

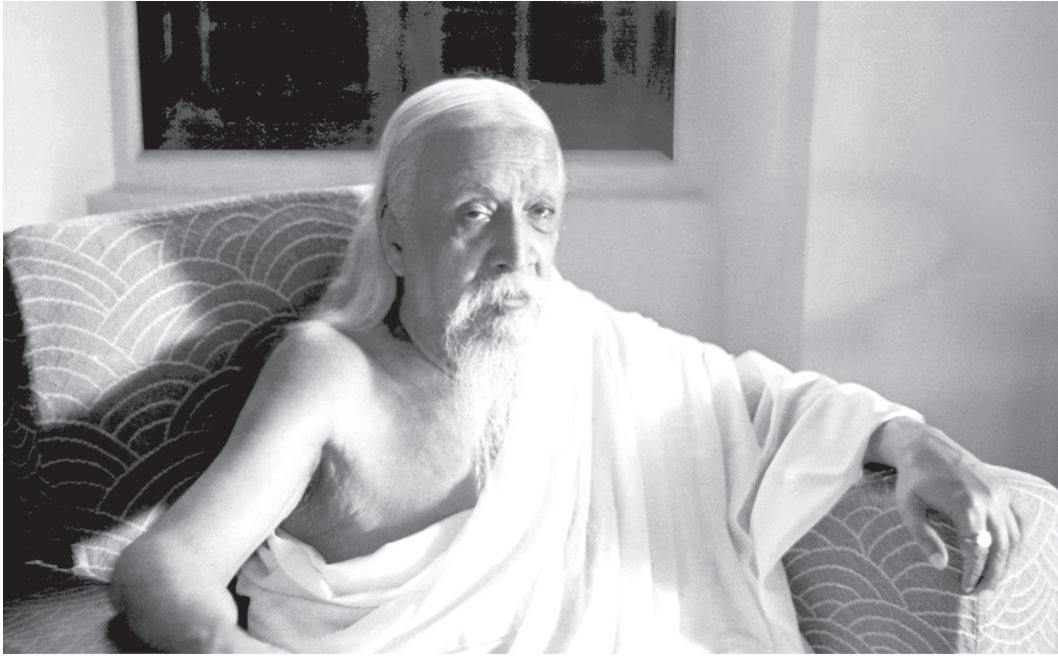
INTRODUCTION TO SRI AUROBINDO'S MAJOR WORKS — I

SAVITRI

Marvellous Prophetic Poem

which will be

Humanity's Guide Towards its Future Realisation ¹



Sri Aurobindo

(About *Savitri*) ²

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

The Mother

1. Words of the Mother, (2nd ed.), CWM Vol. 16, p. 294. 2. CWM Vol. 13, p. 24.



तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं रुपं ज्योतिः परस्य
धामणि ।
यन्नः सत्येन दीपयेत् ॥

(Tat savitur varam rūpam jyotiḥ parasya dhīmahi, yannaḥ satyena dīpayet.)

Let us meditate on the most auspicious (best) form of Savitri, on the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth.

(SABCL Vol. 26, p. 513)

Sri Aurobindo

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Hymn to Savitri in the Rig Veda (No. V. 81)



But also thou goest, O Savitri, to the three shining worlds of heaven and thou art made manifest by the rays of the Sun, and thou encirclest on both sides the Night, and thou becomest Mitra, O god, with his settled laws of Truth.

Translation by Sri Aurobindo

(CWSA Vol. 15, p. 556)

The Rishi hymns the Sun-God as the source of divine knowledge and the creator of the inner worlds. To him, the Seer, the seekers of light yoke their mind and thoughts; he, the one knower of all forms of knowledge, is the one supreme ordainer of the sacrifice. ... He has measured out for us our earthly worlds by his power and greatness: but it is in the three worlds of light that he attains to his real greatness of manifestation in the rays of the divine sun; then he encompasses the night of our darkness with his being and his light and becomes Mitra who by his laws produces the luminous harmony of our higher and lower worlds. Of all our creation he is the one author, and by his forward marches he is its increaser until the whole world of our becoming grows full of his illumination.

(CWSA Vol. 15, p. 555)

Sri Aurobindo



The Mother (Self-portrait)

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SAVITRI (A Legend and a Symbol)

A Legend and a Symbol

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.

(SABCL Vol. 26, p. 265; emphasis added.)

Sri Aurobindo

Aswapati's Yoga

Aswapati's Yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as an individual and this is described as the Yoga of the King. Next, he makes the ascent as a typical representative of the race to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness and this is described in the second book: but this too is as yet only an individual victory. Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realisation and new creation. That is described in the Book of the Divine Mother.

(CWSA Vol. 27, p. 330)

Sri Aurobindo

Savitri: Incarnation of the Divine Mother

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

(CWSA Vol. 27, p. 276)

Sri Aurobindo

The Dual Incarnate Power

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.

... ..

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

... ..

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.

Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*, pp. 702-03

The Divine Mother's Suffering

Only if God assumes the human mind
And puts on mortal ignorance for his cloak
And makes himself the Dwarf with triple stride,
Can he help man to grow into the God.
As man disguised the cosmic Greatness works
And finds the mystic inaccessible gate
And opens the Immortal's golden door.
Man, human, follows in God's human steps.
Accepting his darkness thou must bring to him light,
Accepting his sorrow thou must bring to him bliss.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, pp. 488-89

Q: Mother, suffering comes from ignorance and pain, but what is the nature of the suffering and pain the Divine Mother feels for her children — the Divine Mother in Savitri?

It is because she participates in their nature. She has descended upon earth to participate in their nature. Because if she did not participate in their nature, she could not lead them farther. If she remained in her supreme consciousness where there is no suffering, in her supreme knowledge and consciousness, she could not have any contact with human beings. And it is for this that she is obliged to take on the human consciousness and form, it is to be able to enter into contact with them. Only, she does not forget: she has adopted their consciousness but she remains in relation with her own real, supreme consciousness. And thus, by joining the two, she can make those who are in that other consciousness progress. But if she did not adopt their consciousness, if she did not suffer with their sorrow, she could not help them. Hers is not a suffering of ignorance: it is a suffering through identity. It is because she has accepted to have the same vibrations as they, in order to be able to enter into contact with them and pull them out of the state they are in. If she did not enter into contact with them, she would not be felt at all or no one could bear her radiance.... This has been said in all kinds of forms, in all kinds of religions, and they have spoken very often of the divine Sacrifice, but from a certain point of view it is true. It is a voluntary sacrifice, but it is true: giving up a state of perfect consciousness, perfect bliss, perfect power in order to accept the state of ignorance of the outer world so as to pull it out of that ignorance. If this state were not accepted, there would be no contact with it. No relation would be possible. And this is the reason of the incarnations. Otherwise, there would be no necessity. If the divine consciousness and divine force could work directly from the place or state of their perfection, if they could work directly on matter and transform it, there would be no need to take a body like man's. It would have been enough to act from the world of Truth with the perfect consciousness and upon consciousness. In fact that acts perhaps but so slowly that when there is this effort to make the world progress, make it go forward more rapidly, well, it is necessary to take on human nature. By taking the human body, one is obliged to take on human nature, partially. Only, instead of losing one's consciousness and losing contact with the Truth, one keeps this consciousness and this Truth, and it is by joining the two that one can create exactly this kind of alchemy of transformation. But if one did not touch matter, one could do nothing for it.

(CWM Vol. 5, pp. 387-88)

The Mother

The Story of Creation

Our life is a holocaust of the Supreme.
The great World-Mother by her sacrifice
Has made her soul the body of our state;
Accepting sorrow and unconsciousness
Divinity's lapse from its own splendours wove
The many-patterned ground of all we are.
An idol of self is our mortality.
Our earth is a fragment and a residue;
Her power is packed with the stuff of greater worlds
And steeped in their colour-lustres dimmed by her drowse;
An atavism of higher births is hers,
Her sleep is stirred by their buried memories
Recalling the lost spheres from which they fell.
Unsatisfied forces in her bosom move;
They are partners of her greater growing fate
And her return to immortality...

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, pp. 99-100

... we shall put aside the aridities of metaphysics ... The psychological point of view... it is better to live it than speak about it. So we are left with the story for children. It is good to be always a child. And although we must take care not to believe in it as a dogma in which nothing should be changed if one doesn't want to be sacrilegious, we can at least take these stories as a means to make living to our childlike consciousness something which would otherwise be too remote from us.

There we can choose from many stories that have been told, stories more or less true, more or less complete, more or less expressive. But if by interiorising or exteriorising oneself — which, from a certain point of view, is essentially the same thing — if one can relive this story, at least partially and in its broad outlines, it helps one to understand and hence to master the how and why of things. Some people have done that, they are the ones usually considered as initiates, occultists and prophets at the same time — and very beautiful stories have been told.

I am going to tell you one, very succinctly. Don't take it as a gospel! Take it rather... as a story.

When the Supreme decided to exteriorise Himself in order to be able to see Himself, the first thing in Himself which He exteriorised was the Knowledge of the world and the Power to create it. This Knowledge-Consciousness and Force began its work; and in the supreme Will there was a plan, and the first principle of this plan was the expression of both the essential Joy and the essential Freedom, which seemed to be the most interesting feature of this creation.

So intermediaries were needed to express this Joy and Freedom in forms. And at first four Beings were emanated to start this universal development which was to be the progressive objectivisation of all that is potentially contained in the Supreme. These Beings were, in the principle of their existence: Consciousness and Light, Life, Bliss and Love, and Truth.

You can easily imagine that they had a sense of great power, great strength, of something tremendous, for they were essentially the very principle of these things. Besides, they had full freedom of choice, for this creation was to be Freedom itself.... As soon as they set to work — they had their own conception of how it had to be done — being totally free, they chose to do it independently. Instead of taking the attitude of servant and instrument of which Sri Aurobindo speaks in what I have just read to you,* they naturally took the attitude of the master, and this mistake — as I may call it — was the first cause, the essential cause of all the disorder in the universe. As soon as there was separation — for that is the essential cause, separation — as soon as there was separation between the Supreme and what had been emanated, Consciousness changed into inconscience, Light into darkness, Love into hatred, Bliss into suffering, Life into death and Truth into falsehood. And they proceeded with their creations independently, in separation and disorder.

The result is the world as we see it. It was made progressively, stage by stage, and it would truly take a little too long to tell you all that, but finally, the consummation is Matter— obscure, inconscient, miserable....

The creative Force which had emanated these four Beings, essentially for the creation of the world, witnessed what was happening, and turning to the Supreme she prayed for the remedy and the cure of the evil that had been done.

Then she was given the command to precipitate her Consciousness into this inconscience, her Love into this suffering, and her Truth into this falsehood. And a greater consciousness, a more total love, a more perfect truth than what had been emanated at first, plunged, so to say, into the horror of Matter in order to awaken in it consciousness, love and truth, and to begin the movement of Redemption which was to bring the material universe back to its supreme origin. So, there have been what might be called “successive involutions” in Matter, and a history of these involutions. The present result of these involutions is the appearance of the Supermind emerging from the inconscience; but there is nothing to indicate that after this appearance there will be no others... for the Supreme is inexhaustible and will always create new worlds. That is my story.

(CWM Vol. 9, pp. 206-08)

The Mother

* “The sword has a joy in the battle-play, the arrow has a mirth in its hiss and its leaping, the earth has a rapture in its dizzy whirl through space, the sun has the royal ecstasy of its blazing splendours and its eternal motion. O thou self-conscious instrument, take thou too the delight of thy own appointed workings.” — Sri Aurobindo, SABCL Vol. 16: p. 288.

The Issue

One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.
Assigner of the ordeal and the path
Who chooses in this holocaust of the soul
Death, fall and sorrow as the spirit's goads,
The dubious godhead with his torch of pain
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.
August and pitiless in his calm outlook,
Heightening the Eternal's dreadful strategy,
He measured the difficulty with the might
And dug more deep the gulf that all must cross.
Assailing her divinest elements,
He made her heart kin to the striving human heart
And forced her strength to its appointed road.
For this she had accepted mortal breath;
To wrestle with the Shadow she had come
And must confront the riddle of man's birth
And life's brief struggle in dumb Matter's night.
**Whether to bear with Ignorance and death
Or hew the ways of Immortality,
To win or lose the godlike game for man,
Was her soul's issue thrown with Destiny's dice.**¹

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 17

Q: Who is "One" here? Is it Love, the godhead mentioned before? If not, does this "dubious godhead with his torch of pain" correspond to "the image white and high of godlike Pain" spoken of a little earlier? Or is it Time whose "snare" occurs in the last line of the preceding passage?

Love? It is not Love who meets the burdened great and governs the fates of men! Nor is it Pain. Time also does not do these things — it only provides the field and movement of events. If I had wanted to give a name, I would have done it, but it has purposely to be left nameless because it is indefinable. He may use Love or Pain or Time or any of these powers, but is not any of them. You can call him the Master of the Evolution, if you like.

(CWSA Vol. 27, p. 295)

Sri Aurobindo

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1. Emphasis added.

SAVITRI

(The Mantra of Transformation)

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:

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 375

Luminous Notes*

... you must not read it [*Savitri*] as you read other books or newspapers. You must read with an empty head, a blank and vacant mind, without there being any other thought; you must concentrate much, remain empty, calm and open; then the words, the rhythms, the vibrations will penetrate directly to this white page, will put their stamp upon the brain, will explain themselves without your making an effort.

Savitri alone is sufficient to make you climb to the highest peaks. If truly one knows how to meditate on *Savitri*, one will receive all the help one needs. For one who wishes to follow this path, it is a visible help, as though the Lord himself were taking you by the hand and leading you to the destined goal. And then, every question, however personal it may be, has its answer here, every difficulty finds here its solution, indeed there is everything that is necessary for doing the Yoga. ...

* A recollection from memory of what the Mother had spoken in early 1960s to Mona Sarkar, a disciple, about *Savitri*. On 5th November 1967 Mona read the whole text to the Mother, who then wrote on the last page of the type script "Blessings" and put the date: 5.11.1967. She later on told to Kishore Gandhi (another disciple) that she "found it correct on the whole."

It may then be said that *Savitri* is a revelation, it is a meditation, it is a quest of the Infinite, of the Eternal. If it is read with this aspiration for Immortality, the reading itself will serve as a guide towards Immortality. To read *Savitri* is indeed to practise Yoga, spiritual concentration; one can find here all that is needed to realise the Divine. Each step of the Yoga is noted here, including the secret of all other Yogas. Surely, if one follows sincerely what is revealed here in each verse one will finally reach the transformation of the Supramental Yoga. It is truly the infallible guide who never abandons you; its support is always there for him who wants to follow the path. Each verse of *Savitri* is like a revealed Mantra which surpasses all that man possesses by way of knowledge, and I repeat this, the words are expressed and arranged in such a manner that the sonority of the rhythm leads you to the origin of sound, which is OM.

My child, yes, everything is there: mysticism, occultism, philosophy, the history of evolution, the history of man, of the gods, of creation, of Nature; how the universe was created, why, for what purpose, what destiny — all is there. You can find there all the answers to all your questions. Everything is explained, even the future of man and of the evolution, all that nobody yet knows. He has expressed them in beautiful and clear words so that spiritual adventurers who wish to solve the mysteries of the world may understand it more easily. But the mystery is well hidden behind the lines and one must rise to the required level of true consciousness to discover it. All the prophecies, all that is going to happen is presented with a precise and wonderful clarity. Sri Aurobindo gives you here the key to find the Truth, to discover the Consciousness, to solve the problem of what the universe is. He has also indicated how he has opened the door of the Inconscience so that the light may penetrate there to transform it. He has shown the path, how to liberate oneself from the Ignorance to climb up to the superconscience; each stage, each plane of consciousness, how one can scale them, how one can cross the very barrier of death and attain Immortality. You will find the entire route in detail, and as you go forward you can discover things altogether unknown to man. That is what *Savitri* is, and yet much more. It is truly an experience — reading *Savitri*. All the secrets that man possesses, he has revealed them, as well as all that awaits him in the future; all this is found in the depths of *Savitri*; but one must have the knowledge to discover them, — the experience of the planes of consciousness, the experience of the Supermind, even the experience of the conquest of Death. He has noted all the stages, marked each step needed in order to advance in an integral way in the integral Yoga. ...

These are experiences lived by him, realities, supracosmic truths. He experienced all these as one experiences joy and sorrow in a physical manner. He has walked in the darkness of inconscience, even in the neighbourhood of death, endured the sufferings of perdition, and he has emerged from the mud, the world-

misery, to breathe the sovereign plenitude and enter the supreme Ananda. He has traversed them all, these realms, borne the consequences, suffered and endured physically what one cannot imagine. Nobody till today has suffered like him. He has accepted suffering to transform suffering into the joy of union with the Supreme. It is something unique and incomparable in the history of the world. It is something that has never happened, he is the first to have traced the path in the Unknown so that we may be able to walk with certitude towards the Supermind. He has made the work easy for us. *Savitri* is his whole Yoga of transformation, and this Yoga, it is for the first time that we see it appear in the earth-consciousness.

And I think that man is not yet ready to receive it. It is too high and too vast for him. He cannot understand it, grasp it, for it is not by the mind that one can understand *Savitri*. One needs spiritual experiences in order to understand and assimilate it. The more one advances on the path of Yoga, the more one assimilates and better. No, it is something which will be appreciated only in the future, it is the poetry of tomorrow of which he has spoken in *The Future Poetry*. It is too subtle, too refined, — it is not in the mind or by the mind, it is in meditation that *Savitri* is revealed. ...

My child, everyday you are going to read *Savitri*; read properly, with the right attitude, concentrating a little before opening the pages and trying to keep the mind as empty as possible, absolutely without a thought. The direct road is through that — the heart. I tell you, if you try to really concentrate with this aspiration you can light the flame, the psychic flame, the flame of purification in a very short time, perhaps in a few days. What you cannot do normally, you will do it with the help of *Savitri*. 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, and whoever wants to practise Yoga, if he tries sincerely and feels the necessity, he will be able to climb with the help of *Savitri* to the highest rung 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 practise it anywhere. *Savitri* by itself will be his guide, for all that he needs he will find in *Savitri*. If he remains absolutely quiet when he is faced with a difficulty, or when he does not know where to turn in order to go forward and how to overcome obstacles, for all these hesitations and these incertitudes which overwhelm us at every moment, he will have the necessary indications, and the necessary concrete help. If he remains absolutely calm, open, if he aspires sincerely, always he will be as if led by the hand. If he has faith, the will to give himself and the essential sincerity, he will reach the final goal.

Indeed, *Savitri* is something concrete, living, it is all replete, packed with consciousness, it is the supreme knowledge above all human philosophies, all human

religions. It is the spiritual path, it is Yoga, Tapasya, Sadhana, everything, in its single body. *Savitri* has an extraordinary power, it sends out vibrations for him who can receive them, the true vibrations of each stage of consciousness. It is incomparable, it is truth in its plenitude, the Truth Sri Aurobindo brought down on the earth. My child, one must try to find the secret that *Savitri* represents, the prophetic message Sri Aurobindo reveals there for us.

(Sweet Mother, Luminous Notes by Mona Sarkar, pp. 45-52)

The Extra-ordinary Power of *Savitri*

If you are depressed, if you feel miserable, if you do not succeed in what you do or else if what happens is always the contrary of what you expect, however much you try — if it has come to such a pass that you lose your temper, life becomes disgusting and you are unhappy, then immediately take *Savitri* and, after a moment's concentration, open it at any page and read. You will see that all your misery disappears like smoke. And you will have the strength to overcome the worst sorrows; you will no longer feel that which was tormenting you. Instead, you will feel a strange happiness, a reversal of consciousness along with the energy and force to conquer everything, as though there was nothing impossible. And you will feel this inexhaustible joy that purifies everything. Read just a few lines and that is enough to establish the contact with your inmost being. Such is the extraordinary power of *Savitri*.

Or else, after having read, if you concentrate very deeply, then too you can find the solution to what was tormenting you. You have only to open *Savitri* at random and without thinking and you will have the answer to your problems.

Do it with faith and simplicity, the result is certain.

(The Mother's advice noted from memory and read to her subsequently)

(Sweet Mother, Luminous Notes by Mona Sarkar, p. 59)

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The Word of Power and Light

Rivers poured down of bliss and luminous force,
Visits of beauty, storm-sweeps of delight
Rained from the all-powerful Mystery above.
Thence stooped the eagles of Omniscience.
A dense veil was rent, a mighty whisper heard;
Repeated in the privacy of his soul,
A wisdom-cry from rapt transcendences
Sang on the mountains of an unseen world;
The voices that an inner listening hears
Conveyed to him their prophet utterances,

And flame-wrapped outbursts of the immortal Word
And flashes of an occult revealing Light
Approached him from the unreachable Secrecy.
An inspired Knowledge sat enthroned within
Whose seconds illumined more than reason's years:

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 37

Mantra is a Word of Power and Light

The *mantra* as I have tried to describe it in *The Future Poetry* is a word of power and light that comes from the Overmind inspiration or from some very high plane of Intuition. Its characteristics are a language that conveys infinitely more than the mere surface sense of the words seems to indicate, a rhythm that means even more than the language and is born out of the Infinite and disappears into it, and the power to convey not merely the mental, vital or physical contents or indications or values of the thing uttered, but its significance and figure in some fundamental and original consciousness which is behind all these and greater.

(CWSA Vol. 27, pp. 26-27)

Sri Aurobindo

Three Highest Intensities of Poetic Speech

The Mantra, poetic expression of the deepest spiritual reality, is only possible when three highest intensities of poetic speech meet and become indissolubly one, a highest intensity of rhythmic movement, a highest intensity of interwoven verbal form and thought-substance, of style, and a highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. All great poetry comes about by a unison of these three elements; it is the insufficiency of one or another which makes the inequalities in the work of even the greatest poets, and it is the failure of some one element which is the cause of their lapses, of the scoriae in their work, the spots in the sun. But it is only at a certain highest level of the fused intensities that the Mantra becomes possible.

(CWSA Vol. 26, p. 19)

Sri Aurobindo

Rhythmic Revelation of Soul-sight and of Inner Truths

The Mantra too is not in its substance or its form a poetic enunciation of philosophic verities, but a rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul's sight of God and Nature and itself and of the world and of the inner truth — occult to the outward eye — of all that peoples it, the secrets of their life and being.

*

The Mantra in other words is a direct and most heightened, an intensest and most divinely burdened rhythmic word which embodies an intuitive and revelatory inspiration and ensouls the mind with the sight and the presence of the very self, the inmost reality of things and with its truth and with the divine soul-forms of it,

the Godheads which are born from the living Truth. Or, let us say, it is a supreme rhythmic language which seizes hold upon all that is finite and brings into each the light and voice of its own infinite.

(CWSA Vol. 26, pp. 36, 218)

Sri Aurobindo

The Summit and Absolute of Speech

A supreme, an absolute of itself, a reaching to an infinite and utmost, a last point of perfection of its own possibilities is that to which all action of Nature intuitively tends in its unconscious formations and when it has arrived to that point it has justified its existence to the spirit which has created it and fulfilled the secret creative will within it. Speech, the expressive Word, has such a summit or absolute, a perfection which is the touch of the infinite upon its finite possibilities and the seal upon it of its Creator. This absolute of the expressive Word can be given the name which was found for it by the inspired singers of the Veda, the Mantra. Poetry especially claimed for its perfected expression in the hymns of the Veda this name. It is not confined however to this sense, for it is extended to all speech that has a supreme or an absolute power; the Mantra is the word that carries the godhead in it or the power of the godhead, can bring it into the consciousness and fix there it and its workings, awaken there the thrill of the infinite, the force of something absolute, perpetuate the miracle of the supreme utterance. This highest power of speech and especially of poetic speech is what we have to make here the object of our scrutiny, discover, if we can, its secret, regard the stream of poetry as a long course of the endeavour of human speech to find it and the greater generalisation of its presence and its power as the future sign of an ultimate climbing towards an ultimate evolution as a poetic consciousness towards the conquest of its ultimate summits.

(CWSA Vol. 26, p. 313)

Sri Aurobindo

A Great Formative and Illuminative Power

For neither the intelligence, the imagination nor the ear are the true or at least the deepest or highest recipients of the poetic delight, even as they are not its true or highest creators; they are only its channels and instruments: the true creator, the true hearer is the soul. The more rapidly and transparently the rest do their work of transmission, the less they make of their separate claim to satisfaction, the more directly the word reaches and sinks deep into the soul, the greater the poetry. Therefore poetry has not really done its work, at least its highest work, until it has raised the pleasure of the instrument and transmuted it into the deeper delight of the soul. A divine Ananda,* a delight interpretative, creative, revealing, formative,

* Ananda, in the language of Indian spiritual experience, is the essential delight which the Infinite feels in itself and in its creation. By the infinite Self's Ananda all exists, for the Self's Ananda all was made.

— one might almost say, an inverse reflection of the joy which the universal Soul felt in its great release of energy when it rang out into the rhythmic forms of the universe the spiritual truth, the large interpretative idea, the life, the power, the emotion of things packed into an original creative vision, — such spiritual joy is that which the soul of the poet feels and which, when he can conquer the human difficulties of his task, he succeeds in pouring also into all those who are prepared to receive it. This delight is not merely a godlike pastime; it is a great formative and illuminative power.

(CWSA Vol. 26, p. 12)

Sri Aurobindo

*

Composition of *Savitri*

A Rapture of the Thrilled Undying Word

Oft inspiration with her lightning feet,
A sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops,
Traversed the soundless corridors of his mind
Bringing her rhythmic sense of hidden things.
A music spoke transcending mortal speech.
As if from a golden phial of the All-Bliss,
A joy of light, a joy of sudden sight,
A rapture of the thrilled undying Word
Poured into his heart as into an empty cup,
A repetition of God's first delight
Creating in a young and virgin Time.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 38

The poem was originally written from a lower level, a mixture perhaps of the inner mind, psychic, poetic intelligence, sublimised vital, afterwards with the Higher Mind, often illumined and intuitivised, intervening. Most of the stuff of the first book is new or else the old so altered as to be no more what it was; the best of the old has sometimes been kept almost intact because it had already the higher inspiration. Moreover there have been made successive revisions each trying to lift the general level higher and higher towards a possible Overmind poetry. As it now stands there is a general Overmind influence, I believe, sometimes coming fully through, sometimes colouring the poetry of the other higher planes fused together, sometimes lifting any one of these higher planes to its highest or the psychic, poetic intelligence or vital towards them.

(CWSA Vol. 27, pp. 274-275)

Sri Aurobindo

Q: With your silent consciousness, it should be possible to draw from the highest planes with the slightest pull.

The highest planes are not so accommodating as all that. If they were so, why should it be so difficult to bring down and organise the supermind in the physical consciousness? What happy-go-lucky fancy-web-spinning ignoramus you all are. You speak of silence, consciousness, overmental, supramental etc. as if they were so many electric buttons you have only to press and there you are. It may be one day but meanwhile I have to discover everything about the working of all possible modes of electricity, all the laws, possibilities, perils etc., construct modes of connection and communication, make the whole far wiring system, try to find out how it can be made fool-proof and all that in the course of a single lifetime. And I have to do it while my blessed disciples are firing off their gay or gloomy *a priori* reasonings at me from a position of entire irresponsibility and expecting me to divulge everything to them not in hints — but at length. Lord God *in omnibus*!

✱

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 level, 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.

(CWSA Vol. 27, pp.212-13, 272)

Sri Aurobindo

A Cry of the Moments to the Immortal's Bliss

All the great Words that toiled to express the One
Were lifted into an absoluteness of light,
An ever-burning Revelation's fire
And the immortality of the eternal Voice.
There was no quarrel more of truth with truth;
The endless chapter of their differences
Retold in light by an omniscient Scribe
Travelled through difference towards unity,
Mind's winding search lost every tinge of doubt
Led to its end by an all-seeing speech
That garbed the initial and original thought
With the finality of an ultimate phrase:
United were Time's creative mood and tense

To the style and syntax of Identity.
A paean swelled from the lost musing deeps;
An anthem pealed to the triune ecstasies,
A cry of the moments to the Immortal's bliss.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 90

There is no invariable how — except that I receive from above my head and receive changes and corrections from above without any initiation by myself or labour of the brain. Even if I change a hundred times, the mind does not work at that, it only receives.

*

... my long labour on *Savitri* ... was not labour in the ordinary sense, not a labour of painstaking construction, I may describe it as an infinite capacity for waiting and listening for the true inspiration and rejecting all that fell short of it, however good it might seem from a lower standard until I got that which I felt to be absolutely right.

(CWSA Vol. 27, pp. 211, 344)

Sri Aurobindo

I don't think about the technique because thinking is no longer in my line. But I see and feel first when the lines are coming through and afterwards in revision of the work. I don't bother about details while writing, because that would only hamper the inspiration. I let it come through without interference; only pausing if there is an obvious inadequacy felt, in which case I conclude that it is a wrong inspiration or inferior level that has cut across the communication. If the inspiration is the right one, then I have not to bother about the technique then or afterwards, for there comes through the perfect line with the perfect rhythm inextricably intertwined or rather fused into an inseparable and single unity; if there is anything wrong with the expression that carries with it an imperfection in the rhythm, if there is a flaw in the rhythm, the expression also does not carry its full weight, is not absolutely inevitable. If on the other hand the inspiration is not throughout the right one, then there is an after examination and recasting of part or whole. The things I lay most stress on then are whether each line in itself is the inevitable thing not only as a whole but in each word; whether there is the right distribution of sentence lengths (an immensely important thing in this kind of blank verse); whether the lines are in their right place, for all the lines may be perfect, but they may not combine perfectly together — bridges may be needed, alterations of position so as to create the right development and perspective etc., etc. Pauses hardly exist in this kind of blank verse; variations of rhythm as between the lines, of caesura, of the distribution of long and short, clipped and open syllables, manifold combinations of vowel and consonant sounds, alliteration, assonances, etc., distribution into one

line, two line, three or four or five line, many line sentences, care to make each line tell by itself in its own mass and force and at the same time form harmonious whole sentence — these are the important things. But all that is usually taken care of by the inspiration itself, for as I know and have the habit of the technique, the inspiration provides what I want according to standing orders. If there is a defect I appeal to headquarters, till a proper version comes along or the defect is removed by a word or phrase substitute that flashes — with the necessary sound and sense. These things are not done by thinking or seeking for the right thing — the two agents are sight and call. Also feeling — the solar plexus has to be satisfied and, until it is, revision after revision has to continue. I may add that the technique does not go by any set mental rule for the object is not perfect technical elegance according to precept, but sound — significance filling out the word — significance. If that can be done by breaking rules, well, so much the worse for the rule.

(CWSA Vol. 27, pp. 273-274)

Sri Aurobindo

A Vision of Higher Realms Than Ours

He gazed across the empty stillnesses
 And heard the footsteps of the undreamed Idea
 In the far avenues of the Beyond.
 He heard the secret Voice, the Word that knows,
 And saw the secret face that is our own.
 The inner planes uncovered their crystal doors;
 Strange powers and influences touched his life.
 A vision came of higher realms than ours,
 A consciousness of brighter fields and skies,
 Of beings less circumscribed than brief-lived men
 And subtler bodies than these passing frames,
 Objects too fine for our material grasp,
 Acts vibrant with a superhuman light
 And movements pushed by a superconscious force,
 And joys that never flowed through mortal limbs,
 And lovelier scenes than earth's and happier lives.
 A consciousness of beauty and of bliss,
 A knowledge which became what it perceived,
 Replaced the separated sense and heart
 And drew all Nature into its embrace.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 28

I have not anywhere in *Savitri* written anything for the sake of mere picturesqueness or merely to produce a rhetorical effect; what I am trying to do everywhere in the poem is to express exactly something seen, something felt or experienced; if,

for instance, I indulge in the wealth-burdened line or passage, it is not merely for the pleasure of the indulgence, but because there is that burden, or at least what I conceive to be that, in the vision or the experience. When the expression has been found, I have to judge, not by the intellect or by any set poetical rule, but by an intuitive feeling, whether it is entirely the right expression and, if it is not, I have to change and go on changing until I have received the absolutely right inspiration and the right transcription of it and must never be satisfied with any *à peu près* or imperfect transcription even if that makes good poetry of one kind or another. This is what I have tried to do. The critic or reader will judge for himself whether I have succeeded or failed; but if he has seen nothing and understood nothing, it does not follow that his adverse judgment is sure to be the right and true one, there is at least a chance that he may so conclude, not because there is nothing to see and nothing to understand, only poor pseudo-stuff or a rhetorical emptiness but because he was not equipped for the vision or the understanding. *Savitri* is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences. You must not expect appreciation or understanding from the general public or even from many at the first touch; as I have pointed out, there must be a new extension of consciousness and aesthesis to appreciate a new kind of mystic poetry.

*

This is not the method of *Savitri*. Its expression aims at a certain force, directness and spiritual clarity and reality. When it is not understood, it is because the truths it expresses are unfamiliar to the ordinary mind or belong to an untrodden domain or domains or enter into a field of occult experience; it is not because there is any attempt at a dark or vague profundity or at an escape from thought. The thinking is not intellectual but intuitive or more than intuitive, always expressing a vision, a spiritual contact or a knowledge which has come by entering into the thing itself, by identity.

(CWSA Vol. 27, pp. 343-44, 317)

Sri Aurobindo

The Supramental Vision and the Mode of Expression

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

The sun-orb of mind's fragmentary rays,
Infinity's heaven that spills the rain of God,
The Immense that calls to man to expand the Spirit,
The wide Aim that justifies his narrow attempts,
A channel for the little he tastes of bliss.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 705

It is somewhat like this. In the supramental vision one has a direct and total and immediate knowledge of things, in the sense that one sees everything at the same time, complete in itself, total. The truth of a thing in all its aspects at the same time and... simultaneous, complete. And as soon as one wants to explain that or to describe it, one is obliged to come down, so to say, to a plane which he [Sri Aurobindo] calls here "the Mind of Light", where things have to be said or even thought or expressed one after another, in a certain order and a certain relation with one another; the simultaneity disappears, for in the present state of our mode of expression, to say everything at the same time, all at once, is impossible, and we are compelled to veil one part of what we see or know in order to bring it out one thing after another; and this is what he calls the "veil", which is transparent, for one sees everything, knows everything at the same time; one has the total knowledge of a thing, but one cannot express it fully all at once. There are no words or any possibility of expression, so long as we are what we are. We must necessarily make use of an inferior process to express ourselves, and yet, at the same time we have the full knowledge; it is only the necessity of transmitting his knowledge in words which compels us to veil, so to say, a part of what we know and to let it come out only successively. But it is a transparent veil, for we know the thing — we know it, see it, understand it in its totality — but we cannot express it all at the same time. We have to say it, one thing after another, successively.....

To be able to live fully in the supramental knowledge requires other means of expression than the ones we have now. New means of expression must be worked out to make it possible to express the supramental knowledge in a Supramental way.... Now, we are obliged to raise our mental capacity to its utmost so that there is only, so to say, a sort of hardly perceptible borderline, but one that still exists, for all our means of expression still belong to this mental world, do not have the supramental capacity. We do not have the necessary organs for that. We would have to become beings of the supermind, with a supramental substance, a supramental inner organisation, in order to be able to express the Supramental knowledge in a supramental way. So far we are... half way; we can, somewhere in our consciousness, rise entirely into the supramental vision and knowledge, but we cannot express it. We have to come down again one plane in order to express ourselves.

(CWM Vol. 9, pp. 194-95)

The Mother



Sweet Mother, I have just heard that though the Grace flows from all the limbs of the Guru (such as the eyes and hands), what emanates through the feet is the most dynamic and full of compassion. That is why, it is said, the Indian tradition enjoins Pranam to the feet. Is this true?

Here is Sri Aurobindo's answer to your query: ...

where she presses her feet course
miraculous streams of an entrancing Ananda.¹

[&]

All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life ²

(CWM Vol. 17, pp. 389-90)

The Mother

1. SABCL 25, p. 31 2. *Savitri*, p. 314

Translating *Savitri*
(*Letters to Prithwi Singh Nahar*)

If you want me to express *frankly* my view of this affair, I must say that I consider *Savitri* as **untranslatable** and will never encourage a translation of it except as a personal exercise for the sake for concentration on this unique marvel; but surely *not* for publication. That is why I cannot attach any importance to this contention.

With my love and blessings

[14 December 1961]

Certainly you can continue the translation of *Savitri* for your own benefit and I am sure that the help from Sri Aurobindo will always be with you.

With love and blessings

[15 December 1961]

The Mother

(Sri Aurobindo and Mother to Prithwi Singh, Mira Aditi, Mysore, 1998: pp. 165-66)

An Advice

Q: Sweet Mother, I used to have the habit of reading Savitri or one of Your books before going to bed at night. But now I have lost the habit and I do not even go to the Samadhi very regularly. I do not understand the true value of these things. Should one do them regularly or only when one feels like doing them? Why should one do these things and how should one do them?

One reads *Savitri* to develop one's intelligence and to understand deeper things.

One concentrates at the *Samadhi* to grow in devotion and to put oneself in contact with Sri Aurobindo in order to receive his help.

If these things have any value for you, you must do them regularly, because it is the laziness of unconsciousness that keeps you from doing them.

You are born for a spiritual and conscious life — but perhaps you are still too young to have the will to realise it.

Blessings.

(CWM Vol. 16, p. 397)

The Mother



Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep ...
Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts ...
Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man ...
Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain ...

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, pp. 696-97

There is a Power that no ruler can command; there is a Happiness that no earthly success can bring; there is a Light that no wisdom can possess; there is a Knowledge that no philosophy and no science can master; there is a Bliss of which no satisfaction of desire can give the enjoyment; there is a thirst for Love that no human relation can appease; there is a Peace that one finds nowhere, not even in death.

It is the Power, the Happiness, the Light, the Knowledge, the Bliss, the Love, the Peace that flow from the Divine Grace.

(CWM Vol. 1, p. 380)

The Mother

SAVITRI (The Song of the Infinite)

The Message of *Savitri* : A Few Selected Passages

Earth Is a Chosen Place

Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
The forge where the Archmason shapes his works.
Thy servitudes on earth are greater, King,
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.

... ..

If earth can look up to the light of heaven
And hear an answer to her lonely cry,
Not vain their meeting, nor heaven's touch a snare.
If thou and I are true, the world is true;
Although thou hide thyself behind thy works,
To be is not a senseless paradox;
Since God has made earth, earth must make in her God;
What hides within her breast she must reveal.

Escape Is Not the Solution

Escape, however high, redeems not life,
Life that is left behind on a fallen earth.
Escape cannot uplift the abandoned race
Or bring to it victory and the reign of God.
A greater power must come, a larger light.

We Are Never Abandoned

Alive in a dead rotating universe
We whirl not here upon a casual globe
Abandoned to a task beyond our force;
Even through the tangled anarchy called Fate
And through the bitterness of death and fall
An outstretched Hand is felt upon our lives.

Our Errors Are His Steps Upon the Way

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.

The Essential Oneness Behind Creation

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.

... ..

This is the knot that ties together the stars:
The Two who are one are the secret of all power,
The Two who are one are the might and right in things.

Man Has a Greater Destiny

O Force-compelled, Fate-driven earth-born race,
O petty adventurers in an infinite world
And prisoners of a dwarf humanity,
How long will you tread the circling tracks of mind
Around your little self and petty things?
But not for a changeless littleness were you meant,
Not for vain repetition were you built;
Out of the Immortal's substance you were made;
Your actions can be swift revealing steps,
Your life a changeful mould for growing gods.
A Seer, a strong Creator, is within,
The immaculate Grandeur broods upon your days,
Almighty powers are shut in Nature's cells.
A greater destiny waits you in your front:
This transient earthly being if he wills
Can fit his acts to a transcendent scheme.

All Things Shall Change in God's Transfiguring Hour

My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.
Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart,
Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.
Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand;

Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.
Above blind fate and the antagonist powers
Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;
To its omnipotence leave thy work's result.
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour.

Fate Is Truth Working out in Ignorance

O King, thy fate is a transaction done
At every hour between Nature and thy soul
With God for its foreseeing arbiter.
Fate is a balance drawn in Destiny's book.
Man can accept his fate, he can refuse. ...
Arise from the body's torture and death,
The spirit rises mightier by defeat;
Its godlike wings grow wider with each fall.
Its splendid failures sum to victory.
O man, the events that meet thee on thy road,
Though they smite thy body and soul with joy and grief,
Are not thy fate, — they touch thee awhile and pass;
Even death can cut not short thy spirit's walk:
Thy goal, the road thou chooseth are thy fate.

Death Is a Passage, Not the End of Things

He saw in Night the Eternal's shadowy veil,
Knew death for a cellar of the house of life,
In destruction felt creation's hasty pace,
Knew loss as the price of a celestial gain
And hell as a short cut to heaven's gates.

God Is the Key to Paradox of Life

He has made this tenement of flesh his own,
His image in the human measure cast
That to his divine measure we might rise; ...
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.

By Light We Live and to the Light We Go

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.

... ..

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.

The Promise of a New Creation

Even as of old man came behind the beast
This high divine successor surely shall come
Behind man's inefficient mortal pace,
Behind his vain labour, sweat and blood and tears:
He shall know what mortal mind barely durst think,
He shall do what the heart of the mortal could not dare.

The Supramental Race Shall Inhabit the Earth

The incarnate dual Power shall open God's door,
Eternal supermind touch earthly Time.
The superman shall wake in mortal man
And manifest the hidden demigod
Or grow into the God-Light and God-Force
Revealing the secret deity in the cave.

... ..

The supermind shall be his nature's fount,
The Eternal's truth shall mould his thoughts and acts,
The Eternal's truth shall be his light and guide.
All then shall change, a magic order come
Overtopping this mechanical universe.
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world.
On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's ground,
The superman shall reign as king of life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven,
And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart
And lift towards godhead his mortality.

Darkness Is Greatest Before the Dawn

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.

Love Shall Triumph Over Death

All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky,
And Love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.
A lonely soul passions for the Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God,
A body is his chamber and his shrine.
Then is our being rescued from separateness;
All is itself, all is new-felt in God:
A Lover leaning from his cloister's door
Gathers the whole world into his single breast.
Then shall the business fail of Night and Death:
When unity is won, when strife is lost
And all is known and all is clasped by Love
Who would turn back to ignorance and pain?

A Mother Wisdom and Love Works in Nature's Depths

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.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Savitri*, pp. 686-692-693, 448, 59, 59, 60- 63, 370, 341, 458, 231, 67, 600-01, 344, 705-06, 55, 632-33, 314)

SAVITRI

(The Lyric of Love That Waits Through Time) ¹

The Essence of *Savitri*

To live, to love are signs of infinite things,
Love is a glory from eternity's spheres.
Abased, disfigured, mocked by baser might
That steal his name and shape and ecstasy,
He is still the godhead by which all can change.

... ..

Too far from the Divine, Love seeks his truth
And Life is blind and the instruments deceive
And Powers are there that labour to debase.
Still can the vision come, the joy arrive.
Rare is the cup fit for love's nectar wine,
As rare the vessel that can hold God's birth;
A soul made ready through a thousand years
Is the living mould of a supreme Descent.

*

1. *Savitri*, p. 232

A burning Love from white spiritual founts
Annulled the sorrow of the ignorant depths;
Suffering was lost in her immortal smile.
A Life from beyond grew conqueror here of death;
To err no more was natural to mind;
Wrong could not come where all was light and love.

*

In me the spirit of immortal love
Stretches its arms out to embrace mankind.
Too far thy heavens for me from suffering men.
Imperfect is the joy not shared by all.
O to spread forth, O to encircle and seize
More hearts till love in us has filled thy world!
O life, the life beneath the wheeling stars!
For victory in the tournament with death,
For bending of the fierce and difficult bow,
For flashing of the splendid sword of God!

*

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.

*

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

Sri Aurobindo

(Savitri, pp. 397-98, 314, 686-87, 724, 723)

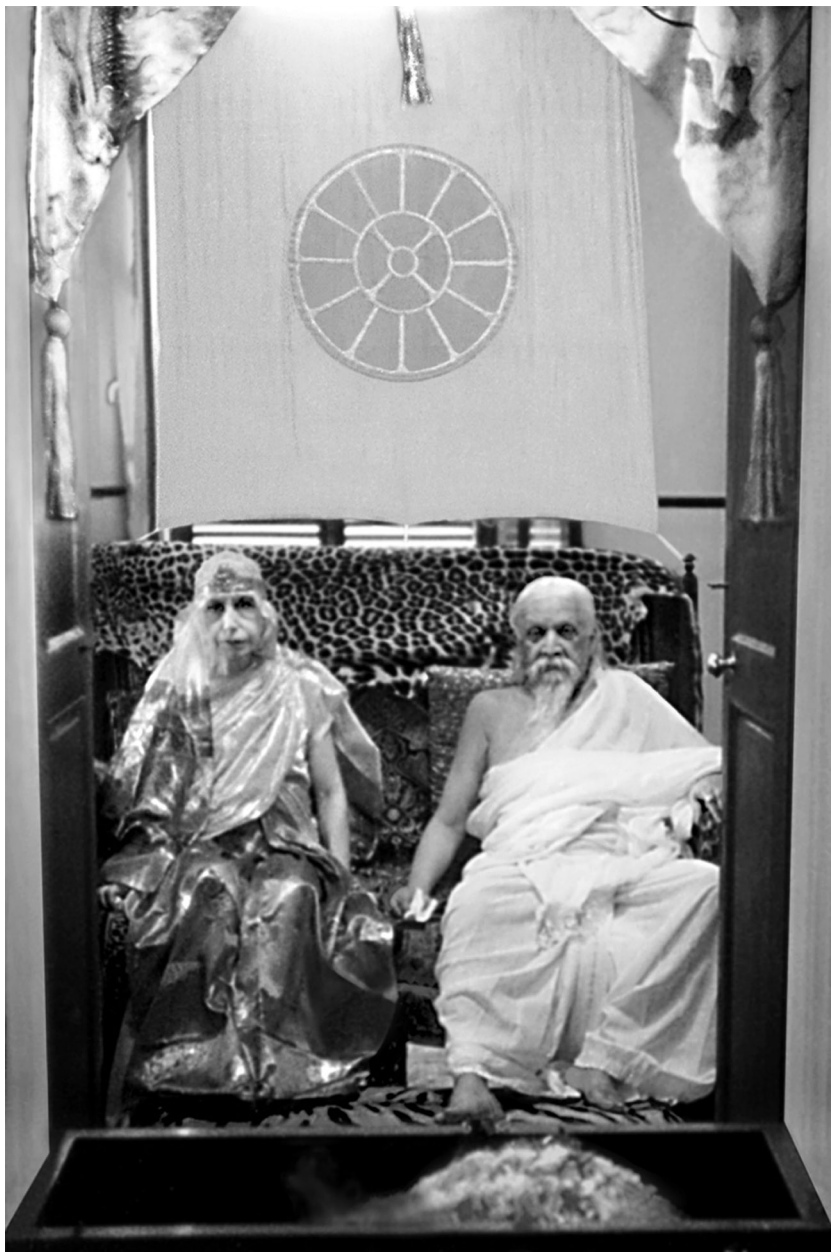
The importance of Savitri is immense.

Its subject is universal. Its revelation is prophetic.

The time spent in its atmosphere is not wasted.

(CWM Vol. 13, p. 26)

The Mother



My soul and his indissolubly linked
In the one task for which our lives were born,
To raise the world to God in deathless Light,
To bring God down to the world on earth we came,
To change the earthly life to life divine.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 692

Appendix I:

Last 3 passages Dictated by Sri Aurobindo (Nirodbaran Recounts)

Some months before his passing, Sri Aurobindo, as if in foreknowledge of the event, said: "I want to finish *Savitri* soon." The words took by utter surprise the disciple, his scribe, who had been used to the grandly patient way in which so far it had been composed and frequently retouched and amplified. Even when, in the past, composition had been extraordinarily swift — once four to five hundred lines needing hardly any change were dictated in succession — there had been no hurry in the poet's attitude to his work. But now he increased immensely the general tempo of composition and revision. There seemed a race with time. And it was almost towards the end that, after rapidly revising the long second canto of the Book of Fate, he paused with some satisfaction. Then he inquired what still remained to be written. On being told about the Book of Death and the Epilogue entitled The Return to Earth, which were yet to be caught up into a larger utterance, he remarked: "Oh, that? We shall see about that afterwards." *Savitri*, as the footnote to the Book of Death indicates, was not completed in the common meaning of the term and indeed Sri Aurobindo's original plan was to give this part of the poem as well as the Epilogue a thorough recasting. But his strange remark suggests that later, for reasons of his own, he was not anxious about them and that what he had thought necessary had been done. So it is impossible to say definitely that he did not wish *Savitri* to be, on the whole, just as he had left it after making corrections and additions in the Canto already mentioned of the Book of Fate.

These corrections and additions were the last things he wrote in this epic of twenty-three thousand [and eight hundred thirty seven (4th edition, 1993)] lines, over which he spent so many years. Among them, in view of subsequent circumstances, three newly written passages in the speech of Narad stand out most significantly. The first is about the sacrifice the God-Man gives in history:

He who has found his identity with God
Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light.
His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death.¹

The second dwells on the inner meaning with which Satyavan's departure from the earth is packed:

His death is a beginning of greater life...

1. *Savitri*, p. 445

A vast intention has brought two souls close
And love and death conspire towards one great end.
For out of danger and pain heaven-bliss shall come,
Time's unforeseen event, God's secret plan.²

The third is the passage of seventy-two lines, absolutely the last piece of poetry dictated by Sri Aurobindo, in which, with a sound as of massive repeating bells, Narad admonishes King Aswapathy's wife when she protests against the fate of loneliness that will be her daughter's, Savitri's, in consequence of the predestined passing of Satyavan, even as it appeared to be that of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual co-worker, the Mother, at the time the Master of the "Integral Yoga" withdrew from his body. Some lines may be quoted:

As a star, uncompanioned, moves in heaven
Unastonished by the immensities of space,
Travelling infinity by its own light,
The great are strongest when they stand alone...
A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers,
Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.
Alone with death and close to extinction's edge,
Her single greatness in that last dire scene,
She must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time
And reach an apex of world-destiny
Where all is won or all is lost for man...
For this the silent Force came missioned down;
In her the conscious Will took human shape:
She only can save herself and save the world...
Even though all falters and falls and sees an end
And the heart fails and only are death and night,
God-given her strength can battle against doom...
Think not to intercede with the hidden Will,
Intrude not twixt her spirit and its force
But leave her to her mighty self and Fate.³

(Source: Appendix to *Savitri* 1954 ed., pp. 817-19)

2. *Savitri*, p. 459

3. *Savitri*, pp. 460-61

Appendix II:

A Brief Summary of *Savitri* (Nolini Kanta Gupta)

(1)

Savitri, the poem, the word of Sri Aurobindo is the cosmic Answer to the cosmic Question. And Savitri, the person, the Godhead, the Divine Woman is the Divine's response to the human aspiration.

The world is a great question mark. It is a riddle, eternal and ever-recurring. Man has faced the riddle and sought to arrive at a solution since he has been given a mind to seek and interrogate.

What is this universe? From where has it come? Whither is it going? What is the purpose of it all? Why is man here? What is the object of his existence?

Such is the mode of human aspiration. And Ashwapati in his quest begins to explore the world and see what it is, the way it is built up. He observes it rising tier upon tier, level upon level of consciousness. He mounts these stairs, takes cognisance of the modes and functions of each and passes on enriched by the experiences that each contributes to his developing consciousness. The ascent he finds is from ignorance to knowledge. The human being starts from the darkest bed of ignorance, the solid basis of rock as it were, the body, the material existence. Ignorance here is absolute inconscience. Out of the total absence of consciousness, the being begins to awake and rise to a gradually developing – widening, deepening and heightening – consciousness. That is how Ashwapati advances, ascends from a purely bodily life and consciousness, to the next rung of the ladder, the first appearance and expression of life-force, the vital consciousness – energies and forms of the small lower vital. He moves on, moves upward, there is a growing light in and mixed with the obscurity; ignorance begins to shed its hard and dark coatings one and gives place to directed and motivated energies. He meets beings and creatures appropriate to those levels crawling and stirring and climbing, moved by the laws governing the respective regions. In this way Ashwapati passes on into the higher vital, into the border of the mental.

Ashwapati now observes with a clear vividness that all these worlds and the beings and forces that inhabit them are stricken as it were with a bar sinister branded upon their bodies. In spite of an inherent urge of ascension the way is not a straight road but devious and crooked breaking into by-lanes and blind alleys. There is a great corruption and perversion of natural movements towards Truth: falsehoods and pretensions, arrogance of blindness reign here in various degrees. Ashwapati sought to know the wherefore of it all. So he goes behind, dives down and comes into a region that seems to be the source and basis of all ignorance and obscurity and falsehood. He comes into the very heart of the Night, the abyss of

consciousness. He meets there the Mother of Evil and the sons of darkness. He stands before

. . . the gate of the false Infinite,
An eternity of disastrous absolutes ¹

Here are the forces that pull down and lure away to perdition all that man's aspirations and the world's urge seek to express and build of Divine things. It is the world in which the forces of the original inconscience find their primitive play. They are dark and dangerous: they prey upon earth's creatures who are not content with being vassals of darkness but try to move to the Light.

Dangerous is this passage for the celestial aspirant:

Where the red Wolf waits by the fordless stream
And Death's black eagles scream to the precipice. . . ²

He must be absolutely vigilant, absolutely on his guard, absolutely sincere.

Here must the traveller of the upward way –
For daring Hell's kingdoms winds the heavenly route –
Pause or pass slowly through that perilous space,
A prayer upon his lips and the great Name.³

But there is no escape. The divine traveller has to pass through this region. For it lies athwart his path to the goal. Not only so, it is necessary to go through this Night. For Ashwapati

Knew death for a cellar of the house of life,
In destruction felt creation's hasty pace,
Knew loss as the price of a celestial gain
And hell as a short cut to heaven's gates.⁴

Ashwapati now passes into the higher luminous regions. He enters regions of larger breath and wider movement – the higher vital and then into the yet more luminous region of the higher mind. He reaches the heavens where immortal sages and the divinities and the gods themselves dwell. Even these Ashwapati finds to

1. Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*, Book II: Canto 8: p. 250.

2. Ibid: Book II: Canto 8: p. 260.

3. Ibid: Book II: Canto 7: p. 238.

4. Ibid: Book II: Canto 8: p. 262.

be only partial truths, various aspects, true but limited, of the One Reality beyond. Thus he leaves all behind and reaches into the single sole Reality, the transcendental Truth of things, the status vast and infinite and eternal, immutable existence and consciousness and bliss.

A Vastness brooded free from sense of Space,
An Everlastingness cut off from Time. . .
"A stillness absolute, incommunicable. . .¹

Here seems to be the end of the quest, and one would fain stay there ever and ever in that status

. . occult, impenetrable, —
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone. ²

Ashwapati was perhaps about to be lured into that Bliss but suddenly a doubt enters into him – there is a hesitation, a questioning; he hears a voice:

The ego is dead; we are free from being and care,
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.
O soul, it is too early to rejoice!
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;
But where hast thou thrown self's mission and self's power?
On what dead bank on the Eternal's road? ³

Ashwapati veers round. A new perception, a new consciousness begins to open within him. A new urge moves him. He has to start on a new journey, a new quest and achievement. The world exists neither as a Truth nor as an illusion in itself. It exists in and through the Mother of the worlds. There is a motive in its existence and it is her will that is being worked out in that existence. The world moves for the fulfilment of a purpose that is being evolved through earth-life and human-life. The ignorant incomplete human life upon earth is not the be-all and end-all of the life here. That life has to evolve into a life of light and love and joy perfect here below. Nature as it is now will be transmuted into a new pure and radiant substance. Ashwapati is filled with this new urge and inspired by this new vision. He sees and understands now the truth of his life, the goal that has to be achieved, the great

1. Op. tit. Book III: Cantos 1-2: pp. 349; 351.

2. Op. tit. Book III: Canto 1: p. 350.

3. Op. tit. Book III: Canto 2: p. 351.

dream that has to be realised here upon earth in and through matter. He sees how nature has been labouring ceaselessly and tirelessly through aeons through eternity onward. He is now almost impatient to see the consummation here and now. The divine Voice however shows him the wisdom of working patiently, hastening slowly. The Voice admonishes him:

I ask thee not to merge thy heart of flame
In the Immobile's wide uncaring bliss. . .
Thy soul was born to share the laden Force;
Obey thy nature and fulfil thy fate:
Accept the difficulty and godlike toil,
For the slow-paced omniscient purpose live. . .
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour.¹

But the human flame once kindled is hard to put down. It seeks an immediate result. It does not understand the fullness of time. So Ashwapati cries out:

Heavy and long are the years our labour counts
And still the seals are firm upon man's soul,
And weary is the ancient Mother's heart.
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time. . .
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate."²

This great cry of the human soul moved the Divine Mother and she granted at last its prayer. She answered by bestowing of her motherly comfort on the yearning thirsty soul:

O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law. . .
A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.³

And She herself came down upon earth as Ashwapati's daughter to undertake the human labour and accomplish the Divine work.

1. Op. tit. Book III: Canto 4: pp. 380; 386.

2. Op. tit. Book III: Canto 4: pp. 390-91.

3. Op. tit. Book III: Canto 4: pp. 391-92.

(2)

The Divine Mother is upon earth as a human creature. She is to change the mortal earth into an immortal paradise. Earth at present is a bundle of material inconscience. The Supreme Consciousness has manifested itself as supreme unconsciousness. The Divine has lost itself in pulverising itself, scattering itself abroad. Immortality is thus entombed here below in death. The task of the incarnate Supreme Consciousness is to revive the death-bound divinity, to free the human consciousness in its earthly life from the obscurity of the material unconsciousness, re-install it in its original radiant status of the Divine Consciousness.

Such is Savitri's mission. This mission has two sessions or periods. The first, that of preparation; the second, that of fulfilment. Savitri, the human embodiment was given only twelve months out of her earthly life and in that short space of time she had to do all the preparation. She knew her work from her very birth, she was conscious of her nature and the mission she was entrusted with. Now she is facing the crisis. Death is there standing in front. What is to be done, how is she to proceed? She was told she is to conquer Death, she is to establish immortal life upon mortal earth. The Divine Voice rings out:

Arise, soul, and vanquish Time and Death.¹

Yes, she is ready to do it, but not for herself, but for her Love, the being who was the life of her life. Savitri is the Divine Consciousness but here in the mortal body she is clothed in the human consciousness; it is the human consciousness that she is to lead upward and beyond and it is in and through the human consciousness that the Divine Realisation has to be express and established. The human Savitri declares: If Death is conquered, it is for the sake of Satyavan living eternally with her. She seems to say: What I wish to see is the living Satyavan and I united with him for ever. I do not need an earthly life without him; with him I prefer to be in another world if necessary away from the obscurity and turmoil of this earth here.

My strength is taken from me and given to Death,
Why should I lift my hands to the shut heavens. . .
Why should I strive with earth's unyielding laws
Or stave off death's inevitable hour?
This surely is best to pactise with my fate
And follow close behind my lover's step
And pass through night from twilight to the sun. ²

1. Op. cit. Book VII: Canto 2: p. 539.

2. Op. cit. Book VII: Canto 2: p. 539.

But a thunderous voice descends from above shaking Savitri to the very basis of her existence.

“And what shall thy soul say when it wakes and knows
The work was left undone for which it came?”¹

Thus a crisis very similar to that which Ashwapati had to face now confronts Savitri also. Both of them were at the crossroads away from the earth in the pure delights of the heavens or in the world labouring on earth's soil. Savitri's soul was now revealed to her in its fullness. She viewed the mighty destiny for which she had come down and the great work she had to achieve here upon earth, not any personal or individual human satisfaction or achievement but a cosmic fulfilment, a global human realisation. The godhead in Savitri is now fully awake, established in its plenitude – the Divinity incarnate in the human frame. All the godheads, all the goddess-emanations now entered into her and moulded the totality of her mighty stature.

Here begins then the second stage of her mission, – her work and achievement, the conquest of Death. Only the Divine human being can conquer Death. Savitri follows Death step by step revealing gradually the mystery of death, his personality and his true mission, although the dark God thinks that it is he who is taking away Satyavan and Savitri along with him, to his own home, his black annihilation. For Death is that in its first appearance, it is utter destruction, nothingness, non-existence. So the mighty Godhead declares in an imperious tone to the mortal woman Savitri:

This is my silent dark immensity,
This is the home of everlasting Night,
This is the secrecy of Nothingness
Entombing the vanity of life's desires. . .
Hapest thou still always to last and love?²

Indeed Death is not merely a destruction of the body, it is in reality nothingness, non-being. The moment being, existence, reality manifested itself, established itself as a material fact, simultaneously there came out and stood against it, its opposite non-being, non-existence, non-reality; against an everlasting 'yes' there was posited an everlasting 'no'. And in fact, this everlasting No proves to be a greater effective reality, it has wound itself around every constituent atom of the universe. That is what has expressed itself in the material domain as the irreversible degra-

1. Op. cit. Book VII: Canto 2: p. 540.

2. Op. cit. Book IX: Canto 2: p. 661.

dation of energy and in the mortal world it is denial and doubt and falsehood – it is that which brings about failure in life, and frustration, misery and grief. But then Savitri's vision penetrated beyond and she saw, Death is a way of achieving the end more swiftly and more completely. The negation is an apparent obstacle in order to increase, to purify and intensify the speed of the process by which the world and humanity is being remodelled and recreated. This terrible Godhead pursues the human endeavour till the end; until he finds that nothing more is to be done; then his mission too is fulfilled.¹ So a last cry, the cry of a desperate dying Death, pierces the universe and throws the final challenge to Savitri:

O human claimant to immortality,
 Reveal thy power, lay bare thy spirit's force,
 Then will I give back to thee Satyavan.
 Or if the Mighty Mother is with thee,
 Show me her face that I may worship her;
 Let deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death. . .²

Death's desire, his prayer too is fulfilled. He faces Savitri but this is not the Savitri against whom he fought. Whose is this voice?

I hail thee almighty and victorious Death,
 Thou grandiose Darkness of the Infinite. . .
 I have given thee thy awful shape of dread
 And thy sharp sword of terror and grief and pain
 To force the soul of man to struggle for light. . .³

What happens thereafter is something strange and tremendous and miraculous. Light flashed all around, a leaping tongue of fire spread out and the dark form of Death was burnt-not to ashes but to blazing sparks of light:

His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured. ⁴

1. We are reminded here of a parallelism in Goethe's conception of the role of Satan (the Negative Principle) in human affairs. Satan is not merely a destroying devil, he is a constructive angel. For it is he

Who must goad and tease
 And toil to serve creation.

whenever

Man's efforts sink below his proper level.

2. Op. cit. Book X: Canto 4: p. 745.

3. Op. cit. Book X: Canto 4: p. 747.

4. Op. cit. Book X: Canto 4: p. 749.

Thus Death came to his death – not to death in reality but to a new incarnation. Death returned to his original divine Reality, an emanation of the Divine Mother.

A secret splendour rose revealed to sight
Where once the vast embodied Void had stood.
Night the dim mask had grown a wonderful face.¹

In that domain of pure transcendent light stood face to face the human Savitri and the transformed Satyavan.

(3)

Savitri has entered into the deathless luminous world where there is only faultless beauty, stainless delight and an unmeasured self-gathered strength. Savitri heard the melodious voice of the Divine:

You have now left earth's miseries and its impossible conditions, you have reached the domain of unalloyed felicity and you need not go back to the old turbulent life: dwell here both of you and enjoy eternal bliss.

But Savitri answered firm and moveless:

I climb not to thy everlasting Day,
Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night. . .
Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield. . .
Thy servitudes on earth are greater, king,
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.²

Once more Savitri, even like Ashwapati, has to make a choice between two destinies, two soul-movements – although the choice is already made even before it is offered to her. Ashwapati had to abandon, we know, the silent immutable transcendent status of pure light in order to bathe in this lower earthly light. Savitri too as the prototype of human consciousness chose and turned to this light of the earth.

The Rishi of the Upanishad declared: they who worship only Ignorance enter into darkness, but they who worship knowledge alone enter into a still darker darkness. This world of absolute light which Savitri names 'everlasting day' is what the Upanishadic Rishi sees and describes as the golden lid upon the face of the Sun. The Sun is the complete integral light of the Truth in its fullness. The golden covering has to be removed if one is to see the Sun itself – to live the integral life, one has

1. Op. cit. Book XI: Canto I: p. 762.

2. Op. cit. Book XI: Canto I: p. 770.

to possess the integral truth.

So it is that Savitri comes down upon earth and standing upon its welcoming soil speaks to Satyavan as though consoling him for having abandoned their own abode in heaven to dwell among mortal men:

Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not our earth. . .
Still am I she who came to thee mid the murmur
Of sunlit leaves upon this forest verge. . .
All that I was before, I am to thee still. . .¹

Voicing Satyavan's thought and feeling, all humanity, the whole world in joy and gratefulness, utters this mantra of thanksgiving:

If this is she of whom the world has heard,
Wonder no more at any happy change.²

(Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol. 4, pp. 237-46)

1. Op. cit. Book XII: p. 808.

2. Op. cit. Book XII: p. 812.

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Savitri

the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision.

(CWM Vol. 13, p.24)

The Mother