divinisation of life, towards freedom from the law of death, towards Love and Light and Unity and Bliss. Once again Sri Aurobindo brings us back to the story and connects the inner state of Savitri with the outer story. She is now fully awake on the fated day, awake not only outwardly but awake with the power and strength of the Divine Mother who alone can change the law.

A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,

*Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven;
Love in her was wider than the universe,
The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.*

[15]

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

Book 1 Canto 3

Now that we have been given the backdrop of the story and have been introduced to the being and persona of Savitri, the master Poet launches us into a long journey which relates to the birth and coming of Savitri. He now introduces us to Aswapati, the human father of Savitri, who brings her down into the mortal world from Her immortal heights. But who is Aswapati and why has he engaged himself in an arduous tapasya? It is towards this that the Poet invites us now. For the background of Savitri's coming is not less interesting than the story of Savitri herself.

The canto starts by introducing us to Aswapati. He is the forerunner, a pioneer, so to say, who has come down from the higher worlds for a specific purpose. His thought and actions will leave an imprint and impact upon earth-nature.

*His was a spirit that stooped from larger spheres
Into our province of ephemeral sight,
A colonist from immortality.
A pointing beam on earth's uncertain roads,
His birth held up a symbol and a sign;
His human self like a translucent cloak
Covered the All-Wise who leads the unseeing world. [22]*

All of us have within us something that is like a descent. The psychic being in man belongs in fact to the higher hemisphere of existence. It is a drop of divine Bliss, a crystallisation of divine Love that has entered into the play of Time and Space for eventually becoming a means for the divine manifestation upon earth. But first it must recover itself through a rather long evolutionary process stretching through many lives. We see this described in some marvellous lines that summarise the evolutionary journey of man, his real self that is hidden within, the grand purpose and the great goal towards which all creation with humanity as its spearhead moves. Aswapati has now come to lead humanity towards this grand fulfilment.

With this background, we are led into experience after experience that the seer King Aswapati undergoes as part of the

transformation that is beginning to take place within him. These are high and profound experiences known to ancient yogis which are like a prototype of what humanity will later experience at large. Essentially these are experiences wherein there is a progressive heightening, widening and deepening of his consciousness bringing with it new powers and knowledge that are hidden behind the veil of our human personality. Described here in great detail are the ascending states of knowledge, the awakening and the operations of faculties of knowledge that are presently only rarely glimpsed, such as inspiration, revelation and intuition. Described also is the awakening of subtle senses as well as of higher powers. We also see here the actual movement of sadhana that moves in a waveform manner touching now the heights and now the abysses rather than moving in one straight-line ascension. This is so because of the integral nature of Reality and of the workings of the Yoga-Force, the Divine Shakti. Finally, the seer King Aswapati being led through these experiences arrives at the first fundamental freedom, the freedom of his soul from the clutches of the lower nature. This allows the soul to soar higher and higher and ascend to regions of Light and Peace freed from all delusion and grief.

*Thus came his soul's release from Ignorance,
His mind and body's first spiritual change.
A wide God-knowledge poured down from above,
A new world-knowledge broadened from within:
His daily thoughts looked up to the True and One,*

*His commonest doings welled from an inner Light.
Awakened to the lines that Nature hides,
Attuned to her movements that exceed our ken,
He grew one with a covert universe....
One and harmonious by the Maker's skill,
The human in him paced with the divine;
His acts betrayed not the interior flame.
This forged the greatness of his front to earth.
A genius heightened in his body's cells
That knew the meaning of his fate-hedged works
Akin to the march of unaccomplished Powers
Beyond life's arc in spirit's immensities.
Apart he lived in his mind's solitude,
A demigod shaping the lives of men:
One soul's ambition lifted up the race;
A Power worked, but none knew whence it came.
The universal strengths were linked with his;
Filling earth's smallness with their boundless breadths,
He drew the energies that transmute an age. [44-45]*

Book 1 Canto 4

Having freed his soul from the bondage of ignorance that ties us like a helpless creature to the stake, Aswapati now turns his gaze deeper to discover the secret Wisdom that has gone forth into the creation. He seeks and discovers the master plan of this universe, its occult cause and moving force, the great purpose

and the will that labours in the atoms and the stars, the far-off goal towards which creation moves. Step by step he discovers the secret Knowledge, secret because we cannot find it through the mind or the senses but can discover it through other faculties and powers which have now awakened in Aswapati. It is a great grand reversal, a reversal of understanding, a reversal of our self-regard and world-view, a reversal of the very basis of our action and our values. Along the path of this discovery, one of the first and the most fundamental discoveries is that of the secret Fire that burns within everything. This Fire is the divine Will that hides behind the mask of forms and names. It is the Glory of God whose sparks illuminate creation and lead our life towards the Divine and creates even here a response to all that is True, Good and Beautiful. In man this spark develops into a flame, the psychic centre that survives death and returns again into the great adventure of life for the great fulfilment.

But all this is hidden and what we experience here is only a half-light or grey shadows of the unseen Reality cast by our surface mind. Yet man can connect with this deeper source of wisdom and power and thereby reorganise his entire life. This is the yoga of the earth that has been going on since its inception. Earth is the chosen place for this work wherein the Divine hid within matter uncovers and manifests Himself progressively. We call it evolution, but from a spiritual perspective all evolution is simply a growing manifestation of That which is concealed within. Therefore, it is inevitable that

one day the Divine hid in forms will manifest Himself fully and thereby our present life based on ignorance and suffering and error will change into a life of Truth and Beauty and Bliss and Love, a life divine.

Man is meant to be the catalyst for this great change. Now he moves between two poles of one tremendous Reality. On one side of our human consciousness, below it, so to say, is the dark pole of existence where all is a shadow and ignorance. On the other side are the flaming powers and potencies of God. But the most important Truth is that within us is the One who is present in each and every element and particle of creation. He is ever close to us and intervenes with His powers and His Grace to lead creation out of chaos and confusion towards Light and Beauty and Truth. Behind all the surface anomalies of life there is a Guidance that leads us through everything in this ignorance towards the great divine disclosure.

What follows next are some long and engaging passages describing how the One becomes the Two for the purposes of His Play. Soul and nature, Purusha and Prakriti, Ishwara and Shakti are various poises of the One Reality for the sake of creation. So too Knowledge and Ignorance, the gods and the titans are luminous and shadowy masks of the One. It is He who has become all these various objects. It is He who has become Space and Time and the creation. It is He who has become bird and beast and man. In and through man He climbs towards still greater heights of supermanhood and a divinised

humanity. Since God has become man, since man is created in the image of God, so to say, man must become one with God. He is so already in essence as indeed all creation is. But what is within him in essence must become his normal and natural state. This is the purpose of creation, its eventual design. What we now see, however, is a half-finished product. The emergence of divinity in man is the next logical step, the inevitable next disclosure of creation.

Finally, Sri Aurobindo takes us on the entire evolutionary journey of man from the most primitive stages where man is conscious only of the immediate material world and physical existence through various degrees of self-awareness and world-awareness until he becomes a seeker of Truth and Light and begins to be drawn towards what lies beyond his mind and his present limited consciousness. The canto ends once again with the hope and the certitude of a New Creation upon earth, a divine creation with the full manifestation of divinity, of the divine Truth and Power and Glory upon earth and in man.

*A sailor on the Inconscient's fathomless sea,
 He voyages through a starry world of thought
 On Matter's deck to a spiritual sun.
 Across the noise and multitudinous cry,
 Across the rapt unknowable silences,
 Through a strange mid-world under supernal skies,
 Beyond earth's longitudes and latitudes,
 His goal is fixed outside all present maps.
 But none learns whither through the unknown he sails*

*Her play is real; a Mystery he fulfils:
There is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim,
A purpose in her vast and random game. [71-72]*

Book 1 Canto 5

Now Aswapati's gaze is turned to discover the greater possibilities that await the embodied being upon earth. The Spirit's now hidden powers must manifest in a nature that is ready and released from the bonds of Ignorance. It is here that we see Sri Aurobindo's Yoga beginning to part ways with the traditional yogas that are content to seek a release from Ignorance and thereby disappear from the manifestation, abandoning the cosmic labour. Instead, Aswapati is striving to bring down a greater world, to hasten the advent of the superhuman form upon earth that he has seen as the far-off goal awaiting its hour.

But first we are led to share the great discovery that what we experience as a mystic void or a Nihil is in fact filled with the omniscience and omnipotence of the Divine. Therein Aswapati steps in and discovers the grand reconciliation he is seeking between God and world, soul and nature, Spirit and matter. The secret sense and purpose of the Night of ignorance and error and pain are now revealed to Him. He discovers why the Divine has chosen to become what seems to be His very opposite. In other words, he discovers the greatest of all truths that 'there is nothing else but the Divine.'

Once this is revealed a new aspiration is now born in Aswapati. He seeks to embody the divine in this house of flesh. It is no more enough for him to experience and realise the Divine within. Even the outermost consciousness, even this material body in its each and every cell must experience this profound truth and undergo a transformation by its touch and pressure. It is an entirely new and unprecedented aspiration and needs full commitment. So we are told that Aswapati withdraws from the din and noise of earthly life to focus on this one goal above all else. Even as he thus hopes and aspires he is surprised by a descent from above. Some Power and Glory of God, some Bliss and Beauty of the Unmanifest descends from the transcendent realms into his body and being, initiating a new transformation.

*A Will, a hope immense now seized his heart,
And to discern the superhuman's form
He raised his eyes to unseen spiritual heights,
Aspiring to bring down a greater world.
The glory he had glimpsed must be his home.
A brighter heavenlier sun must soon illumine
This dusk room with its dark internal stair,
The infant soul in its small nursery school
Mid objects meant for a lesson hardly learned
Outgrow its early grammar of intellect
And its imitation of Earth-Nature's art,
Its earthly dialect to God-language change,*

*In living symbols study Reality
And learn the logic of the Infinite.
The Ideal must be Nature's common truth,
The body illumined with the indwelling God,
The heart and mind feel one with all that is,
A conscious soul live in a conscious world. [76-77]*

*In a divine retreat from mortal thought,
In a prodigious gesture of soul-sight,
His being towered into pathless heights,
Naked of its vesture of humanity.
As thus it rose, to meet him bare and pure
A strong Descent leaped down. A Might, a Flame,
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain [80-81]*

This transformation reveals to him the entire secret plan, the forces and springs that move creation, the powers that create numerous finites out of the One Infinite. The entire range of occult powers and cosmic forces now pass into his charge. He begins to enter into the supramental domain even while in the body and fully consciously. He glimpses the triune One, the Supreme Transcendent Divine as Sachchidananda. He enters into the adventure of the unknown.

This canto and the book end here. The descent now opens new possibilities of the future, not only for Aswapati but for

the earth and humanity. Ascension of consciousness must necessarily be an individual phenomenon though it may include more and more individuals. But the descent can become a collective possibility if the Powers and Forces that descend can find a sufficient point of support in earth nature and from that point spread as a contagion to the rest of humanity. Now Aswapati turns towards that possibility. Renouncing his individual realisation he turns towards the earth and studies the various forces and energies that have gone into its making and worked towards our evolution. All this is described in Book 2 and Book 3 in great detail.

Canto One: From Darkness to Light

The Coming of the Divine Mother and the Initiation of the Earth

The seers of the *Vedas* saw in the physical world a reflection and an image of subtle profound truths. They used this imagery with a deftness to convey deeper realities to man's consciousness still bound to the physical world and its images. Sri Aurobindo, in almost a similar vein, opens the first canto of *Savitri* with the powerful symbol of dawn. However, even though this is a symbol of illumination, and more specifically, the awakening of man to greater truths and hidden realities of existence, he with his masterly touch weaves it into the narrative of the epic. Thus, the dawn becomes at once a symbol and a reality. On the physical plane, it is the day of destiny when Satyavan must die. But at a deeper level, and almost paradoxically, it is the dawn of creation, the coming of hope, light, effort, beauty and joy into the world. The prophesied day of the fatal stroke is described so beautifully because regardless of the dark sombre night, the Divine Mother is there bending over earth to bring about the needed change. She is the giver of Hope, of Light, of Beauty, of Strength, of Bliss. Her coming, her Presence is the sure sign that all will turn out to be good for even out of darkness, She can pluck out the Light. Lighting the

commonest of objects, even the dust below our feet, She creates shapes of beauty. She is indeed the Creatrix Consciousness, the Power of the Lord of whom the sun is a representative symbol. Even as the sun stays where it is but awakens, illumines and conducts all the operations of creation from its birth until its passing, — or its evolutionary change, through the rays leaning across the spaces, so too She has come from the land of shadowless Light reaching out to one and all for the enormous task before her.

But this is not the first time this is happening. Whenever creation has been plunged into darkness, in a state of utter oblivion, losing all strength and hope, She comes. Listening to the cry of nature, She arrives from the other side of boundlessness to change all this into Light by her transfiguring touch. When that happens, then all grows beautiful and joyous, uplifted as a sacrament reaching out to the highest abode of Truth. The will and the joy to live is born with her coming and man once again takes up the journey of fate whose far ends are not visible to his eyes.

All this is revealed to us at the very opening. It is as if the essence of the story is being given to us. *Savitri* is after all the story of the Divine Mother's Advent that will change the tides of Time. It is the story of the conquest over darkness by her Light and Peace and Love. It is the story of conjugal love conquering death, the conjugal love born of the eternal wedding of the human soul struggling in ignorance with its

Divine Beloved. If that can happen, if the human soul can give itself unreservedly to the Divine Mother, surrender itself to her transfiguring touch, then nothing is impossible. Such is the message of *Savitri*, the message of hope that comes by the Presence of divine Love in creation. After all, creation is not an accident, it is a divine event. There are a Will and Wisdom working in its heart. True it has plunged into darkness and seems to have lost its aim and direction, but She is there to redeem it by her Love and Light. She is there as an inmost Presence moulding the clay from behind the seemingly mechanical workings of material nature. But more importantly, She descends into our obscure outer fields of ignorance, dons the terrestrial robe of mortality and death, stands as the leader and queen of the human march, fights for us against inevitable destiny and the complex workings of blind fate to win the godlike game for man. Because She is there the world can hope and dare; because She is there the world can climb towards the Light; because She is there the world forgets to die; because She is there man will one day cross the dangerous brink of death that skirts throughout his journey of life and discover the pathways of immortality.

She is not only up above but here too, in a human body. Through the toil of the Ages, She labours to mould creation and man into a perfect image of God. But some consent is needed from man for her workings to have full effect. Even without this consent the Truth hidden behind nature is sure to reveal itself but our consent will make the journey shorter and

smoother. Alas! Man prefers the comfort zones of his ignorance rather than the great adventure of life to discover its own hidden truth. He prefers his routine and accustomed ways rather than the greatest of all adventures that will take him eventually beyond even the gods. He prefers his little comforts and small ephemeral joys rather than to be charged with the passion of the Infinite. He repels the Light and prefers to go back to sleep in the night of his ignorance which he mistakenly calls light. And when the true Light comes into his life, he rejects its divine gifts doubting them and prefers instead the old and 'seemingly secure' ways. Nay, he even tries to capture the Splendour that has come from afar and shut it into his little room with locks of creeds and cults. The Light comes for all but he tries to appropriate it for his personal use, claiming it for himself alone for his egoistic uses. He erects temples and churches and mosques around the divine Name but refuses to build the one true temple of the Godhead that dwells within his own heart, refuses to participate in the great labour of creation to manifest the Godhead hidden in the depths of creation, refuses to change and be transformed by her touch of Love.

Such has been the story so far. But the Divine Mother refuses to give up. She knows that it is not man but the Inconscient that holds the human soul captive in its net of ignorance and death. All growth is out of darkness into the Light and darkness does not easily give up its reign. It extracts its price of suffering which is what it knows. It inflicts upon the Light and its messengers the law of misery and pain, it afflicts

us with unconsciousness and imprisons us with the deceptive play of falsehood that makes us turn away from Light and Peace and Truth and Love. But She has come and all will surely change. While man can and must collaborate, her work does not depend upon man. She has been labouring since earth began, nay She has been there even before the elements could emerge. Her Love has plunged into the darkness of the Inconscient and fights with doom. That is why in spite of everything slowly the Light grows and man evolves and earth moves further in its tremendous journey towards the Light. It is her Work and She is bound to succeed but meanwhile, man must go through the state of death and darkness knowing that She is here. She is here upon earth, leaving her Abode of Truth. *'She made earth her home, for whom heaven was too small.'* She has accepted the burden of human fate even though man refuses and the abyss denies. She has become the sacrifice so that man may burn in her purifying fire and emerge as a new being with a new body and mind and this earthly life become the life divine.

This is the great significance of her coming, her coming for which seers and sages have waited and aspired.

Her coming they had asked for earth and men. [332]

Darkness to Light

The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* speak of human life as a journey from darkness to Light. The darkness is the state of

ignorance from which all seems to emerge. It is this ignorance which is the cause of suffering and pain. Since we are ever surrounded by this ignorance we fill it with all kinds of beliefs and conceptions. Our hopes create heavens, our shame creates hell. Our fears create death. Thus we get trapped in our mental conceptions which take the place of Reality. These conceptions become the prison of our souls. How to break free from this state? Well, the way is to free ourselves from our mind and senses that hold us a captive. But if mind sits a jailor and the senses build the jail walls, our desires become so many bars between us and the vast Freedom and Delight that are at the root of the creation. This need for freedom, this compelling urge in nature that climbs from a state of darkness towards Light as if drawn helplessly is beautifully described in the famous verse of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

*Asado ma sadgamaya, tamaso ma jyotirgamaya, mrityor
ma amritamgamaya...*

*From Non-being to the true Being, from Darkness to
Light, from Death to Immortality.*

This is not to say that something corresponding to the state of heaven and hell does not exist. States of joy and peace (heavens) as well as states of suffering and despair (hell) exist. So also death exists, not as we understand it but as a power of destruction in the universe. This destruction removes forms that can no longer serve the evolutionary purpose that drives

creation. It is, we may even say, indispensable, complementary to the birth of forms. This destruction or the cessation of forms would not, however, carry so much horror attached to it if we were conscious of the immortal element within us and identified with it. Then it will be no more than changing our clothes as the Gita puts it succinctly. It is our ignorance that gives to death its awful shape of terror and fear. Due to this fear and terror that get associated with the destruction of forms, death appears as something abominable to our limited consciousness. We begin to live in its shadow, which increases with every year of our life upon earth, as if a grim reminder of the transience of all our joys and the brevity of our love. It seems to make all our efforts at perfection vain until we in our limited understanding of the ways of God in creation end up declaring all as an illusion and creation itself a vanity of vanities. Quite naturally, such a God, if any existed, would not be the wise and compassionate Being we intuitively expect him to be, but a kind of tyrant who builds worlds merely to trap our souls in an illusion, and make us pray to him out of fear and run towards him from the horror of creation. Such is often the god of religions, painted in the human mind through popular lore and certain scriptures. This fear and horror are due to the Ignorance and the Inconscient that stand at the back of the world and from which not only our souls but also our nature seeks deliverance.

My will, my call is there in men and things;

But the Inconscient lies at the world's grey back

CANTO ONE: FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

*And draws to its breast of Night and Death and Sleep.
Imprisoned in its dark and dumb abyss
A little consciousness it lets escape
But jealous of the growing light holds back
Close to the obscure edges of its cave
As if a fond ignorant mother kept her child
Tied to her apron strings of Nescience.
The Inconscient could not read without man's mind
The mystery of the world its sleep has made:
Man is its key to unlock a conscious door.
But still it holds him dangled in its grasp:
It draws its giant circle round his thoughts,
It shuts his heart to the supernal Light. [690]*

But Truth is other than what we conceive of It with our limited consciousness. This world is other than what it seems. It is an illusion only in the sense that we do not perceive it correctly. But we can correct our perceptions, we can fill our minds with Truth-Light, flood our senses with the harmonious rhythms of Beauty that stand behind creation. Thus can this illusion be corrected and this nightmare cease to be. Thus reveals *Savitri* to us:

*But Maya is a veil of the Absolute;
A Truth occult has made this mighty world:
The Eternal's wisdom and self-knowledge act
In ignorant Mind and in the body's steps.
The Inconscient is the Superconscient's sleep.*

*An unintelligible Intelligence
Invents creation's paradox profound;
Spiritual thought is crammed in Matter's forms,
Unseen it throws out a dumb energy
And works a miracle by a machine.
All here is a mystery of contraries:
Darkness a magic of self-hidden Light,
Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life.
Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face:
Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.
The unconscious world is the spirit's self-made room,
Eternal Night shadow of eternal Day.
Night is not our beginning nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we have hid
Safe from too swift a waking to world-pain.
We came to her from a supernal Light,
By Light we live and to the Light we go. [600-601]*

And the Mother says:

*The knowledge possessed by the Yogi is also an answer to
the terrible theory that all that takes place is God's direct*

working. For once you rise to the Supermind you immediately perceive that the world is false and distorted. The supramental truth has not at all found manifestation. How then can the world be a genuine expression of the Divine? Only when the Supermind is established and rules here, then alone the Supreme Will may be said to have authentically manifested. At the same time, we must steer clear of the dangerous exaggeration of the sense of the falsehood of the world, which comes to those who have risen to the higher consciousness. What happened with Shankara and others like him was that they had a glimpse of the true consciousness, which threw the falsehood of this world into such sharp contrast that they declared the universe to be not only false but also a really non-existent illusion which should be entirely abandoned. We, on the other hand, see its falsehood, but realise also that it has to be replaced and not abandoned as an illusion. Only, the truth has got mistranslated, something has stepped in to pervert the divine reality, but the world is in fact meant to express it. And to express it is indeed our Yoga.

CWM 3: 162

What is the way? The path is inbuilt within us. We have been already provided with the means to rectify the distortion. Deep within the heart of creation, in each and every particle of creation, in the very dust that constitutes this earth, there is lit a flame, a flame of aspiration that ever burns and increases by

the day and the night. It seeks for Beauty and Truth and Good even when all around is darkness and strife. It is the immortal element in us that survives death and defeat, rises from the pyre and the grave, persists in the effort and the pang despite a million obstacles and temporary failures. *Savitri* reveals to us the secret of this flame of God that resides within man:

*But since she knows the toil of mind and life
As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,
She puts forth a small portion of herself,
A being no bigger than the thumb of man
Into a hidden region of the heart
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds
And labour mid the labour of the stars.
This in us laughs and weeps, suffers the stroke,
Exults in victory, struggles for the crown;
Identified with the mind and body and life,
It takes on itself their anguish and defeat,
Bleeds with Fate's whips and hangs upon the cross,
Yet is the unwounded and immortal self
Supporting the actor in the human scene.
Through this she sends us her glory and her powers,
Pushes to wisdom's heights, through misery's gulfs;
She gives us strength to do our daily task
And sympathy that partakes of others' grief
And the little strength we have to help our race,
We who must fill the role of the universe*

CANTO ONE: FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

*Acting itself out in a slight human shape
And on our shoulders carry the struggling world.
This is in us the godhead small and marred;
In this human portion of divinity
She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time
To uplift from light to light, from power to power,
Till on a heavenly peak it stands, a king. [526-527]*

Savitri also assures us the eventual victory of this spark of God against the darkness of Ignorance that surrounds our life here. This flame which is a gift of Grace to life upon earth was implanted even before early life-forms emerged. It has been sent especially to earth to assist the evolutionary process through the long winding roads of Time. But from time to time, when the play of earthly life becomes too dramatic, when creation is passing through a crucial phase and stands on the brink of chaos and collapse, a special Intervention takes place to assist the journey. A breath of God comes down from the heights and the Spirit becomes flesh again so that filled with its divine afflatus, matter too can become conscious of the Spirit. These periods of Intervention when the otherwise slow and painful evolution takes a sudden and swift leap are called the ‘Hour of God’, and the special Descents that change the course of Time and save creation from inevitable disaster are known as Avataras. Of course God is always there hidden behind all things, behind creation as well as destruction, behind good as well as evil, using both as a means of the human ascension

towards divine Freedom, Light, Truth and Immortality. He pushes things from behind using instruments for his grand design. But during these special Descents, He himself steps into the forefront of the journey, takes up the role of the Leader and the Guide, steers the wheel of Time and changes destiny. Once the change is affected, the decisive turn taken, the victory of Light and Truth assured, the breath of God retires for a while even as it now watches from the hills of silence from where it had descended. Then man must once again follow the labour of the stars now aligned rightly and set to course by the divine Intervention. He along with Time must work out the great journey and its next step with faith as the compass and the awakened soul as the pilot and guide. It is one of these divine Interventions that is described in *Savitri*, the Hour of God when the Divine Mother herself descended into creation to lead it one step forward towards its inevitable destiny, — Light and Truth and Freedom and Bliss. In fact, the New Dawn is closest when the Night is thickest:

*But when the hour of the Divine draws near
The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time
And God be born into the human clay
In forms made ready by your human lives.
Then shall the Truth supreme be given to men: [705]*

*Even should a hostile force cling to its reign
And claim its right's perpetual sovereignty
And man refuse his high spiritual fate,*

*Yet shall the secret Truth in things prevail.
For in the march of all-fulfilling Time
The hour must come of the Transcendent's will:
All turns and winds towards his predestined ends
In Nature's fixed inevitable course
Decreed since the beginning of the worlds
In the deep essence of created things:
Even there shall come as a high crown of all
The end of Death, the death of Ignorance.
But first high Truth must set her feet on earth
And man aspire to the Eternal's light
And all his members feel the Spirit's touch
And all his life obey an inner Force. [708]*

Human Aspiration and the Past Dawns

The truth of an inner awakening and growth of experiences on the spiritual journey is beautifully described by Sri Aurobindo through the images of dawn and light as they progress during the day. Even as the dawn, at first just a faint glimmer, next a trickle of light, grows into the full blaze of the sun, so too our spiritual journey begins with the birth of aspiration, an awakening to the Truth, then experiences come and go touching us awhile until finally darkness is dissolved in the growing Light.

First, of course, is the birth of aspiration. Our earthly matter becomes a vase that holds the flame. We must guard it against

the forces of Night that are still active. But eventually dawn arrives and with it the first glow of awakening. There is now clarity as the path is seen before us. It is like the initiatory ritual of yoga. In the beginning is prepared the close. So too the seeds of Light enter deep into the Earth and bury the dreams of the Sun and its grandeur into the human soil. There is an outpouring of the revelations and the glories that have just been witnessed. All this is yet a first sign of the things that are yet to come. The Light brings with it the message of hope, the certainty of the victory against the Night and its powers that have taken shelter in our obscure parts. However dark the Night, however difficult and challenging the battle with the Inconscient, the triumph of the divine afflatus is bound to come. Even if the Light seems to fade after a while, it has given the impetus and the impulsion for a future New Creation. The seeds sown in this hour will surely sprout one day when the time is ripe and the seasons are ready.

The seemingly senseless world begins to assume a new meaning and purpose revealing in its newfound Light the drift of past dawns and the spiritual efforts of the past seers of Truth and Light. The inner sky of man, the heavens of his higher mentality, are filled with wonder and beatitude. His nature's peaks are set afire and glow with the splendour. The orange-red glow reminds the earth that one day its red and brown body will turn into sun-bright gold. Matter shall be transformed by the Spirit's power and the past spiritual awakenings will come to their full fruit and eventual fulfilment.

By making a reference to the past spiritual dawns and then connecting them to the present and the future, Sri Aurobindo sheds a new light on our current understanding of the myths that believes they were mere babbles of a primitive people who were nature-worshippers. Just as in this opening passage of *Savitri*, the past seers too used the images of physical nature to reveal profound inner experiences. The initiate who had taken to the path of these ‘forefathers’ could well understand their meaning while to the non-initiate the inner sense was lost in a jumble of unintelligible words.

Sri Aurobindo too uses very much a similar style and imagery as the *Vedas* that speak about the forefathers who had gone before the Rishis of that time. It will not be an exaggeration to say that *Savitri* is indeed a Veda, a Veda of the future that carries the lines of previous spiritual efforts of mankind to their grand culmination. What has been foreseen and promised comes to its inevitable fulfilment.

Our earth shaped out of the dark inconscient ocean of existence lifts its high formations and ascending peaks heavenward; the heaven of mind has its own formations, clouds that give out their lightnings and their waters of life; the streams of the clarity and the honey ascend out of the subconscious ocean below and seek the superconscious ocean above; and from above that ocean sends downward its rivers of the light and truth and bliss even into our physical being. Thus in images of physical Nature the Vedic poets sing the hymn of our spiritual ascension.

That ascension has already been effected by the Ancients, the human forefathers, and the spirits of these great Ancestors still assist their offspring; for the new dawns repeat the old and lean forward in light to join the dawns of the future.

Hymns to the Mystic Fire, CWSA 15: 383

We may therefore surmise that our actual Sanhita represents the close of a period, not its commencement, nor even some of its successive stages. It is even possible that its most ancient hymns are a comparatively modern development or a version of a more ancient¹ lyric evangel couched in the freer and more pliable forms of a still earlier human speech. Or the whole voluminous mass of its litanies may be only a selection by Veda Vyasa out of a more richly vocal Aryan past. Made, according to the common belief, by Krishna of the Isle, the great traditional sage, the colossal compiler (Vyasa), with his face turned towards the commencement of the Iron Age, towards the centuries of increasing twilight and final darkness, it is perhaps only the last testament of the Ages of Intuition, the luminous Dawns of the Forefathers, to their descendants, to a human race already turning in spirit towards the lower levels and the more easy and secure gains — secure perhaps only in appearance — of the physical life and of the intellect and the logical reason.

But these are only speculations and inferences. Certain it is that the old tradition of a progressive obscuration and loss of the Veda as the law of the human

cycle has been fully justified by the event. The obscuration had already proceeded far before the opening of the next great age of Indian spirituality, the Vedantic, which struggled to preserve or recover what it yet could of the ancient knowledge. It could hardly have been otherwise. For the system of the Vedic mystics was founded upon experiences difficult to ordinary mankind and proceeded by the aid of faculties which in most of us are rudimentary and imperfectly developed and, when active at all, are mixed and irregular in their operation. Once the first intensity of the search after the truth had passed, periods of fatigue and relaxation were bound to intervene in which the old truths would be partially lost. Nor once lost, could they easily be recovered by scrutinising the sense of the ancient hymns; for those hymns were couched in a language that was deliberately ambiguous.

The Veda itself speaks constantly of “ancient” and “modern” Rishis, (pūrvah. . . nūtanah), the former remote enough to be regarded as a kind of demigods, the first founders of knowledge.

CWSA 15: 12-13

The Mother also reminds us in her answers to a student:

Sweet Mother, you have said: The Supramental has descended upon earth. What does that mean exactly? You

have also said: “The things that were promised are fulfilled.” What are these things? ¹

Ah, that’s ignorance indeed! This was promised a very long time ago, this was said very long ago — not only here — since the beginning of the earth. There have been all kinds of predictions, by all kinds of prophets; it has been said, “There will be a new heaven and a new earth, a new race will be born, the world will be transformed....” Prophets have spoken about this in all the traditions.

You have said, “They are fulfilled.”

Yes. And so?

Where is the new race?

The new race? Wait for something like... a few thousand years, and you will see it!

When the mind descended upon earth, between the time the mind manifested in the earth-atmosphere and the

¹ Mother announced the Supramental Manifestation of February 29 in two messages published in the Bulletin of April 1956:

*“Lord, Thou hast willed and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.”*

“The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

“It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.” CWM 8: 126-128

time the first man appeared, nearly a million years elapsed. Now it will go faster because man expects it, he has a vague idea; he is expecting in some sense the advent of the superman, while, certainly, the apes did not expect the birth of man, they had never thought of it — for the good reason that they probably don't think much. But man has thought of it and awaits it, so it will go faster. But faster means still thousands of years probably. We shall speak about it again after a few thousand years! (Silence)

People who are inwardly ready, who are open and in contact with higher forces, people who have had a more or less direct personal contact with the supramental Light and Consciousness are able to feel the difference in the earth-atmosphere.

But for that... Only the like can know the like, only the supramental Consciousness in an individual can perceive this Supermind acting in the earth-atmosphere. Those who, for some reason or other, have developed this perception, can see it. But those who are not even conscious of an inner being — just slightly within — and who would be quite at a loss to say what their soul is like, these certainly are not ready to perceive the difference in the earth-atmosphere. They still have a long way to go for that. Because, for those whose consciousness is more or less exclusively centred in the outer being — mental, vital and physical — things need to take on an absurd and

unexpected appearance for them to be able to recognise them. Then they call them miracles.

But the constant miracle of the intervention of forces which changes circumstances and characters and has a very widespread result, this they do not call a miracle, for only the mere appearance is seen and this seems quite natural. But, truly speaking, if you were to reflect upon the least little thing that happens, you would be obliged to acknowledge that it is miraculous. It is simply because you don't reflect upon it that you take things as they are, for what they are, without questioning; otherwise every day you would have any number of occasions to tell yourself, "Really, but this is quite astonishing! How did it happen?"

Quite simply, it is a habit of seeing things in a purely superficial way.

The fire mentioned in the *Vedas* is quite clearly not just the heat and light of the outer sun but the mystic fire worshipped by the ancient mystics. It is a subtle fire experienced through the eye of yoga. This fire is the first clear manifestation of the divinity in man and represents the divine Will working in the cosmos:

When the seer speaks of Agni as "the luminous guardian of the Truth shining out in his own home", or of Mitra and Varuna or other gods as "in touch with the Truth and making the Truth grow" or as "born in the Truth", these

are words of a mystic poet, who is thinking of that inner Truth behind things of which the early sages were the seekers. He is not thinking of the Nature-Power presiding over the outer element of fire or of the fire of the ceremonial sacrifice.

CWSA 15: 12

The elements of the outer sacrifice in the Veda are used as symbols of the inner sacrifice and self-offering; we give what we are and what we have in order that the riches of the divine Truth and Light may descend into our life and become the elements of our inner birth into the Truth, — a right thinking, a right understanding, a right action must develop in us which is the thinking, impulsion and action of that higher Truth, ṛtasya preṣā, ṛtasya dhīti, and by this we must build up ourselves in that Truth. Our sacrifice is a journey, a pilgrimage and a battle, — a travel towards the Gods and we also make that journey with Agni, the inner Flame, as our path-finder and leader. Our human things are raised up by the mystic Fire into the immortal being, into the Great Heaven, and the things divine come down into us.

ibid.: 20

Agni is this power. He is divine force which manifests first in matter as heat and light and material energy and then, taking different forms in the other principles of man's

consciousness, leads him by a progressive manifestation upwards to the Truth and the Bliss.

Isha Upanishad, CWSA 17: 10

On the basis of this conception of the worlds and the relation of these different soul-states to each other the Upanishad proceeds to indicate the two lines of knowledge and action which lead to the supreme vision and the divine felicity. This is done under the form of an invocation to Surya and Agni, the Vedic godheads, representative one of the supreme Truth and its illuminations, the other of the divine Will raising, purifying and perfecting human action.

ibid.: 68

Our surface vision looks at nature as an inert mechanical movement somehow set into motion in some void called Space. It sees life and all else that has followed matter as the result of chance and random accidents. But the deeper seer vision looks at material nature as a hearth where a vast cosmic yagna (sacrifice) is going on. The fruits of this sacrifice are the progressive emergence of consciousness in dumb matter. To this deeper vision, everything comes alive and we can feel and sense a greater consciousness, a Wisdom, a Power, an Intelligence even a conscious Being who is hidden behind everything. The most material shapes, the most commonplace everyday experience becomes to this vision shapes and movements of a conscious Force, bodies of a living Reality.

This is being beautifully described here wherein the air that raises all things upwards becomes the hymn of the priest, the priest being none other than Agni himself. The hills are the altars and the high boughs of the trees are like hands joined in prayer.

Yet as Sri Aurobindo reminds us in one of his letters, nothing is written in *Savitri* merely for the sake of creating a symbolic image. A subtle truth is hidden behind each and every image, a living experience.

The mystic feels real and present, even ever-present to his experience, intimate to his being, truths which to the ordinary reader are intellectual abstractions or metaphysical speculations. He is writing of experiences that are foreign to the ordinary mentality. Either they are unintelligible to it and in meeting them it flounders about as in an obscure abyss or it takes them as poetic fancies expressed in intellectually devised images. That was how a critic in The Hindu condemned such poems as Nirvana and transformation. He said that they were mere intellectual conceptions and images and there was nothing of religious feeling or spiritual experience. Yet Nirvana was as close a transcription of a major experience as could be given in language coined by the human mind of a realisation in which the mind was entirely silent and into which no intellectual conception could at all enter. One has to use words and images in

order to convey to the mind some perception, some figure of that which is beyond thought....

To the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction. Everything which to the intellectual mind is abstract has a concreteness, substantiality which is more real than the sensible form of an object or of a physical event. To me, for instance, consciousness is the very stuff of existence and I can feel it everywhere enveloping and penetrating the stone as much as man or the animal....

The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or others or in the world just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave it to the general reader to understand or not understand or misunderstand according to his capacity. A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer....

CWSA 27: 311-317

Indeed, our everyday life recreates the images of a deeper Reality albeit in imperfect and symbolic terms. And if we can go deeper within ourselves or in the heart of all things we shall feel this Reality pulsating through the warp and woof of existence. We shall then feel the prayer of a tree, the music of the winds, the aspiration of matter in the figure of mountains. Such is the deeper vision, a vision mystically-real that is being conveyed to us through *Savitri*.

Canto Two: The Issue

From Crisis to Liberation

As man grows beyond his first primal needs, there also grows in him, especially with the development of the mind, the urge to understand the world around him. Starting from the things immediately at hand he must eventually reach out to the stars and beyond and try to understand how each thing works, what is its place in his life, how he can use it to his advantage, or as in more developed human beings, for the larger good of humanity. But the understanding of the world alone does not satisfy his longings for knowledge. There comes a point when he must turn back upon himself, the observer of the scene, and try to see who he is. The value of his knowledge of the world will eventually depend upon the value of who he is. There is a way that each creature understands the world and navigates through the complex play of forces that weave the fabric of our terrestrial existence. The ant and the worm, the plant and even the inanimate stone are all given a certain amount of knowledge that is enough for their limited purposes. Man too has been given a basic understanding of the world around him. But unlike the animal and the plant, man is a seeker and is not satisfied with what he has or what he knows. He must seek

more and find more until the entire earth and beyond becomes his domain of knowledge and power. Of course, there is a scale and a gradation. There are human beings closer to the first pristine purity of animal-human life who are satisfied with a little. But as man develops up the scale of existence his thirst for knowledge, for power, for perfection grows. But there comes a time when his mental and vital instruments are not able to fulfil that thirst. They can take him thus far but no farther, so to say. At least one is able to see clearly the inherent limitations of the human instruments of knowledge and power. He discovers that his senses that observe and the reason that analyses and arrives at a working knowledge of the reality around him are very limited. And when it comes to subjective domains and questions concerning his self-identity, he is still more severely handicapped and restricted. Few question that there could be any greater reality than the material and end up regarding their body as the self. Some go a little further and feel that the body is an instrument to satisfy their desires and longings which are their true self. Still fewer move on and regard their most intimate self as thought and idea and would fight and give their lives to preserve the truth enshrined in the idea and belief that moves them.

But some are destined to go further. Sometimes we are pushed beyond ourselves, pushed beyond our beliefs and non-beliefs, pushed beyond the boundaries of our religions and our ideologies in which we are trapped, pushed beyond the limits of our senses and our knowledge; in effect, we are pushed

beyond what we think ourselves to be and who we believe we are! These are moments of crisis when all is snatched away from us, or so it seems. This moment of crisis is also a moment of Grace when we can open an inner door and rediscover ourselves and the world. We can, if we have the courage, die to our ego and be reborn to our soul. *Savitri* reveals this profound truth of our life in equally profound words:

*An absolute supernatural darkness falls
On man sometimes when he draws near to God:
An hour arrives when fail all Nature's means;
Forced out from the protecting Ignorance
And flung back on his naked primal need,
He at length must cast from him his surface soul
And be the ungarbed entity within: [11]*

Burden of the Past and the Prison of Nature

Beyond there is a whole world awaiting our discovery, a world beyond thought and ideas, a world that expresses itself as a state of consciousness in which delight and harmony, love and truth are inherent and 'natural', not something to be acquired through struggle and conflict. It is the realm of intuition and, climbing beyond intuition, is the very Source of all Knowledge. Thus, following the trail of Light that shines upon our mind and falls upon our deeper heart, we go in quest of a Reality that is still only vaguely felt, hardly known. It is here that man begins

to fulfil his real role as a human being, which is to go beyond his humanity and transcending the barriers of the mind enter the domains of a higher spiritual truth that is seen, heard and felt through other faculties than his present bodily senses, and understood by a hidden possibility of intuition other than his present mind and reason. This is man's real business, the work of works he has come to do without which he is merely an animal with some instincts of a god.

But this is no easy task. Nature keeps us tied within its boundaries proper to our humanity. It only allows just a little of what lies behind the screen. It uses every kind of trick up her sleeve to prolong our human play. Prominent among her methods that keep us tied to the present formation of our human personality are the dual tables of pleasure and pain. We are hooked to the present enjoyments and are unwilling to go beyond for a greater delight, lest we lose what we already have. Even after we become aware that there is indeed a greater, a far greater delight that awaits our discovery, we still hesitate and linger with the joy at hand. The fear of loss, the pain that temporarily accompanies it, or simply the force of past habit and momentum, the impulsion given to a tendency formed in past lives, continues to hold us back as if some invisible chains were tied around our feet. Thus we remain a 'willing and happy' captive to the complex play of forces and their intricate balance that binds and ties our life to our limited condition. The result is a little joy followed by suffering, a little good followed by much that is harmful and hurtful to others. We move within

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a narrow range of existence, we are attuned to a small bandwidth of frequencies, we live as if caged within the low walls of an ill-lit room unable to open the doors and windows for fresh air and greater light. We hear a few knocks at our doors but cannot even turn our gaze in the right direction. We see a thin layer of light filter through some chink in our windows but know not how to open them. The latches are firmly secured, the nuts and bolts are rusted and fixed, not easy to dislodge. And if perchance we apply some effort and the window-panes of our prison-house of mind-moulded mud and clay called the body begin to open up to some light, the sentries posted by nature push us back in. The names of these sentries are doubt and fear and despair:

*Only the Self that builds this figure of self
Can raise the fixed interminable line
That joins these changing names, these numberless lives,
These new oblivious personalities
And keeps still lurking in our conscious acts
The trail of old forgotten thoughts and deeds,
Disown the legacy of our buried selves,
The burdensome heirship to our vanished forms
Accepted blindly by the body and soul.
An episode in an unremembered tale,
Its beginning lost, its motive and plot concealed,
A once living story has prepared and made
Our present fate, child of past energies.*

*The fixity of the cosmic sequences
Fastened with hidden inevitable links
She must disrupt, dislodge by her soul's force
Her past, a block on the Immortal's road,
Make a rased ground and shape anew her fate. [12]*

*A gaol is this immense material world:
Across each road stands armed a stone-eyed Law,
At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.
A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgment sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God:
Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel's circling immobility.
A bond is put on the high-climbing mind,
A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life. [18]*

The Help and the Grace

But if we cannot do it by ourselves, there is someone willing to do it for us. This is Savitri, the Light of the Supreme, the incarnation of the Divine Mother who enters the prison house of matter veiling her Light and Glory and Powers. She comes near us to breathe hope and give strength. Her very Presence is enough to disarm the sentries. Her smile is enough to fill us

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with renewed energy and enthusiasm. But for this, She must first sacrifice her own divinity, become like us, one of us, experience the same sorrow and the pang that human beings experience, feel the same limitations and difficulties that we have, know what moves us and makes us suffer. Though transcendent and beyond the cosmic law, She yet must come beneath the yoke of the laws of karma, assume a limited form and name, take up a human body vulnerable to disease and death like all the rest of us. Nay, She must experience the agony of the human heart, the pains that we experience when we lose a loved one, face and discover the inner reason for hell, wrestle with the Shadow that turns love into hate, good into evil, joy into suffering and life into death. Then alone She can give us a true and lasting solution, a remedy suited to our needs and our possibilities. If She comes flashing her divinity then there can only be some dazzling miracles for the faithful few but not a change in the very machinery of nature, not a fundamental victory that transforms the way that nature operates now subjecting us to grief and death. The very cosmic laws must change as they have outlived their purpose. New laws must be established in place of the old, new ways of life, new modes of thought and activity, an entirely new way of being:

*In her the superhuman cast its seed.
Inapt to fold its mighty wings of dream
Her spirit refused to hug the common soil,
Or, finding all life's golden meanings robbed,*

*Compound with earth, struck from the starry list,
Or quench with black despair the God-given light.
Accustomed to the eternal and the true,
Her being conscious of its divine founts
Asked not from mortal frailty pain's relief,
Patched not with failure bargain or compromise.
A work she had to do, a word to speak:
Writing the unfinished story of her soul
In thoughts and actions graved in Nature's book,
She accepted not to close the luminous page,
Cancel her commerce with eternity,
Or set a signature of weak assent
To the brute balance of the world's exchange.
A force in her that toiled since earth was made,
Accomplishing in life the great world-plan,
Pursuing after death immortal aims,
Repugned to admit frustration's barren role,
Forfeit the meaning of her birth in Time,
Obey the government of the casual fact
Or yield her high destiny up to passing Chance.
In her own self she found her high recourse;
She matched with the iron law her sovereign right:
Her single will opposed the cosmic rule.
To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose. [19]*

The Leader of the Human March

Savitri comes to lead and show us the way so that we may follow in her trail of Light, carried by her Love. Wherever She goes and whatever She does becomes now a new imprint upon nature, the stamp and seal of the Eternal upon Time that can never be erased. It lingers in the memory of the race, it stirs the coming generations with the new vibrations of Light and Truth, it awakens and inspires us to look beyond our present limited condition and aspire for Light and Beauty and Truth. She activates and then hands over to us the ‘magic lever’ that takes us beyond the cosmic laws. She opens the inner doors and windows to the New Light, She floods the inner chambers of our mind and heart with the New Consciousness. Then we discover that what we call nature and the laws of nature are merely habits and patterns traced out upon the sands of time. We follow them mechanically and obediently as if there could be no other way. But as Light grows and Wisdom comes, the dust covering the path begins to fly away and we see clearly before us the sunlit way of the soul. We discover the inner Godhead, the Master of our souls. We see how much more is possible than our finite minds can even conceive. We break into the infinity of God:

*A magic leverage suddenly is caught
That moves the veiled Ineffable's timeless will:
A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.*

*Then miracle is made the common rule,
 One mighty deed can change the course of things;
 A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.
 All now seems Nature's massed machinery;
 An endless servitude to material rule
 And long determination's rigid chain,
 Her firm and changeless habits aping Law,
 Her empire of unconscious deft device
 Annul the claim of man's free human will.
 He too is a machine amid machines;
 A piston brain pumps out the shapes of thought,
 A beating heart cuts out emotion's modes;
 An insentient energy fabricates a soul.
 Or the figure of the world reveals the signs
 Of a tied Chance repeating her old steps
 In circles around Matter's binding-posts.
 A random series of inept events
 To which reason lends illusive sense, is here,
 Or the empiric Life's instinctive search,
 Or a vast ignorant mind's colossal work.
 But wisdom comes, and vision grows within:
 Then Nature's instrument crowns himself her king;
 He feels his witnessing self and conscious power;
 His soul steps back and sees the Light supreme. [20]*

This is Savitri's work and mission, the work for which She has come down as a deliberate choice, a work for which She is empowered from the Beyond. By opening ourselves to her

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Light supreme and receiving her in our life we too can thus grow into that Wisdom which, as the Upanishad puts it, comes not by thought. Taking upon herself the limitations of human nature, bearing the burden of our mortality, Savitri opens the hidden doors of a greater Self and a greater becoming for man. We may close with these marvelous lines revealing this truth to us:

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

Canto Three: From Ignorance to Knowledge

Knowledge and Ignorance

Ordinarily, the word ‘knowledge’ stands for being well-informed, educated, learned about many and different things. Each activity becomes a field of knowledge and those who enter this field gathering as much knowledge as they can about the subject are regarded as knowledgeable in that particular field. Seen this way everybody has some kind of knowledge or the other depending upon the person’s engagement and consequent experience in a given field. However, we can go deeper and deeper into this knowledge. Starting from surface understanding and appearances and phenomena as they seem to be to our outward senses we can enter deeper and deeper into the subject or object of our study. This going deeper is also accompanied by another kind of activity of knowledge and it is called integration of the known with the unknown. Each new thing discovered must lead to a further and better understanding of what we had already known. Thus, for example, to say that the leaf is green is one kind of knowledge, a sensory knowledge. All that is needed for this knowledge is that the sensory apparatus must be working well, that we

should not be colour blind, so to say. Indeed since it is through our senses that we first come into contact with the world, the senses become our first primary means of knowledge that we gain through observation. But we can go deeper and study what chemical within the leaf gives rise to the colour green. We can go still deeper and find why this particular chemical leads to the green and not some other colour. This way we can enter deeper and deeper into matter and discover the molecular configuration and the atomic constitution that builds or conjures for us the experience of green colour. But now we encounter another problem. Not all animals and other species experience the colour of a leaf as green. This means that knowing the outer phenomenon in all its depths is not enough. There is something within us that also responds to the contact in a particular way, unique to each species, that will give rise to the sensory experience. We can thus go on for everything, for colour and form and perhaps even properties, since everything is dependent upon something else for its existence or its phenomenal appearance. The problem gets even more compounded when we take into consideration all other fields of experience and knowledge-systems as it were and try to integrate them into one. In other words, all our knowledge is a knowledge of relativities, it exists as a result of an interdependence of things and arises as a result of contact between the field and the knower.

The question then arises, what is Real and True? Are this world and all that we experience merely a fabrication of our senses and mind? Or is there a Reality, a Truth independent of all creation and phenomenon out of which all has emerged or extended and into which all is resolved and harmoniously integrated? Science has been grappling with this question of questions since the beginnings of the last century and is yet to arrive at any definitive conclusion. The ancient Vedanta (literally meaning the end of knowledge) grappled with this problem at the dawn of human civilisation! They made their own discoveries and based on that spoke of knowing as a two-fold state, a state of true Knowledge (or just Knowledge) and a state of Ignorance (or knowings without having discovered the true basis or the One Reality that underlies and integrates all different things and experiences within Itself). To put it in another way, true Knowledge meant a state of knowing that emerges out of an experience of the Oneness. It is a state wherein we can understand all things as extensions and expressions and manifestations of the One Reality underlying all things. Even the interconnectedness is seen as the diverse aspects of the One stupendous Reality in which all are harmoniously synthesised and reconciled. On the other hand all knowing that is based on division (of seeing each thing or element as separate and distinct only and without knowing the underlying integrating principle), is Ignorance. It is a partial knowing, a limited knowledge, so to say, and therefore incomplete and prone to error.

Thus they went deeper and deeper into the phenomenon. Crossing the last boundaries of matter they discovered the force of life that animates and moves all things. Going further they discovered that it is the mind (and the senses) that give rise to form out of the formless essence, thereby creating an illusion of separateness. Going still further they discovered the true seat of Knowledge, the One who becomes the Many. Going still further they entered the very heart of creation, the core and substance, the very cause and source to seek an answer to the why rather than the how and discovered the Delight that is expressing Itself in myriad ways through this rainbow-hued tapestry of life. Going still further they discovered the One who is at once the Supreme Form (out of whose substance all else emerges through a progressive condensation and special concentration) as well as Formless essence which no formula can define and no understanding describe. Being and Non-being became a single Reality and yet there was a Beyond of which nothing can be spoken or understood by human mind and speech. But in this process of discovery, they found the path or the paths that can lead us towards That which has no name and yet assumes a name. They found the path that can lead us to an utter identification with That, even an ultimate dissolution into That since it is the base and root and essence of all things including us, including creation. This final dissolution into our Origin was called Mukti, Moksha, Nirvana, a state of utter and final Freedom. It was even envisaged as the goal of creation by some, though not by all who thus went into

the very heart of this inner Knowledge (the Upanishad which embodies the Vedantic lore, literally means entering into the very heart of inner Knowledge). The various paths towards this ultimate Reality became to be known as the paths of yoga through which man's soul climbs from a state of mortality and ignorance towards Knowledge and Immortality. This was but one line of spiritual evolution undertaken by man. The main method was to discover and uncover that divine element in us that sustains all things and stands behind all the works of nature. Once this was discovered, they abandoned the rest of the field of nature as a mere shell that would simply wither off empty of its seed and core once the soul leaves this world and exits creation by plunging into the Absolute!

But there was another line, more consistent with the very logic of creation, undertaken by the early Veda and Upanishad seers. It was to discover the ultimate Reality but instead of dissolution live freely in the world with true Knowledge and true inner Freedom. The two great Upanishads, *Kena* and *Isha*, hint towards these two possibilities or two lines of spiritual evolution. Sri Aurobindo belongs to the line of seers who belong to the latter thought and experience that one can live normally and yet be inwardly free. This is the stated position of the Gita as well that not only is it possible to live with an inner freedom but also engage in even the most challenging actions such as war and politics in this state of inner freedom. However, Sri Aurobindo is not satisfied just with an inner freedom since it would still mean that parts of our nature

remain still in Ignorance while the soul and possibly the higher mind and the deeper heart are freed. This is still a partial living and not fullness and integration. The body must also share the freedom and liberty gained by the soul. Our outer nature and the senses so prone to error and Ignorance must also be freed for an integral divine life based on Truth and Harmony. This too is possible because of the same logic that since all have emerged from the One, nature too reverts back to the One. Nature too must be free even as the soul or the divine element in us can be free. In fact, soul and nature are also One Reality in two poises. They are the passive and dynamic sides of the One. The Divine looking away from creation towards Itself is the passive side, also called the Purusha; the Divine leaning towards creation is the Shakti.

These are the discoveries among many others that flow from the central truths that we find in *Savitri*, Book One, Cantos 3 and 4, ‘The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul’s Release’ and ‘The Secret Knowledge’.

An Evolving Continuum

Ignorance and knowledge can be on a continuum, we start from a state of ignorance and through a progressive enlargement of thought and vision and understanding we move towards knowledge. But it is also and equally true that they are two different modes of nature’s workings, two different states of consciousness. A state of Ignorance is also a state of suffering

and striving. This is especially so for man since by his nature he is a seeker and cannot rest content for long in a state of Ignorance. Therefore man is often a double birth. There is his first birth which is in a state of Ignorance and for lives he remains in this state. His instrument for 'knowledge', while he labours under the law of the Ignorance, is the dim corporeal mind bound to the senses using reason as its highest faculty for discovering and analysing the data he received through the senses. But a time comes when he is ready for the transition from a state of Ignorance to a state of Knowledge and Wisdom in the true sense of the word. This passage is not a sudden event but a progression that happens by a progressive deepening, heightening and widening of his consciousness. At first, it is the senses that begin to undergo a change and one is able to see and hear and perceive truths that have remained hidden even though right in front of us. This is the awakening of the subtle senses that would eventually transmute into divine senses in the supramental creation. We see an elaborate description of this transmutation in *Savitri* as Aswapati takes this great journey of yoga.

Next, though going along with it, there is a shift of our mode of knowledge from reason and analysis to inspiration, revelation and intuition. Through this change, we can feel the Divine Presence and understand the ways of the Divine in his creation. The doors of a secret knowledge begin to open and we receive truths directly even as light or rain pours from above, without any distortion that takes place as these truths

enter the mind with its atmosphere of doubt and scepticisms, its rational arguments of what can be and cannot be, what is and what is not. The workings of our human mind transcend reason and a new working, the working of a spiritualised mentality begins to operate more and more frequently.

A further shift takes place in our actions. Ordinarily, the centre of our action is the ego, the driving force is desire, the motive is self-gratification, and the field of action is the little circle of people, events and situations that crystallise around our ego-self. But now we discover a new law of action, the law of Truth. The centre of our action shifts from the ego-self to the divine Self from where we get the right indication, the right discernment, the right prompting to act according to the law of Truth which is other than all our mental, moral, social and religious standards that we erect to guide our action while in a state of Ignorance. The driving force also changes from the smoky heat of desire to the pure divine Force, the Shakti. The motive is no more fulfilment of our egoistic selfish interest but the fulfilment of the divine Will in creation. The field also undergoes an enlargement as our limited consciousness extends and expands into the cosmic consciousness.

The human consciousness liberated from the living cage of matter begins to get access to the higher planes of existence where it dwells more and more drawing from it greater and greater Knowledge and Power and above all the Delight of existence that stands behind creation as the sole moving force.

Then grief and sorrow leave our list and all becomes a single and yet manifold movement of Delight that has built the worlds for Its own play. The different worlds begin to disclose their energies and forces, the beings who rule over them, and their purpose and place in the grand scheme of things.

As we proceed along these lines, eventually our inner consciousness begins to get more and more attuned to the Divine until there is a growing contact, likeness and then a sheer identity with the Divine. This identity includes not only a discovery of the Divine within but also the Divine in creation. Finally, the growing steps towards freedom lead the human souls completely out of the cosmos into oneness with the transcendent Self out of which both the individual and cosmos are born and by which all is sustained and into which all returns.

The Freedom from Ignorance

The soul's freedom from Ignorance is the first great step of yoga. It is a step common to all yogas including the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. In a true sense, Sri Aurobindo's Yoga begins after this first indispensable task is accomplished. Until this happens everything that we do, every effort that we put in is a preparation. Fundamentally, the soul being a portion of the Divine is, in principle, not ignorant. It has all knowledge within itself in a seed state just as the entire tree is held within a tiny seed. The effort of past lives and the script of future destinies is as if written in a summary way within the soul. But this

destiny has to be worked out through a number of experiences encountered in the course of many lives. It is for these experiences which will lead to its eventual blossoming that the soul enters into the cycle of birth and death and rebirth. Just as a seed must bury itself below the soil to gradually blossom and come to fruition so too the soul accepts to enter the dark state of mortal ignorance, get rooted to earth-nature, and then slowly recover its full possibilities. But in the process, it also drags our earth-nature along with it, pulls it upwards towards Light and Freedom and Bliss as it climbs towards Its Source. This emergence is a spontaneous process, an inbuilt mechanism in nature, since the soul is automatically drawn towards divinity from which it has come and of which it is a part. Yet, for the sake of fullness, it has of its own accord consented to take the plunge into Night. This is the background of the soul's entry into the fields of Ignorance and not some punishment or condemnation by the wrath or folly of some arbitrary God.

Where then does Maya come in, that much-maligned mother whose snare is supposed to be the cause of all our suffering? Well, Maya is simply the power that creates an illusion of separation of division and thereby, in a practical sense (in reality there can be no separation, nor any permanent division) puts a veil upon the soul. Once the veil is put the soul forgets its divine nature and identifies with the fields of darkness and ignorance created for the soul's experience and growth. It is like a first primary school, the school of ignorance,

where the soul must be tutored and trained under difficult and trying conditions so that its latent faculties and capacities may blossom to their fullness. This blossoming takes place under the law of opposition. The forces of darkness deny and obstruct the passage of the soul and even force it to abandon its bodily home, the material frame, again and again. But the soul being immortal does not die. It returns in a new body and new circumstances more or less challenging. But through each challenge it grows by the resistance offered to it. Each such step and growth of the soul brings out from within it a stream of power we call as one's nature. But this nature is simply a part of universal nature through which the soul swims upwards. The three streams through which it moves are *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*. Identifying with the current of nature and the tools and means given to it, it becomes the soul of matter, the *annamaya purusha* residing in the physical man. Its state is deluded since it is totally unaware of its divine origin. It engages mainly with material nature and fills it with various godheads of matter through whom it approaches the Divine Presence. In this stage, the soul is nearly fully asleep so to say. But next it ascends to *pranamaya purusha* or the vital and kinetic soul in man, creating the dynamic man, the hero, the entrepreneur, the natural leader. Here it approaches the Divine Presence through strength and joy of life. Its godheads also are givers of earthly boons and other material riches. The gods of battle and war and the gods of prosperity and power are its companions and partners. Finally, crossing these two difficult stages of schooling it enters the third and final phase of its primary

education. It identifies with *sattwa* and becomes a soul discovering itself in and through the mind as a principle of intelligence and thought. It plays with ideas and walks with godheads of wisdom and knowledge, inspiration and learning, vision and compassion. Here it gets some first far-off glimpse of the Divine who dwells in the heart of creation and beyond it. Thus far the soul had identified with nature and its instruments and had completely forgotten itself. But with the coming of *sattwa*, the principle of light and balance, it begins to seek itself, to know who it is and for what purpose it is here. It begins to ponder and reflect over deeper issues, seeks higher things. It is then that its first stage of schooling is coming to a close and it is becoming ready for deliverance from the school of Ignorance.

Essentially Ignorance here is a false and limited identification of the soul with limited movements of nature. Even *sattwa* is not yet its full truth or full potential. It is only a very partial and reflected light, a distant wandering gleam and not the Light of Truth itself. As long as the soul within us remains tied to these three modes of nature, it remains in bondage to Ignorance and therefore prone to error and its consequences that follow naturally. But just as in the course of its evolution it rises upstream from *tamas* through *rajas* to *sattwa*, a time comes when it is ready to sail beyond this magic circle that nature has weaved around it by her forms and forces and figures. Then the soul in man begins to turn upwards or else go deeper in search of something truer, something that is

the stable basis of all this movement of nature, something that is like a principle of Truth. It begins to seek for Truth and Good and Beauty and Love. Even in Ignorance it is searching for these very things since such is its own nature (in fact it is seeking to know itself) but a time comes when this seeking becomes conscious. No more satisfied with the parade and presentations of illusions that mimic these high things, it seeks for their truth. In the beginning it seeks this Truth through formulas and concepts of philosophy and religion and occult understanding and even moments of reverie when transported from earthly plane it is lifted above the narrow arc of experiences and gets a glimpse of the Beyond. The curtain of Ignorance is lifted for a while and we feel a light, a warmth, a sweetness, a peace, a joy within. A wisdom begins to dawn within our heart and the entire way of seeing and understanding and relating to life begins to be reversed. Instead of our small ego-self being the reference point, a new reference point is found, a reference point that is at once within us and within all, individual as well as universal. Growing further along this route, we are freed from the debates and dualities that the mind entertained and division begins to give place to oneness and unity that we perceive behind everything. This oneness brings supreme peace and calm, it also awakens a new kind of knowledge and new powers of acting upon the world. We discover what we are here for, even as we discover the drift and meaning of our lives left behind and more that are yet to come.

This is the first radical step that contains within it new possibilities. One such possibility, one that has been so often spoken of and emphasised in traditional spiritual literature, is the possibility of an ultimate withdrawal from birth and death and rebirth. The soul once freed from the circle of Ignorance can choose to stand back from nature and watch the cosmic play from some higher plane in the celestial company of the Great Gods or else enter into a state of endless Peace and Bliss of the Beyond. Or else it can dissolve itself in the vast Infinity of That which is Inconceivable, Infinite, Unknowable, Eternal, Alone. This, however, gives a whole lie to the play. It may solve an individual soul's problem (to put it that way) but leaves the cosmic riddle unanswered. It does not answer the why and the wherefore of creation. It does not answer what or who compelled the immortal soul, a portion of the Bliss that made the worlds, forget its true nature and become identified with the fields of Ignorance and, if so, then to what purpose was this forgetfulness if at the end it had to return back to what it always was? The Creator and creation then become an absurdity, a play without meaning or sense. It is here that we see that Aswapati's yoga departs from traditional yogas. The soul in the course of its freedom discovers higher and higher realms and with each such realm there emerge from within it greater and greater powers of knowledge and action. There is no abrupt cutting off of the magic fence of Ignorance creating a sharp unbridgeable divide between Knowledge and Ignorance but a progressive enlargement, a widening and

deepening and heightening of consciousness under the pressure of the soul's aspiration and ascent. The limits of human nature operating within the three gunas begin to fade and blur as newer fields and powers of nature are discovered that were hidden in some higher luminous and vaster fields of creation. In other words, the soul's freedom here does not leave nature unchanged, as it were. Rather it carries nature too towards its own greater possibilities. Sri Aurobindo summarises it beautifully:

*Thus came his soul's release from Ignorance,
His mind and body's first spiritual change.
A wide God-knowledge poured down from above,
A new world-knowledge broadened from within:
His daily thoughts looked up to the True and One,
His commonest doings welled from an inner Light.
Awakened to the lines that Nature hides,
Attuned to her movements that exceed our ken,
He grew one with a covert universe.
His grasp surprised her mightiest energies' springs;
He spoke with the unknown Guardians of the worlds,
Forms he descried our mortal eyes see not.
His wide eyes bodied viewless entities,
He saw the cosmic forces at their work
And felt the occult impulse behind man's will.
Time's secrets were to him an oft-read book;
The records of the future and the past
Outlined their excerpts on the etheric page.*

CANTO THREE: FROM IGNORANCE TO KNOWLEDGE

*One and harmonious by the Maker's skill,
The human in him paced with the divine;
His acts betrayed not the interior flame.
This forged the greatness of his front to earth.
A genius heightened in his body's cells
That knew the meaning of his fate-hedged works
Akin to the march of unaccomplished Powers
Beyond life's arc in spirit's immensities.
Apart he lived in his mind's solitude,
A demigod shaping the lives of men:
One soul's ambition lifted up the race;
A Power worked, but none knew whence it came.
The universal strengths were linked with his;
Filling earth's smallness with their boundless breadths,
He drew the energies that transmute an age. [44-45]*

Canto Four: The Secret Knowledge

When we think of knowledge, we immediately think of packets of information received as data through the senses. Then we apply the faculty of reason and analysis to this data and arrive at an understanding of the nature of reality whether of a person or an object or of creation itself. In other words, the senses and reason are our instruments of knowledge. Yet it is also obvious that our senses do not give us all the data and reason cannot say with certitude about what it has found through rigorous analysis. Therefore, the next stage is to build a hypothesis and then apply it to see if it works and the conditions under which it works. If tested and found to be workable repeatedly then it becomes a theory and an established fact.

So far so good and this kind of knowledge has its practical advantage. But yogic science reveals to us that there is another kind of knowledge that neither the senses nor the mind can arrive at, that any kind of surface observation or rigorous analysis cannot provide us. Yet it is there hidden at the core of things. Nay, we can even arrive at it and know it through certain yogic processes and practices. Like any other knowledge, it can also be tested and found to be true, thereby differentiating yogic knowledge from religious belief systems that have to be

accepted whether you experience them or not! Of course, we may say that all religions start with some kind of yogic knowledge. But the inability of its adherents to engage in yoga turns it into a formal practice and belief system. By formal practice is meant the insistence on external rituals while ignoring the inner essentials.

So what is this secret knowledge that yoga aspires for or arrives at and by what processes? This secret knowledge that yogis have engaged with through the Ages is, first and foremost, the knowledge of the eternal Reality, of That which stands behind creation, beyond Time and Space, beyond percept and concepts. In other words, it is a knowledge of the unchanging stable basis behind this ever-changing world. Next, it is a knowledge of how this eternal Reality, evidently spaceless, timeless and formless since it precedes them, relates with creation, with this world of forms and names. Finally, it is a knowledge of how this eternal Reality expresses Itself in us. After all, these are the three fundamental questions we need to answer before anything else. Seen from this side these questions are, — Who am I? What is this world? Is there a stable basis, a permanent indestructible and unchanging immutable element behind the creation? What is my relationship with the world and its inhabitants? Based on our answers to these fundamental questions we shall also discover if there is a purpose in creation and if so, then what role, if any, we have in it. Science does not take up these questions. It proceeds from the observable and tries to dig deeper and

deeper, layer by layer, and see if there is anything at all at the base of it. But given the number of layers and layers within layers, dimensions beyond dimensions, it will be quite a while before science will arrive at the doorsteps of these fundamental questions. In the meanwhile it takes the attitude of an agnostic who accepts his limitations and present understanding and says that I know not beyond what I have thus far known. There may or may not be an eternal Reality; there may or may not be any purpose in creation! It leaves us nowhere. Philosophy climbs higher in thought and tries to derive these truths by using a higher reason that uses reasonable assumptions, so to say. Or sometimes, when it rejects all assumptions as science does, then it arrives at some kind of abstraction of thought which gives us no clue or foothold in the inner experience of what it claims to discover, again leaving us nowhere! Yoga, more practical in its approach, does not take this long-winding, tedious and complex process that would leave our burning questions hanging in thin air. It plunges directly into the heart of Reality, finds an inner door and the key to enter a realm that neither the senses show us nor the mind can surmise and then returns with its findings. But here there are different levels of seeing and knowing. Not all yogis climb to the highest rung and return. Most are satisfied with a partial glimpse, a reflected vision, a faint figure of Reality, a hurried glance and hence miss the whole. Evidently, it depends upon the route one has taken. A partial system of yoga, a one-sided approach will help us glimpse partially only, it will show us only one side or aspect of Reality on which we can build up a religion or a cult or sect.

But just as in science, the yogin must advance further and further until he has known all that had to be known. And the sign of it is very simple, — ‘knowing That all else can be known.’ Until one has touched this core, our explorations remain partial lights on the way.

This core cannot be known through the present instruments of nature says the yogin. The mind cannot reach it nor the senses know it. This is true of our present mind and sense organisation. Our mind and senses have thus far evolved in the hard grip of matter which they use as a base. According to the spiritual view of things, even the senses have their divine equivalents and there is a divine sense that is used by the beings of higher worlds for experiencing Reality and the truth of things. But here these senses operate under conditions of matter. Matter modifies the experience and limits it, our present mind also labouring under the duress of matter, equally limits and even distorts Reality. Therefore, it is said that we can never know the Truth as long as we are confined in our present state of material existence. This leads logically to only two possible solutions. The first and more commonly envisaged solution is to break the hold of matter and liberate the senses and the mind from its hold. Once this is done our mind becomes a free Intelligence and our senses regain their subtle and diviner capacities. However, this solution means that the yogin must reduce his physical existence to a minimum since to enter the physical body means to enter once again into the conditions that impose ignorance. The other solution is what Sri

Aurobindo presents to us. It is to transform matter itself so that it does not diminish the original divine powers either of the mind or of the senses. This is possible because just as the mind and senses have their higher truth and origin in the Divine, matter too has its origin in the spiritual substance that emerges in the divine worlds as a matrix for the play of the Spirit and its manifestation. Meanwhile, it is yet possible to access the secret Knowledge by awakening the power of intuition within us. That is the first fundamental step before we can become privy to this secret Knowledge. This is what Aswapati has done and therefore he can now enter this great secret and share it with us so that we too may feel inspired to undertake this journey. We see in him an awakening of the hidden senses now released from the hard grip of matter. We also see in him his mind attaining to higher and higher modes of functioning going beyond reason into inspiration, illumination, intuitive discrimination, revelation to a direct and all-comprehending power of intuition. Therefore, he can access this hidden secret Knowledge.

What really is this secret hidden from us and knowing which we shall experience a radical change in the way we presently understand and experience life and self and world and God? The Mother calls it as a reversal of consciousness and each such ascent leads to a reversal. This is the subject of this fourth canto, so beautiful and uplifting and inspiring in its scope.

The very first secret is that there is indeed an immortal element within our mortal frame. And this immortal element

called the soul changes forms and names and through this perpetual change enters into a new and fresh experience. These experiences eventually feed it and help it to grow and evolve until it reaches a point wherein it can become conscious of itself. The process is akin to a child who grows first through every sense contact and mental influences and vital and occult forces until it reaches a point where it begins to discover and form its own unique identity. This of course happens to the ego-self in our present field of ignorance but it is symbolic of another similar process going on deep within us. The individual soul too gathers and grows through a multitude of experiences from life to life until it is ready to discover and know itself. Until that happens the soul remains in a state of forgetfulness of its origins and defines itself through the veils and shadows of the lower nature and the ego-self. Yet from time to time there arise within us soul-moments when there is a faint remembrance of who we are and why we are here. A faint memory of some bygone past ideal state lingers within compelling us to seek or create it in earthly forms. But the means are limited and the instruments of nature ill-equipped and hence we never really succeed completely in this process. The dream is however never lost. It re-emerges in another life and resurfaces under other conditions and circumstances. Then comes the moment of the apocalypse, and we are ready for the great disclosure. Then a secret Hand of God or the Breath of Grace enters our life and lifts us out of our present state and reveals to us the greater mysteries of existence.

But the individual Self and the universal Self are one like the sea and the waves. This too is discovered by Aswapati as he enters into the deep Oneness of creation where he sees that the distinctions drawn by our mind between this and that separate and independent entity, this and that object and subject, even the distinctions between God and world, soul and nature are mere conventions, a limitation of our vision. In reality, there is only One who fashions himself as many through his own Power called nature. But deep within, the Two, Being and Becoming, Self and nature are one. In countless worlds this Two-in-One play together. In the fields of Ignorance as well as in the fields of Knowledge each diminishes and adjusts itself to the conditions of the field created by the Great Wisdom that works in the heart of creation. The reason for these many worlds and layers of consciousness and states of being is to provide the individual soul step by step experiences for recovering the fullness of its divine possibilities. The soul is like a divine seed that must grow into the tree of divine life it is meant to be. It must bear divine blossoms on its bodily form built by nature even as it must bear the fruits of divine sacrifice in matter. This is the final consummation for which creation waits, so beautifully summarised in *Savitri* thus:

*All here where each thing seems its lonely self
 Are figures of the sole transcendent One:
 Only by him they are, his breath is their life;
 An unseen Presence moulds the oblivious clay.*

CANTO FOUR: THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE

*A playmate in the mighty Mother's game,
One came upon the dubious whirling globe
To hide from her pursuit in force and form.
A secret spirit in the Inconscient's sleep,
A shapeless Energy, a voiceless Word,
He was here before the elements could emerge,
Before there was light of mind or life could breathe.
Accomplice of her cosmic huge pretence,
His semblances he turns to real shapes
And makes the symbol equal with the truth:
He gives to his timeless thoughts a form in Time.
He is the substance, he the self of things;
She has forged from him her works of skill and might:
She wraps him in the magic of her moods
And makes of his myriad truths her countless dreams.
The Master of being has come down to her,
An immortal child born in the fugitive years.
In objects wrought, in the persons she conceives,
Dreaming she chases her idea of him,
And catches here a look and there a gest:
Ever he repeats in them his ceaseless births.
He is the Maker and the world he made,
He is the vision and he is the Seer;
He is himself the actor and the act,
He is himself the knower and the known,
He is himself the dreamer and the dream.
There are Two who are One and play in many worlds;*

*In Knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met
And light and darkness are their eyes' interchange;
Our pleasure and pain are their wrestle and embrace,
Our deeds, our hopes are intimate to their tale;
They are married secretly in our thought and life.
The universe is an endless masquerade:
For nothing here is utterly what it seems;
It is a dream-fact vision of a truth
Which but for the dream would not be wholly true,
A phenomenon stands out significant
Against dim backgrounds of eternity;
We accept its face and pass by all it means;
A part is seen, we take it for the whole.
Thus have they made their play with us for roles:
Author and actor with himself as scene,
He moves there as the Soul, as Nature she. [60-61]*

*Always he follows in her force's wake.
He sails through life and death and other life,
He travels on through waking and through sleep.
A power is on him from her occult force
That ties him to his own creation's fate,
And never can the mighty Traveller rest
And never can the mystic voyage cease
Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul
And the morns of God have overtaken his night.
As long as Nature lasts, he too is there,
For this is sure that he and she are one;*

CANTO FOUR: THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE

*Even when he sleeps, he keeps her on his breast:
Whoever leaves her, he will not depart
To repose without her in the Unknowable.
There is a truth to know, a work to do;
Her play is real; a Mystery he fulfils:
There is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim,
A purpose in her vast and random game.
This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,
This constant will she covered with her sport,
To evoke a Person in the impersonal Void,
With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of
trance,
Wake a dumb self in the inconscient depths
And raise a lost Power from its python sleep
That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.
For this he left his white infinity
And laid on the spirit the burden of the flesh,
That Godhead's seed might flower in mindless Space.*

[72-73]

Canto Five: Splendours of the Spirit

Man is not the summit of creation. There are greater possibilities hidden in the heart of creation that await their hour. Man is an intermediary creation, a transitional being, so to say. Though the facts of our present and outward existence naturally condition us to believe that man is the last and hence the highest term of creation, the inner facts of man's inner subjective existence state otherwise. There is so much more that we seek and aspire for, so much more that we long and hope for than has ever manifested upon earth. These longings and aspirations are themselves an indication that there is more to come for which presently earth and mankind are not ready. This aspiration is like the inner oestrus that prepares the child of a future New Creation in the womb of the present. Even though nothing of the present may seem to support these dreams and aspirations, even though our present earthly realities seem to deny and contradict these deeper longings and higher hopes, yet we refuse to give up because deep within us these possibilities stir and move us to exceed ourselves. Most give up these dreams and aspirations that call us to the adventure of the Beyond and compromise our life with the smallness of the earthly state and accept that we are nothing more than limited creatures driven by a mud-engine. Others,

driven by a mental idealism but nothing more, try to create something more beautiful and perfect but fail since it is not the mind of man and its limited and borrowed light, but the original Power, the power of the Spirit that can recreate our world and ourselves. The yogi and the mystic chase these dreams and succeed in discovering something of that hidden Mystery within themselves. It not only changes their own life but also leaves a stamp upon earth and mankind, rekindling hope and showing the direction towards which we must move.

Yet it is through man that the ascent beyond man has to be accomplished. This is man's real work; his importance is that he is a bridge for the evolving consciousness of earth to cross over beyond the last frontiers of Ignorance. This is evident if we simply take a close look at the way earth has changed, for better or for worse, since the advent of man. The incorrigible thirst in man to know has been the cause of his losing the spontaneous instinctive knowledge that we find in other species. He does not know by instinct but by applying deliberate reason and analysis, a rather laborious and cumbersome process. But the reward of this is that he ends up knowing much more than what the other species can ever dream of. By this thirst for knowledge he goes far beyond his personal survival, reaches out to the stars, dives into fathomless seas, digs deep into the bowels of the earth for hidden treasures, harnesses electricity from the clouds and running waters, tames the winds and other elements for his purposes, dreams of

eternity and immortality. The fruit of knowledge that he ate leading to his fall from the purity and simplicity of his animal state will also be the cause of his redemption. It is true that right now his life is a misery and he burns in the red heat of hell as if condemned by some wrathful god, but this suffering only steels his strength further and feeds his determination to discover and cross the ultimate shores.

Indeed, it is this insatiable urge to know what lies behind and beyond the iron curtain of the senses and the limits of the mind that gives him also the great evolutionary push. It is at once a fall and a means, a tool for a greater rise. It is this urge that gives birth to the fire of yoga. The fire of hell below and the fire of heavens above rub with each other in man and through their consanguineous marriage, there is born in man the fire of aspiration for the True, the Good, the Beautiful. *Savitri* is the story, nay, the very embodiment, of this fire blazing beyond the last limits that with difficulty few have ever glimpsed. This last limit is what is called the Overmind region. Of course, the Overmind itself is boundless and free from Ignorance but it opens the possibility to Ignorance. It is at this high peak of creation, this last limit of mortal nature, that yogis and mystics have sometimes glimpsed the Glory of Glories, albeit hurriedly and from afar. But Sri Aurobindo, not satisfied with this hurried glimpse, comes with a new aspiration, not just to see from afar but to enter into it, live in it and what is more, to bring it down upon earth and by its presence change earthly life into a life divine. In this canto we are given a little glimpse

of this wonderland even as Sri Aurobindo stations his consciousness on the Overmind peaks of creation. He reveals to us that here one can discover the secret truth and intent of creation, the reconciling Power between heaven and earth, the synthesis of different approaches to the Infinite, the secret of Night and God's sanction to the paradox of life, the paradox of the immortal soul dwelling in a mortal frame and the divine Perfection giving birth to an imperfect world. It is here that he discovers that creation is not finished and there is more that is concealed in God's Beyond. It is here that we see him planting this new aspiration upon earth, the aspiration for perfecting the bodily instruments, the frame within which the immortal dwells.

Essentially then there are two natures or rather two levels of one nature that operates everywhere. The first and the one with which we are more familiar is the lower nature that operates in apparent ignorance and deals with separate units as if they were distinct and apart from each other. But as science and spirituality both reveal to us, in their own way, that behind the operations of this world there 'seems' or 'is' a Wisdom that is at work. It takes into account the totality of things and their profound inter-connectedness, even when outwardly they seem distinct and separate. But this Wisdom is hidden behind things and science can at best guess or surmise it if it looks at things honestly and has the courage to admit the facts that stare at our eyes bandaged with prejudices and preconceived ideas, theories, scientific belief-systems and all the rest. Spiritually,

mystics have always known by a direct inner identity rather than an indirect inference that there does exist a Wisdom, even a divine Perfection, a perfect state of Consciousness that dwells upon the peaks of nature or else surrounds it and acts as a course corrective Guidance and Power lest chaos prevail upon order and harmony. The chaos, of course, is because on the surface and in the inner being of our own self and the world there is much activity because nothing is finished and all is in the making. Science calls this state of perpetual change and remoulding of creation an evolution through accidents, chance, etc. Spirituality looks at this perpetual hand-in-hand disorder and order as the process through which the eternal Perfection that exists deep within is trying to manifest Itself outside, in a visible and tangible way. The tussle between the two, the conflict and struggle of the two, is the cause of all the crises and upheavals we face in our individual and collective lives. Until now, mystics have taken it for granted that this eternal Perfection cannot manifest here upon earth and the only possibility for the soul of man is to leave this troubled field of perpetual unrest and depart and dwell in the state of eternal Perfection beyond.

Not anymore, says Sri Aurobindo. Based on his own experiences and realisations, he assures us that not only this eternal Perfection, this divine Supernature intervenes from time to time, it is indeed seeking to manifest Itself more and more in and through earthly vessels. Not only so, but it is also progressively building forms of the future that would manifest

this hidden Supernature as spontaneously and naturally as we breathe today. Then God will no more remain hidden, to be realised through an arduous tapasya, when it should be the most obvious truth, but manifest openly and naturally and spontaneously. Not only his workings will be clear and obvious as daylight but He himself will be revealed all the time to the new eye in man. Even more, the bodily instruments now transformed and able to know and understand his ways will also themselves grow capable of ‘playing God’, if we may say so. It means there will be a practical omniscience and omnipotence for man, practical in whatever field he is given to work upon. Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga took this new and unexpected turn with the great intention of bringing down the hidden splendours of the Spirit, this higher Supernature into the surface life of man and activate its play openly in the world. Surely this is no easy task, for several reasons. To start with, man may not aspire for it, he is too busy playing with the surface mud and analysing the mire of earth-nature to look deep within or ascend in his consciousness to discover this greater truth of himself. Even if he so aspires, it is by no means an easy task. The roads to Nirvana are open and fixed but the roads to transformation, though open now, do not work in a humanly predictable manner since the grand experiment has just begun and the various possibilities and conditions are being worked out. Most of all, the human instruments so far evolved to express the lower nature are not yet tuned to express the higher Power. They sleep off or break down, or become

chaotic under the stress of the Divine Shakti. Of course, all this will be done in due course of time but for the moment few are ready to go through the process. Obviously, there may be still a long way to go, but once the way is open humanity is destined to reach one day. This is the promise and the assurance that Sri Aurobindo has given to man.

That is why these splendours have so far been denied to man. Only the gods hidden in the solar Light had the right and the privilege to have these powers. Man is still too weak and imperfect to acquire them. Yet without these powers and corresponding faculties, human life will continue to labour under limitations and struggle against error and imperfection. Herein we begin to see the tremendous significance of Aswapati's tapasya which is, of course, Sri Aurobindo's own experiences revealed through Aswapati. The doors of a higher Supernature, long denied and closed, open before Aswapati's persistent tapasya and the gifts of the Spirit begin to pour down upon him. This descent is the crucial moment that changes everything, changes the course of Aswapati's tapasya, changes human destiny. Through Aswapati a new door with enormous possibilities begins to open, for what can happen in one human being can, theoretically at least, happen in others. It is towards turning this theoretical possibility into a practical and realisable eventuality for all that his tapasya now turns its course. Already his being has universalised, a pre-condition for the supramental transformation. Now he must aspire for the entire human lot and make humanity a bridge towards the superhumanity of

tomorrow. His heart has grown one with every heart, his vast soul a meeting point of many lives.

Therefore, Aswapati, the supreme renunciate, turns back from these borders, renouncing immediate individual success so that the collectivity can progress. What he has gained by arduous tapasya must be given to others as a gift of Grace. It is towards this wonderful Grace, the magic key he is searching for, that he now turns his seeking. The descent of a higher Supernature he has experienced, he now seeks to bring it down and manifest it upon earth. This descent which marks a characteristic movement of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is beautifully described thus:

*In a divine retreat from mortal thought,
In a prodigious gesture of soul-sight,
His being towered into pathless heights,
Naked of its vesture of humanity.
As thus it rose, to meet him bare and pure
A strong Descent leaped down. A Might, a Flame,
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany:
His nature shuddered in the Unknown's grasp.
In a moment shorter than death, longer than Time,*

*By a Power more ruthless than Love, happier than
Heaven,
Taken sovereignly into eternal arms,
Haled and coerced by a stark absolute bliss,
In a whirlwind circuit of delight and force
Hurried into unimaginable depths,
Upborne into immeasurable heights,
It was torn out from its mortality
And underwent a new and bournless change.
An Omniscient knowing without sight or thought,
An indecipherable Omnipotence,
A mystic Form that could contain the worlds,
Yet make one human breast its passionate shrine,
Drew him out of his seeking loneliness
Into the magnitudes of God's embrace.
As when a timeless Eye annuls the hours
Abolishing the agent and the act,
So now his spirit shone out wide, blank, pure:
His wakened mind became an empty slate
On which the Universal and Sole could write.
All that represses our fallen consciousness
Was taken from him like a forgotten load:
A fire that seemed the body of a god
Consumed the limiting figures of the past
And made large room for a new self to live.
Eternity's contact broke the moulds of sense.
A greater Force than the earthly held his limbs,
Huge workings bared his undiscovered sheaths,*

CANTO FIVE: SPLENDOURS OF THE SPIRIT

*Strange energies wrought and screened tremendous hands
Unwound the triple cord of mind and freed
The heavenly wideness of a Godhead's gaze.
As through a dress the wearer's shape is seen,
There reached through forms to the hidden absolute
A cosmic feeling and transcendent sight.
Increased and heightened were the instruments.
Illusion lost her aggrandising lens;
As from her failing hand the measures fell,
Atomic looked the things that loomed so large.
The little ego's ring could join no more;
In the enormous spaces of the self
The body now seemed only a wandering shell,
His mind the many-frescoed outer court
Of an imperishable Inhabitant:
His spirit breathed a superhuman air
...
The old adamantine vetoes stood no more:
Overpowered were earth and Nature's obsolete rule;
The python coils of the restricting Law
Could not restrain the swift arisen God:
Abolished were the scripts of destiny.
There was no small death-hunted creature more,
No fragile form of being to preserve
From an all-swallowing Immensity.
The great hammer-beats of a pent-up world-heart
Burst open the narrow dams that keep us safe*

*Against the forces of the universe.
The soul and cosmos faced as equal powers.
A boundless being in a measureless Time
Invaded Nature with the infinite;
He saw unpathed, unwalled, his titan scope. [80-83]*