



**Four Aspects of
*Savitri***

Ananda Reddy

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of
Savitri**

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Puducherry, India



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Dedicated to
Savitri and Satyavan
The Mother and Sri Aurobindo

Tu peux compter sur
mes bénédictions pour
comprendre vraiment
Savitri dans sa signification
profonde et magnifique



You can be sure of my blessings for truly understanding Savitri in its deep and magnificent meaning.

-The Mother
14.09.1964

(The Mother's Blessings to Ananda Reddy)

Preface

Sitting in the lap of the Himalayas,
Under the sky's blue laugh mid green-scarfed trees
And happy squanderings of scents and hues,
In the field of the golden promenade of the sun
And the vigil of the dream-light of the stars,
Amid high meditating heads of hills,
On the bosom of voluptuous rain-kissed earth... (*Savitri*, BX.C3)

We were in the best possible place to experience the delight of reading *Savitri*. We had gathered from different parts of the world to attend a study camp at Van Nivas, Nainital, in the year 2006.

I had dared to lead the study group not knowing what thought and emotions would pass through my benumbed mind and trepidating heart. Almost eight years back I had attempted a retreat on *Savitri* in one of the quiet, small towns of Germany. It was my very first attempt to share my understanding of *Savitri* with others. It was an audience of twenty odd participants who were being introduced to this marvellous epic. May be because the group was small I had no hesitation in leading the group. But this time at Nainital there were not only more number of participants but they were mostly well read in *Savitri*, hence the nervousness.

A volta-face happened as soon as I remembered the Mother's promise and

blessings given to me in 1964: “You can be sure of my blessings for truly understanding *Savitri* in its deep and magnificent meaning.” It was as if sudden springs of confidence and joy burst forth in my heart and I was filled with waves of delight and gratitude for the Mother. The message became the source of my inspiration, of my confidence, my connection with Her presence. I knew She would speak through me – of course depending on how much I am open in my mind and my heart centre.

Each morning started with a golden sunrise, giving multiple shades of colour on the bold rocks and the topless towers of the evergreen pines. It was as if every morning prepared itself to hear the mantric verses of *Savitri*. As the sun rose clearing the roving clouds that had enwrapped our room where we had gathered for the *Savitri-yajña*, we felt gentle warmth in it making it a perfect niche to meditate and deliberate on the “deep and magnificent” *Savitri*.

Savitri is indeed “deep and magnificent” because Sri Aurobindo the poet is at his best in this mantric creation. He is at once the Seer, *kavayah satyadrastarah*, the seer of the Truth; he is the Doer, *surya chaksuh*, the eye of the Sun, a knower as well as a creator and, lastly, he is the Seer-Will, *kavikratuh*, the dynamic knowledge supremely potent with power. In essence, Sri Aurobindo is at his peak-consciousness both on the individual and universal levels. In the Vedic terminology, he as “Savita ... manifests the Truth, as Tashta...gives a perfected body and form to the Truth, and as Vedha ... maintains the Truth in its dynamic working”. (*Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta* 2: 43). The ancient Vedic Seer-Poet is reborn in Sri Aurobindo who has prepared a new path to a new world through the mantric expression in *Savitri*!

The poetry of the future, writes Sri Aurobindo, “will be first and foremost a poetry of the intuitive reason, the intuitive senses, the intuitive delight-soul in us, getting from this enhanced source of inspiration a more sovereign poetic enthusiasm and ecstasy, and then, it may even be, rise towards a still greater power of revelation nearer to the direct vision and word of the Overmind from which all creative inspiration comes.” (CWSA 26: 226) It was as though Sri Aurobindo had first discovered by his spiritual consciousness the sources of inspiration and the characteristics of future poetry while serialising the essays in *The Future Poetry* in the years between 1917-1920 and then, later, given them an expression in *Savitri*. At least this is what Sri Aurobindo had done vis-à-vis his other writings in the *Arya*. His essential spiritual experience was that of the “Spirit being the fundamental truth of existence” and all life “only its manifestation” and this realisation was worked out on different levels: on the

metaphysical level, in *The Life Divine*; on the social level in *The Psychology of Social Development*. However, unlike all other books that he had written earlier, *Savitri* was not only a fulfilment of his prophetic vision of the future of the highest form and content of poetry but it was the “living truth” of the ascent of his consciousness towards the Supermind and its descent upon earth. This is what makes *Savitri* a synthesis of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual realisations, his yoga and his vision of the next future of humanity.

Note on Documentation

This book is the outcome of a series of talks delivered during a study camp. The talks have been transcribed and edited to suit the purpose of the readers. Wherever required certain portions have been re-written to bring greater clarity. The tone of the personal accounts and the questions and answers are purposely kept simple and colloquial.

There is a difference in the way references have been cited in the prelim pages and in the chapters. A select bibliography of the works referred to has been given at the end of the book. The abbreviation CWSA stands for Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo and CWM for Collected Works of the Mother.

Foreword

Ananda’s Anandamaya vision of *Savitri*

I have not been a stranger to ironies in my life. But this divine irony is a little overwhelming. Dr. Ananda Reddy wants me to write a foreword for his first book on a subject that is a favourite with us all: Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*. Son of Prof. V. Madhusudhan Reddy, an eminent Aurobindonian Scholar, who has drawn us to Sri Aurobindo’s Vedic vision in a big way, Ananda was brought up by one whom we consider verily the Savitri of the Book of Yoga in the epic. The Ashram ambience is totally with him and he needs no one to introduce his book on *Savitri*. I have always been the ‘outsider’, admiring the Ashram children from a distance, their gait, their brisk walk, the Playground, the lovely school so far away from the madding crowd. Yes, I have studied *Savitri* under my father, K.R.S. Iyengar’s guidance and tried to shape my life accordingly. But Ananda has seen Savitri in action, has been close to our sweet Mother who tended the altar and the kitchen that are major components of

Purna Yoga for the Ashram, so that her children could effortlessly glide into the next future. For her they were not mere children growing up in the Ashram but “the Omnipotent’s flaming pioneers”:

I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality. (*Savitri*, BI.C4)

Then, why did I allow myself to be persuaded to write this message? Ah, once one opens *Savitri*, one becomes a student of the epic for life. There is never any satiation, for there is always something new to learn. Ananda brings that refreshing ‘another’ view for me. He has tried to take the bull by the horns, as it were, by turning the focus on yoga in *Savitri*. Incidentally, this also happens to be the most demanding of the aspects of the poem. After a few indications regarding the special kind of spiritual (Overhead) poetry that streams forth in our presence, Ananda also draws our attention to Sri Aurobindo’s own explicatory letters on his work and the Mother’s intuitive symbolisation regarding the involution of the Supreme into Matter and the evolution that has followed since then.

So we move forward to take off with the four aspects of *Savitri* which is more than a literary masterpiece. Actually, Ananda is presenting four approaches to the poem as noted down by the Mother. One can study the work as “the daily record of the spiritual experiences of the individual who has written.” The individual, the Mahayogi! As our “reading eye” moves between the *Record of Yoga* and *Savitri* in the chapter, “The Daily Record”, we do get to have a distant glimpse of the process in which the legend became a symbol.

The second approach shows a change in gear. *Savitri* is not one person’s yoga, but a system which can be taken up by each one of us. There is no need for some one to teach us the steps; the poem itself acts as a facilitator. A favourite photograph of the Mother for me is the one in which she holds out a paper. It is for us to extend our hands and receive it! Like the Mother’s gifts, *Savitri* gifts not merely a sliver or two of the yogic process but the system in its entirety. In integral yoga the sadhak has to “sweat it out”, to use a crude

contemporary idiom. “We must try to transform ourselves very consciously”, says Ananda and gives the touching incident of Nolini-da and the pieces of cut lemons. The Antaryami, the Pratyagatma, the watching soul is a witness to our struggles. But the Chaitya Purusha, the psychic being in integral yoga is not only an observer but a conscious helper up to a point. The alpha and the omega of this yoga is achieving egolessness. As they say in the Telugu language, just erase the words, *nenu, naadhi, naakoraku* (me, mine and for my sake) from your life! Once this is done, the yoga of self-perfection takes the royal road to the fulfillment of the human race, as already hinted by Sri Aurobindo in the concluding lines of the poem, “The Rishi”:

Seek Him upon the earth. For thee He set
In the huge press
Of many worlds to build a mighty state
For man's success,
Who seeks his goal. Perfect thy human might,
Perfect the race.
For thou art He, O King. Only the night
Is on thy soul
By thy own will. Remove it and recover
The serene whole
Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover
To God the goal. (CWSA 2:237)

This brings us to the third approach indicated by the Mother and elaborated by Ananda, “The Yoga of the Earth”. Integral yoga, is indeed meant for transforming life on earth into the life divine. Countering the Advaitic explanation of the Brahman being without any attributes, Sri Aurobindo had said crisply: “But this world is Brahman, the world is God, the world is Satyam, the world is Ananda.” (CWSA12: 76) All these qualities are imbedded in Matter. The transformatory touch of this yoga can bring all that out, like an expert sculptor whose chisel transformed a rocky boulder into the Bahubali statue at Sravanabelagola. There are times when Ananda wonders whether all these talks on sadhana, seminars on transformation and even meditation and devotional music are but illusions. “One single touch, one single call of her name and all else is illusion.” Which is quite true but not all are lucky enough to be close to a *vibhava avatara*, when the Supreme incarnates on earth to lead us, as were the people of Ayodhya or the cowherds of Gokula or the sadhaks and the children who had found a divine sanctuary in Sri Aurobindo

Ashram. These like Ananda and his wife Deepshikha are very few but there are millions like me who have to depend on all these instruments at one time or another! All the same, Ananda has given a much-needed warning lest we sorrow like the eminent poet, T.S.Eliot:

Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
(*Choruses from the Rock*)

“The Experiences of the Divine Mother” is not only the fourth approach but is vital to our understanding of the entire volume. This chapter proves that *Savitri* was no work of an arm-chair philosopher. Sri Aurobindo himself undertook this yoga and the Mother did so to prove that *Savitri* is about a workable concept. Through Ananda’s thesis we see the Divine as human trying to get back to its divine origins. After all, the descent of the Divine Mother is “the holocaust of Prakriti” for the sake of her children. How the Mother suffered! Composed on 31st July, 1935,

Sri Aurobindo’s “A God’s Labour” had pithily described it all:

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way. (CWSA 2: 534)

The chapter is an important research paper carefully plaited with the *Mother’s Agenda*, *Savitri* and Mona Sarkar’s book, *The Supreme*. The study clarifies the physical limitations of earth nature that claw at the incarnation. Where even an ordinary, ignorant mother suffers willingly for her child, would the Divine Mother leave us alone, to be lost in the darkness of incapacity, death and ignorance?

So characteristic of Ananda’s style that after all the intricate weave, just when we think that yoga is not as easy as it seems and begin to turn away, he sets down the final message from the Mother given to Champaklal, verily a tiny handful of *amrita* for the beginner who turns back at once:

Be quiet,
be simple,
be happy, do your work as well as you can
and always remain open to me.
That is all that is asked of you. (*Champaklal Speaks*)

This is the first book on *Savitri* by Ananda. I look forward to more insights from him, taking along the initiated as well as the novice on the sunlit path, in the background of a gently-strummed *sruti* of Ananda's own total surrender at the Mother's feet, helping the reader quaff the nectar of *Savitri*.

*yam yam lokam manasā samvibhāti
viśuddha-sattvah kāmāyate yāmśca kāmān,
tam tam lokam jāyate tāmśca kāmāmstasmād
ātmajñam hyarcayed bhūti-kāmah (3.1.10)*

“Whatever world the man whose inner being is purified sheds the light of his mind upon, and whatsoever desires he cherishes, that world he takes by conquest, and those desires. Then, let whosoever seeks for success and well-being approach with homage a self-knower.” (*Mundaka Upanishad*, Ch. III, section 1, x. Translated by Sri Aurobindo.)

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After years of patience and persuasion, after much doubt and debate, I took courage to publish in book form the edited transcripts of the recordings of a workshop on *Savitri* held in October 2006, at Van Niwas, Nainital, Uttarakhand, India.

It is an acknowledged fact that a book of this genre, where the spoken word dominates the written sentences, many minds had to collaborate and contribute their respective editorial talents. They immensely enriched and brought the book to its final stages. This is the moment to express my gratitude to all members of SACAR involved in this work. My first gesture of gratitude goes to my wife Deepshikha who worked hard to get the recording transcribed and preserved them for long. She also helped me in the first editing of the book. I thank Mirajyoti and Shruti Bidwaikar for polishing the language and for their dedication in seeing through the publication of this book – *Four Aspects of Savitri*. Miresch and Vipul need special thanks for their technical help and paginating the book meticulously.

This book will surely gain much more acceptability because of the Foreword written by Dr. Prema Nandakumar whom the literary world in India knows as

one of the most prolific writers, critics and speakers on Indian classical literature. But, for me, her book on *Savitri* – the very first one written for her doctorate – has been my inspiration since my student days. I express my heartfelt gratitude to her for her gracious gesture.

Beyond all human aid it is the Mother's blessings and assurance of her help that emboldened me to bring out this book and share it with the readers.

In utter humility I offer this work of mine in the hands of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. May they accept it and open my mind and heart further so I may constantly think of them, speak of them and sing of them forever!

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Chapter 1

An Epic of Truth, Beauty and Delight

Savitri is the incantation of an Incarnation. It is his Word – “it is truth in its Splenitude, the Truth Sri Aurobindo brought down on the earth”.¹ It is “a mantra for the transformation of the world.”² It is “The Word, a mighty and inspiring Voice,” that “Enters Truth’s inmost cabin of privacy/ And tears away the veil from God and life.” (*Savitri*, BX.C4) It is like the *sabda-Brahman* containing both the subjective aspect of Sacchidanandam–Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and the objective aspect of Satyam Jnanam Anantam – Truth, Knowledge, Infinity.

In its objective aspect it brings out “the essential truth (and truths) in things and also its infinite possibilities.”³ This, in fact, is the essential characteristic of Overmind aesthesis: to record the truths underlying “mysticism, occultism, philosophy, the history of evolution, the history of man, of the gods, of creation, of nature.”⁴ When we open any page of *Savitri* we find deep truths revealed on each. Let us take at random a line: “My father, I have chosen. This is done.” (*Savitri*, BVI.C1) This announcement by Savitri is laden with many layers of meaning — physical, psychological, occult and spiritual. Essentially it throws light on two facets of Savitri — the human and the divine.

Indeed, all along this soul-epic, Sri Aurobindo gives us “the key to find the Truth, to discover the Consciousness, to solve the problem of what the universe is.”⁵ The underlying truth of the universe is that it is not what it seems to be – a universe of infinitely separated individual forms. Behind the infinite forms there is the One:

Existence found its truth on Oneness’ breast
And each became the self and space of all.
The great world-rhythms were heart-beats of one Soul,
To feel was a flame-discovery of God,
All mind was a single harp of many strings,
All life a song of many meeting lives;
For worlds were many, but the Self was one. (*Savitri*, BIII.C3)

We realise that the truth Sri Aurobindo reveals is not merely the truth of fact or idea or an inspiration of higher thought bordering on spiritual consciousness. “It has the truth of spiritual thought, spiritual feeling, spiritual sense and at its highest the truth that comes by the most intimate spiritual touch or by identity.”⁶ Let us take up the passage:

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. (*Savitri*, B1.C4)

What we feel on reading this passage is that it describes pure Truth without any adornment or affectation, in plain and bare imagery, resembling the stark and golden-hued Himalayan peaks. It is a magnificent and cryptic statement of integral philosophy which runs through the whole book in one form or another, employing “whatever terms are necessary to convey this truth of vision and experience...”⁷

Overmind consciousness reveals not only the truths of the Superconscient levels beyond the mind of man, but it brings out also “the truth of the Inconscient”, the Subliminal and the Subconscient. Such a depiction of truth from the Superconscient to the Inconscient and all the levels that lie in-between, is not done for the sake of any philosophic discourse. With Sri Aurobindo to describe a level of consciousness is to lend the words the power to manifest.

The previous avatars had conquered the Asuric powers by harnessing the highest powers that Nature in her evolution had brought forth till then. Be it Sri Rama or Sri Krishna — the highest consciousness that was available to them to triumph over the anti-divine forces was that of sattwic or of spiritual nature. It is true that Asuras like Ravana and Kansa were killed. But the fallen heads of Ravana breathed anew in different forms of demoniac ego and humanity was engulfed time and again in the inconscience of adharma. But, Savitri journeys deeper to the Inconscient and transforms Death in an irrevocable manner. Such a penetration of the Divine Grace and Love coupled with the Supramental force could alone transform Death, and give earth the possibility of coming out of its inconscience, untruth, death and suffering once and for all. This is what is unique about Savitri’s mission — it is to transform the earth by re-kindling the Supramental consciousness in Matter:

O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light

And bring down God into the lives of men;
Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house,
My garden of life to plant a seed divine.
When all thy work in human time is done
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

This magnificent vision of the destiny of the earth and man is revealed in about twenty-four thousand lines in *Savitri*. It also encompasses the beginningless past of creation and the infinite future of evolution. It is as if Time and Timelessness are brought together in the Present on the “day when Satyavan must die”. Although the theme of the epic seems to be woven around the happenings of one day, the day of the death of Satyavan, it expands into the Timeless consciousness. The poet does not use the philosophic logic to bind together ideas; he moves from truth to truth of “all the planes of being and their action upon each other”⁸. To the non-initiate these vistas of truth may seem “abstract ideas”, but there is in each one of them a “living truth or reality”. Each image and description is in itself a light of truth and consciousness quite incomprehensible to the mental consciousness.

Secondly, typical of the Overmind consciousness, Truth in *Savitri* expresses itself in “a total and many sided vision and experience of all the planes of the being and their action upon each other.”⁹ And human mind is not used to comprehending the multiple dimensions of the Overmind consciousness and therefore gets confused and frustrated while trying to grasp the truth-vision of *Savitri*. Modern poets find it hard to appreciate *Savitri* because they are not familiar with these truths which, as we have seen, belong to a domain of consciousness far above the ordinary mind. Nor can they grasp the thought behind the lines because more than thought there is inspiration and intuition which bring in their own expression and rhythm quite alien to modern poetry that has denuded it of all true heights of poetic expression and vision. Deep emotion is replaced by sensationalism and vital titillation, poetic rhythm and style is turned into colloquial expression and all philosophical reflection to mundane social issues.

Added to this difficulty is *Savitri's* presentation of “its thought, feeling, vision”, which is “high or deep or wide or all things together”, in a massiveness of thought and density of symbolism. This difficulty in understanding *Savitri* cannot be avoided because it is an expression of Overmind consciousness and

naturally presents its thought in a —

...corresponding language and rhythm. The higher thought has a strong tread often with bare unsandalled feet and moves in a clear-cut light: a divine power, measure, dignity is its most frequent character. The outflow of the illumined mind comes in a flood brilliant with revealing words or a light of crowding images, sometimes surcharged with its burden of revelations, sometimes with a luminous sweep. The intuition is usually a lightning flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye; its rhythm has a decisive inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential unheard, but very commonly is embodied in a single stroke.¹⁰

Fortunately, as if to alleviate these difficulties of understanding the thought that sails from the levels of Intuition or Inspiration, there is the aspect of beauty and delight which sweeps across this epic of the Supreme. The reader can not only experience this delight but also profit from it on the soul level. Let us read the lines:

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,
An imperishable Force touching brute things
Transform earth's death into immortal life.
Then can thy dead return to thee and live.
The prostrate earth perhaps shall lift her gaze
And feel near her the secret body of God
And love and joy overtake fleeing Time. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

In these lines we find the prophetic vision of the possibility of transforming the earth. Apart from the vision there is an overflow of the anticipating joy of getting a glimpse of the face of that Supreme Creatrix of Beauty and Delight. Even Death is waiting to see this Face whom it may “worship”! Love and joy fill the reader's heart and soul, and his mind is intensely thrilled at the possibility of the divine apocalypse!

As writes Sri Aurobindo:

Truth is not merely a dry statement of facts or ideas to or by the intellect; it

can be a splendid discovery, a rapturous revelation, a thing of beauty that is a joy for ever. The poet also can be a seeker and lover of truth as well as a seeker and lover of beauty. He can feel a poetic and aesthetic joy in the expression of the true as well as in the expression of the beautiful...But also there is another action of Overmind which sees and thinks and creates in masses, which reunites separated things, which reconciles opposites. On that level truth and beauty not only become constant companions but become one, involved in each other, inseparable: on that level the true is always beautiful and the beautiful is always true.¹¹

One of the perfect examples of pure and sheer poetry are the following lines:

O Bliss who ever dwellst deep-hid within...
Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,
Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
Mission to earth some living form of thee.
One moment fill with thy eternity,
Let thy infinity in one body live,
All-Knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
All-Love throb single in one human heart...
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate. (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

A magnificent description of Goddess Savitri, splendid heights of a prayer to the Divine, marvellous imagery instilling worship and delight! This whole passage is like a mantra with the full power of manifestation. It describes Aswapathy's prayer and invocation to the Goddess to manifest on earth. To this prayer the Goddess responds:

O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature's doom by the lone Spirit's power. (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

In this and many other passages truth, beauty and delight, *satyam shivam sundaram* become inseparably one. Truth is Beauty and Beauty Truth! In lines describing the first hour before the gods awoke, or the hour when "Savitri too awoke among these tribes", there is an overwhelming touch of "the flaming doors of ecstasy". (*Savitri*, BI.C1) Similarly, there is a deep power of delight or an exuding Ananda in lines which describe Savitri's search for her life-partner or her soul.

Beauty that is Delight, Delight that is Love is not the exclusive privilege of the higher levels beyond mind or the caves of the Subliminal. They express themselves in all moods and movements of Nature:

As if sunbeams made living and divine,
The golden-bosomed Apsara goddesses,
In groves flooded from an argent disk of bliss
That floated through a luminous sapphire dream,
In a cloud of raiment lit with golden limbs
And gleaming footfalls treading faery swards,
Virgin motions of bacchant innocences
Who know their riot for a dance of God,
Whirled linked in moonlit revels of the heart. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

Or,

Eternal mountains ridge on gleaming ridge
Whose lines were graved as on a sapphire plate
And etched the borders of heaven's lustrous noon
Climbed like piled temple stairs and from their heads
Of topless meditation heard below
The approach of a blue pilgrim multitude
And listened to a great arriving voice
Of the wide travel hymn of timeless seas. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

On reading these lines on Nature which is but a tabernacle of God, the body of Brahman, one gets deep feelings of adoration for the Unknowable.

Savitri is thus, to use a Vedic imagery, the body of Beauty and Delight, the "Soma, the god of the Ananda", that divine delight which "once manifest, supports all life's crowning activities"¹² upon earth for it is the *dharmakshetra* of evolution.

Savitri, like the Isha Upanishad, follows throughout an "uncompromising reconciliation of uncompromising extremes".¹³ The extremes that *Savitri* resolves, reconciles are like the one's given in the Isha Upanishad. Again like the Isha Upanishad, *Savitri* focuses on not only manifesting higher Truth, Beauty and Delight but it synthesises these with their very opposites on the Life plane. In fact through this synthesis of the extreme principles *Savitri* deals with many more issues than what the Isha has covered making "life itself the field of the immortal existence"¹⁴ and wanting to transform earth-life into a life divine.

Unlike the Upanishads which are cryptic in their language, *Savitri* describes the path at length: “the way to liberate oneself from the ignorance and climb right up to the superconscience; each stage, each plane of consciousness, how they can be scaled, how one can cross even the barrier of death and reach immortality.”¹⁵

Whatever be the description of Life — its expression through Nature or man or gods — there is behind all these descriptions a deep sympathy born of a divine impersonality of the seer-poet. This sympathy turns into compassion and love, divine grace and solace in the personality of Savitri. Take for example her meeting the triple soul-forces — the three goddesses of the overmental world, the “Madonna of light”, the “Madonna of might”, and the “Madonna of suffering”. These Madonnas claim to be Savitri’s “secret soul” and they recount their role and mission upon earth. But, their work is obstructed by the perversions of the three Forces — “the tamasic ego”, “the dwarf-Titan”, and “the sense-shackled” mental ego. Listening to all of their woes Savitri responds with intense divine Love and compassion:

One day I will return, His hand in mine,
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,
Then shall the divine family be born.
There shall be light and peace in all the worlds. (*Savitri*, BVII.C4)

There are many more inspiring passages in *Savitri* that bring to the suffering humanity hopes of greater dawns than what the earth has experienced till now. These heavens of Delight and Beauty and Truth are found not only in the supracosmic worlds but they will become the realities of a perfected and transformed earth of tomorrow. This is the promise given to humanity:

A divine force shall flow through tissue and cell
And take the charge of breath and speech and act
And all the thoughts shall be a glow of suns
And every feeling a celestial thrill...
Thus shall the earth open to divinity
And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit’s ray
And meet the deity in common things.
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,

This earthly life become the life divine. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

In a letter to a disciple Sri Aurobindo reiterated the promise:

I am concerned with the earth, not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits. All other yogas regard this life as an illusion or a passing phase; the supramental yoga alone regards it as a thing created by the Divine for a progressive manifestation and takes the fulfilment of the life and the body for its object...¹⁶

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is en masse a body of Beauty and Bliss; an invasion of Light and Power; an adventure of Consciousness and Joy. And all this packed in the simple story of Savitri and Satyavan from the Mahabharata. It is indeed the wonder of wonders in the world of literature for it is the poetry of soul's adventure with the infinite as the backdrop. Indeed "there is nothing like it in the whole world", says the Mother:

It is of immense value — spiritual value and all other values; it is eternal in its subject and infinite in its appeal, miraculous in its mode and power of execution; it is a unique thing, the more you come in contact with it, the higher you will be uplifted. Ah! truly it is something! It is the most beautiful thing he has left for man, the highest possible.¹⁷

References:

1. *Perspectives I*: १⁹
2. *Udar: One of Mother's Children*: 164
3. CWSA 27: 28
4. *Perspectives I*: 46
5. Ibid.
6. CWSA 27:28
7. Ibid., 95
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 37
11. Ibid., 44
12. CWSA 15: 184
13. CWSA 17: 83
14. CWSA 17: 84
15. *Perspectives I*: 46
16. CWSA 29: 482

Chapter 2

Sri Aurobindo's Note on *Savitri*

The Mother declared that *Savitri* is “the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision.”¹ It is a mantra for the transformation of the world. It “is a revelation, it is a meditation, it is a quest of the Infinite, the Eternal.”² It is that “marvellous prophetic poem which will be humanity’s guide towards its future realisation”³. It is the fulfilment in its widest sense of Sri Aurobindo’s Gayatri mantra:

*tat savitur varam rupam jyotih parasya dheemahi
yannah satyena deepayet*

Let us meditate on the most auspicious (best) form of *Savitri*, on the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth.⁴

An epic marvel, a work with such intensities of spiritual experiences and expression is indeed too high and vast for the understanding of the present humanity. “*Savitri* is occult knowledge and spiritual experience”, the Mother emphasised. “Some part of it can be understood mentally but much of it needs the same knowledge and experience for understanding it. Nobody here except myself can explain *Savitri*.”⁵

Thus were born the explanations of *Savitri* given by the Mother to Huta some of which have been published in a series of books titled *About Savitri*. From her comments we understand that she alone could have explained *Savitri*, for, did she not say that the experiences described in *Savitri* were also her own simultaneous realisations? I will read a passage from the Mother:

It is my sadhana which he [Sri Aurobindo] has worked out. Each object, each event, each realisation, all the descriptions, even the colours are exactly what I saw and the words, phrases are also exactly what I heard. And all this before having read the book. I read *Savitri* many times afterwards, but earlier when he was writing, he used to read it to me. Every morning I used to hear him read *Savitri*. During the night he would write and in the morning read it to me. And I observed something curious, that day after day, the experiences he read out to me in the morning were those I had had the previous night, word by word...Yes, they were exactly my experiences of the previous night which he read out to me the following morning.⁶

This is why *Savitri* has been considered by many scholars and devotees as a spiritual autobiography of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This view is corroborated by a letter of Sri Aurobindo to Amal Kiran in 1947: “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... 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.”⁷

In the passage earlier quoted from the Mother we also get an indication from her that though some parts of *Savitri* can be “understood mentally, much of it needs the same knowledge and experience or understanding”. Of course, it is true that there are certain portions in *Savitri* which can be appreciated by the mind if it is open to the higher consciousness. It is for such an appreciation that I have selected Sri Aurobindo’s “Author’s Note” on *Savitri* which may open for us doors to a deeper vision. Perhaps we all have read it, but most of us may not have really paused to look into it deeply. Normally, we give it a cursory reading and do not delve deeper into its symbolism. But this time when I looked closely, I found in it different layers of meaning:

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; Aswapathy, 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.⁸

My endeavour here is to delve deep into the symbolism of *Savitri* given by both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Let us now take up each phrase and sentence separately and find out its deeper import. This will surely help us to

rediscover *Savitri*.

A Story of Conjugal Love

The first sentence of the Author's Note reads: "The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death." It is the original story taken from Mahabharata, written in a section called Vana Parva. It is narrated by Rishi Markandeya in whose name we have even a Purana called *Markandeya Purana*. It is one of the magnificent Puranas dedicated to Devi Mahatmyam. The name itself suggests that it is going to be an episode woven around the greatness of the Divine Mother whose embodiment is Savitri herself as seen in Sri Aurobindo's interpretation. In this manner he has taken the simple story of conjugal love and transformed it into a symbol of Love conquering Death.

A symbolic myth of the Vedic cycle

The second line of the Note is: "...this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle." As generally understood the Vedic cycle describes human life as a journey towards the realisation of soul-immortality. In this long and upward journey there are dangers and hurdles but man is constantly helped by godheads. The legend of Savitri and Satyavan transformed by Sri Aurobindo into a symbol, also depicts an arduous battle to conquer and transform Death. And here too the supreme Mother intervenes and resolves the crisis. This is what perhaps Sri Aurobindo is referring to when he says that this legend of Savitri fits into the concept of the Vedic cycle. In this symbolic interpretation of the legend, Savitri and Satyavan are shown to realise not only the immortality of the soul but physical immortality itself.

The Vedic cycle which had begun in times immemorial culminates in Sri Aurobindo who completes the cycle of aspiration for physical immortality. Apart from the Vedas, till the coming of Sri Aurobindo, hardly anyone ever conceived the concept and the process of attaining physical immortality becoming an evolutionary strategy. There have been innumerable attempts for realising the Brahmic consciousness, to attain union with the Self, to experience Nirvana etc., but no one has particularly envisaged the possibility of physical immortality. There may have been some wishful thinking of such a state by poets and philosophers but none have really made an attempt. Thus it is a great leap right from the Vedas to Sri Aurobindo: the rainbow arc that has the Veda at one end with its concept of physical immortality and Sri

Aurobindo at the other end with his embodied knowledge and experience of the process of the transformation of the physical body. The aeonic gulf has been now bridged and the work almost accomplished.

Satyavan: the soul carrying the divine truth

The next line is: “Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance;” In *Savitri*, Satyavan is described thus:

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-beings’ forms:
He is the soul of man climbing to God
In Nature’s surge out of earth’s ignorance. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

Here is the clear meaning and significance of Satyavan as a personality and soul. Narad too describes Satyavan in a similar manner:

A sapphire cutting from the sleep of heaven,
Delightful is the soul of Satyavan,... (*Savitri*, BVI.C1)

It is the Mother who in her simple words has given us his true significance: “Satyavan is the soul of earth, the earth’s *jiva*.” She used the Sanskrit term “*jiva*” whereas Sri Aurobindo puts it in a philosophic manner: “He is my soul that gropes out of the beast” and “He is the soul of man climbing to God/ In Nature’s surge out of earth’s ignorance”. When we put these together, the understanding that emerges is that Satyavan is the evolutionary Avatar or the incarnation who surges out of earth’s ignorance. The fact that he is the divine soul descended into the grip of Death and Ignorance means that this is the Divine Consciousness which has entered the Inconscient.

In order to understand the nature of this Descent we need to take help of the “Story of Creation” narrated by the Mother. She recounts the concept of creation from the Vedic and Chaldean traditions. She says that when the Supreme wanted to become the Many he brought forth his own Consciousness. This Consciousness, in its turn, went forth and created out of itself four emanations — those of Truth, Light, Love and Life — which were asked to create the worlds. But, unfortunately these emanations, as they went on their mission, forgot their origin and went so far from it that they totally got separated from their very source, the Divine Consciousness. Instead of

creating the worlds with the substance of Love, Light, Life and Truth, they created their very opposites and became Untruth, Darkness, Suffering and Death. Therefore, these four falsehoods existed even before the worlds were created. They are known as the “first creation” meaning the “original creation”.

As the first creation took a wrong turn, the Original Consciousness or the Supreme Mother invoked the Supreme Lord and implored for his intervention. Then the Supreme once again told Aditi or the Supreme Mother to recreate the worlds in a hierarchical manner. It is called “the second creation”. This time the process was altered. This was to be a graded creation, level by level, linked to the supreme Consciousness. Thus, in the second creation there descended the Supermind, Overmind, the various levels of Mind, followed by Life, Matter, down to the Subconscient and the Inconscient. This is now a perfect step-down, graded creation interconnected with different intermediary levels of consciousness from the Supermind to the Inconscient.

What happens further in this process is that the Supreme Lord descends as an emanation into the Inconscient. The Mother says that this first descent of the Supreme into the Inconscient was the first Avatar. Satyavan may be considered to be this first Avatar as described in these lines: “He is my soul that gropes out of the beast/ To reach humanity’s heights.” Or in another line: “He is the soul of man climbing to God”. He is this divine soul who has come down into the Inconscient to begin the process of evolution. Satyavan is not just a figure or a name, the husband of Savitri – he is in reality the very first Avatar who descended into the Inconscient.

It is important to understand the deeper meaning of the story. In Mahabharata, Savitri, the wife of Satyavan, pleading for the life of her husband from Yama is all that we are told. But Sri Aurobindo takes this story of conjugal love and raises it into a universal symbol. Satyavan is that soul in the Inconscient who is “climbing to God”. What we understand by this “climbing” is that it is the divine soul which gives the impetus or thrust to evolution. In fact, all evolution, be it on the individual or the collective levels, takes place because of the soul’s evolution from stage to stage. It is truly the Soul or Satyavan who “gropes” from the level of the Inconscient to that of Matter and Life and then Mind. This is what is emphasised in these lines too: “He is the godhead growing in human lives/And in the body of earth-being’s forms”.

They clearly indicate that Satyavan is the real persona, the soul taking a body for its evolution. In order to manifest the Divine, to realise the Divine, to understand the will of the Divine, the soul needs a body, a form. The soul cannot progress without coming down on earth and assuming a physical body. It is exactly the same with Satyavan, the *jiva* of the earth, the soul of the earth. He too needs a body, but each time, along with the stage of evolution, the form of his body changes. First, this body was called “Matter”, then the body became “Life”, meaning all the plants, animals and life everywhere. Then it became “the Mind”, meaning the human being. Therefore, each time the soul of earth takes up a new evolved body, we call it “earth’s evolution” and of that Satyavan is the evolving spirit. So, as explained by Sri Aurobindo, “Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself...”

Four descriptions of Savitri

Sri Aurobindo, in his brief Note, has given the quintessence of this epic. After describing the symbolic significance of Satyavan, he writes that Savitri is the “Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save” humanity. In order to appreciate the supreme role of Savitri, that of the “Divine Word”, we need to first examine the other aspects of Savitri which could help us to appreciate a true role. Fortunately, in the book itself we have magnificent descriptions of other dimensions also. The first one is given by Goddess Surya even before the birth of Savitri; the second one is described by Aswapathy the father, the third one by Narad, the heavenly sage, and lastly we have the most powerful and inspiring description by the Supreme.

Daughter of the Sun

The first description of Savitri as the “daughter of the Sun” comes in the words of Goddess Surya Savitri, who responds to Aswapathy’s prayer–

O radiant fountain of the world’s delight
World-free and unattainable above,
O Bliss who ever dwellest deep-hid within
While men seek thee outside and never find,
Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,
Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
Mission to earth some living form of thee. (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

And, in response, Aswapathy is assured that–

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. (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

When the Divine Mother will transplant herself on the “human soil” then humanity will have the possibility of achieving immortality and earth shall “overleap her mortal step” and “Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will”. This description of Savitri given to us even before she was born tells us clearly about her divine mission – the conquest of Death and the transformation of earth. It is an assurance given to man that with the coming of Savitri his fate will be changed and humanity will attain immortality.

Daughter of Aswapathy

The second description of Savitri is the one given by her father, Aswapathy. The stage is set as she enters the royal court where her father is sitting along with his queen Malavi and Narad. She walks in to inform her parents about the choice of her soul-mate:

The son of Dyumatsena, Satyavan,
I have met on the wild forest's lonely verge.
My father, I have chosen. This is done. (*Savitri*, BVI.C1)

Aswapathy has certainly known his daughter all along but now, as if a subtle vision opens up in him, and he realises the inner truth of Savitri who has been actually a “boon” granted by the Divine Mother:

He saw through depths that reinterpret all,
Limited not now by the dull body's eyes,
New-found through an arch of clear discovery,
This intimation of the world's delight,
This wonder of the divine Artist's make
Carved like a nectar-cup for thirsty gods,
This breathing Scripture of the Eternal's joy,
This net of sweetness woven of aureate fire. (*Savitri*, BIV.C^r)

This is a very subtle and powerful description of the beauty and divinity of Savitri bringing out her human and divine aspects.

Narad's description of Savitri

We can now take up the third description when Narad welcomes Savitri,
He flung on her his vast immortal look;

His inner gaze surrounded her with its light
And reining back knowledge from his immortal lips
He cried to her, “Who is this that comes, the bride,
The flame-born, and round her illumined head
Pouring their lights her hymeneal pomps
Move flashing about her? (*Savitri*, BVI.C’)

Narad who knows about the divine reality of both Savitri and Satyavan holds back the secret knowledge of the future and asks Savitri–

Reveal, O winged with light, whence thou hast flown
Hastening bright-hued through the green tangled earth,
Thy body rhythmical with the spring-bird’s call.
The empty roses of thy hands are filled
Only with their own beauty and the thrill
Of a remembered clasp, and in thee glows
A heavenly jar, thy firm deep-honied heart,
New-brimming with a sweet and nectarous wine.

(*Savitri*, BVI.C’)

We can look at this passage from two different angles. On the deeper level Narad knows everything but he pretends not to know what Savitri has been up to in the forest. Sri Aurobindo has thus set the scene beautifully with a “double meaning” embedded in it which the reader enjoys greatly. Narad knows that love is newborn in her, the “nectarous wine” in a “heavenly jar”, yet he asks her the question “whence thou hast flown/Hastening bright-hued through the green tangled earth?”

Goddess of the supreme Truth

We go to the next sentence where Sri Aurobindo writes that Savitri is the “goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save”. The question is: whom has she saved? In the legend, of course, she has saved her husband, Satyavan. But we have seen already that Satyavan is the eternal avatar and the growing soul of the earth. Seen from this angle, Savitri has come to save the earth itself. It is because of this that she refuses to accept all other boons offered by the Supreme Lord to her for her personal gain and delight and asks specifically for earth and men:

Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,

Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

So, right from the beginning we see that she is not seeking just the life of Satyavan. She asks for humanity divine love and sweetness which will relieve the earth from its pain and suffering. However, the work is not easy and even the earth and men reject her help, just as they did with all the saviours of humanity. Instead of being grateful to them, humanity has only given them the Cross as “the payment for the crown they gave”. So too Savitri is ill understood:

Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:
It fears the pure divine intolerance
Of that assault of ether and of fire;
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,
Almost with hate repels the light it brings;
It trembles at its naked power of Truth
And the might and sweetness of its absolute Voice.

(*Savitri*, BI.C')

Humanity has always been ungrateful to its saviours and ill-treated them. Human beings cannot bear the truth and sweetness and love of the divine incarnate. It is almost intolerable for us: it is like the unbearable pain of looking at the dazzling light of the sun. Avatars are the supreme Light, great Sweetness and Love to which our narrow human nature is unable to respond suitably. Instead of opening to their Light and Love to change our sorrow and suffering we reject them, inflicting pain on them. That has been the fate of most of the divine beings and even of Savitri. Yet, in spite of all these violent and painful rejections, Savitri does fulfil her mission:

The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss
She had brought with her into the human form,
The calm delight that weds one soul to all,
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy. (*Savitri*, BI.C1)

The next description of Savitri which comes just before she faces Death forms part of the “supreme truth” that Sri Aurobindo has mentioned. She has had long dialogues with Death but in this last act, when he puts forth his greatest resistance in denying life of Satyavan, Savitri draws upon herself her own transcendental form. What we have to understand here is that Death represents all the existing thought and mental philosophy prevalent on the earth which he places before Savitri who on the other hand represents the new

consciousness of the future. So this dialogue is not only between Light and Darkness but between Past, Present and Future. Death is trying to hold on to the human mind, its logic and experience against Savitri but she goes beyond him by manifesting a higher consciousness. Finally, when Death is about to be conquered, Savitri brings upon herself her original transcendental Self. Let us read these powerful lines:

And Savitri looked on Death and answered not...
A mighty transformation came on her.
A halo of the indwelling Deity,
The Immortal's lustre that had lit her face
And tented its radiance in her body's house,
Overflowing made the air a luminous sea.
In a flaming moment of apocalypse
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil.
A little figure in infinity
Yet stood and seemed the Eternal's very house,
As if the world's centre was her very soul
And all wide space was but its outer robe...
Eternity looked into the eyes of Death,
And Darkness saw God's living Reality. (*Savitri*, BX.C१)

Such a revelation of her own highest consciousness is crucial for the transformation of Death. She has to rise into her own transcendental Self in order to command immortal Death: it is from her highest consciousness, that of the Divine Mother, that Savitri can dissolve the universal Darkness and bring out its hidden truth – that of being the son of sun, Vivasvan.

To take up another aspect of this conquest of Death, let us go back to the original story in the Mahabharata. According to this story, Yama, the God of Death, grants Savitri three boons: the kingdom and sight to Dyumatsena, hundred sons to Aswapathy and Satyavan's life. These three boons have been transformed by

Sri Aurobindo:

I give to thee, saved from death and poignant fate
Whatever once the living Satyavan
Desired in his heart for Savitri.
Bright noons I give thee and unwounded dawns,
Daughters of thy own shape in heart and mind,

Fair hero sons and sweetness undisturbed
Of union with thy husband dear and true.
And thou shalt harvest in thy joyful house
Felicity of thy surrounded eyes.

Love shall bind by thee many gathered hearts. (*Savitri*, BX.C3)

But Savitri rejects these earthly gifts from the God of Death, “Thy gifts resist./ Earth cannot flower if lonely I return.” (*Savitri*, BX.C1) And Savitri is persistent with her demand for the life of Satyavan – “Give me back Satyavan, my only lord”, (*Savitri*, BX.C3) because the deeper truth is–

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. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

In spite of knowing the deeper truth Death does not grant Savitri the life of Satyavan. The mystery behind this refusal is this: if Death grants the life to Satyavan it will be at the cost of his own dissolution. It means that they are interlinked – he has to dissolve himself in order to grant this wish for which he is not ready at that moment. So he withholds the last boon. Here this issue takes an interesting turn in connection with the giver of the boon. Who returns Satyavan to Savitri? If Death is not ready to get dissolved, then by whom is Satyavan returned to earth? It is the Supreme Lord himself who takes off his mask of Death to redeem Satyavan.

Here, through Savitri’s description we come to know the truth of Death:

O Death, thou too art God and yet not He,
But only his own black shadow on his path
As leaving the Night he takes the upward Way
And drags with him its clinging inconscient Force.
Of God unconscious thou art the dark head,
Of his Ignorance thou art the impenitent sign,
Of its tenebrous womb the natural child,
On his immortality the sinister bar.

All contraries are aspects of God’s face. (*Savitri*, BX.C4)

The true face of Death is revealed as Darkness gets dissolved in Light. It takes away the mask from his front and then Death comes out in his own supreme form.

The “supreme truth” that Sri Aurobindo speaks of in reality is the “Divine Word”. This phrase connects Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* to the Vedic cycle and to his vision of the future. In the epic *Savitri* is addressed as “Sun-Word”, an epithet also used in his own Gayatri Mantra. R.Y. Deshpande, one of the foremost scholars of

Sri Aurobindo’s writings, explains in his introduction to *Perspectives of Savitri*, the difference between the ancient Vedic Gayatri mantra of Rishi Viswamitra and that of Sri Aurobindo. Those of us who know both the versions of this most sacred mantra ought to know why Sri Aurobindo has brought in this modification. Let us read R.Y. Deshpande’s lucid explanation:

In the mantra that Sri Aurobindo has given for *Savitri*, “the meditation is on the auspicious form of the Sun, the Sun of Divine Light. The mantra affirms that the light shall illumine us with the Truth. It shall illumine all the parts of our being, even the very physical. In it shall be our true progress. The threefold reality of Sat-Chit-Ananda shall express itself in this creation. Even the physical shall express the dynamic Truth.

In it we shall be immune from the contingencies of Time, from the workings of fate. We shall be un-circumscribed by ignorance. We shall be free from death...

In Viswamitra’s Gayatri mantra the invocation to the Sun-god *Savitri* is for the illumination of our intuition, of our perception, of our perfect understanding of the things. In such perfect understanding shall be our great spiritual achievements. In Sri Aurobindo’s Gayatri mantra, the emphasis is on the auspicious form – *varam rupam*, the implication is that of physical transformation.

The Vedic-Upanishadic Rishis had the knowledge of the supreme Reality. They knew that it is the support of the entire creation. But about the manifestation of this dynamic truth in this mortal world, in *mriyutuloka*, they did not have the working intuition. They did not know the way to this physical transformation. Perhaps it was then too early to realise it collectively here in this death-bound world.¹⁰

For those of you who are new to this concept let me clarify that in India people have been chanting the Gayatri mantra –

*om bhur bhuvahwaha
tat savitur varenyam|
bhargo devasya dhimahi*

dhiyo yo nah prachodayat||

Om, that divine illumination which pervades the Bhu Loka (physical plane), Bhuvar Loka (astral plane) and Suvar Loka (celestial plane). That *savitur* – which is the most adorable, on that divine radiance we meditate. May that enlighten our intellect and awaken our spiritual wisdom.¹¹

For thousands of years people have been reciting the Gayatri mantra in the early hours of the morning. All spiritual seekers – householders, businessmen, even students – all chant this eternal mantra. This is an invocation to the Sun-God *savitur*. The emphasis here is on the light of the Sun-God which may illumine our minds, bringing to it light, intuitions and perfect understanding of things. At that time the Vedic Rishis perhaps did not foresee any physical transformation and therefore the stress was on the perfection of the Mind. But in Sri Aurobindo the main aim being physical transformation a different mantra was necessitated which could invoke the transformative consciousness and force represented in Savitri — the Supramental Mahashakti. What then is the difference between Savitri and Gayatri? Here is the explanation:

If we choose the Pauranic language, we can say that Brahma's conceptive-expressive power as the supreme Creatrix is present in two aspects, – in the modes of transcendental and terrestrial creation. That Creatrix in the nature of the Word is held by Brahma in his clasp and, when she comes out, she comes out as Gayatri in the transcendent and Savitri in the world of ours.¹²

It is a significant clue given by R.Y. Deshpande. Gayatri is the Divine creative power who is present on the transcendent level and does not directly manifest herself upon earth. This Gayatri or Supreme Creatrix sends Savitri to the earth for its transformation. Now we understand why Aswapathy's yoga is so important when he aspires to the Sun-goddess Gayatri, the Creative Force, so that she may manifest on the earth her own self who is called Savitri and who will transform the earth. Therefore, it becomes clear that Gayatri is related to the Goddess on the universal level while Savitri is related to the earth's transformation. It is for this that Savitri is invoked for she is the dynamic creative force of Gayatri, the Supreme Mother.

The Gayatri mantra is the supreme vision of our spiritual philosophy. Sri Aurobindo chose to alter it only because he brought down a new force of transformation. For thousands of years, we have been chanting the Gayatri mantra and we did become illumined on the mental and higher planes. But on the life plane we have remained quite unchanged. No progress has been

achieved at all on these levels. Now Sri Aurobindo needs Goddess Savitri for the work of transformation of the lower nature of man.

Normally, the words we speak have several levels of meaning. Before the sound of the word, there is an unheard sound as it is first formulated by a consciousness which percolates through different levels before expressing itself in sound. Behind this sound there is a vibration. Essentially, each word is a vibration! It is therefore a word uttered with a certain vibration that can change the human consciousness. It can happen either way. We have heard about very powerful verses that carry a force that impacts immediately. Of course, what is of cardinal importance is the person who utters them! At times you will see that the words or sentences may be the same but spoken by a powerful person has a deeper impact.

Savitri carries within herself the vibration and the consciousness of the Supramental Mahashakti, hence she represents the Sun-Word — Sun being the symbol of the Supermind. Sri Aurobindo brings down the action of the supramental consciousness to transform the world. The Vedic Rishis of yore were surely familiar with the consciousness of the Supermind but were perhaps not aware of the process to manifest it on earth. Nor was the concept of collective transformation emphasised as much at that time. Now the time has come for Sri Aurobindo to reveal this process and hence the importance of his invocation to Goddess Savitri.

Aswapathy

Now let us try to understand in Sri Aurobindo's words the symbolic significance of Aswapathy: "Aswapathy, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of the spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes."

To go back to the Vedas — *aswa* or the horse signifies power.

Its fundamental meanings are, therefore, pervading existence, enjoyment, strength, solidity, speed. Shall we not say, therefore, that *aswa* to the Rishis meant the unknown power made up of force, strength, solidity, speed and enjoyment that pervades and constitutes the material world?¹³

It may also mean, in the light of Sri Aurobindo, "the mind-power" or "tapas" if it is dynamic. To extend further the symbolism, Aswapathy could be representing Tapas, the inseparable aspect of Chit. Through long years of tapasya he opens to humanity a higher level of consciousness and brings down the Divine Mother. On the one hand he represents the human aspiration

while on the other he represents the divine Energy. In this manner he is like Satyavan, the growing and evolving soul of humanity, helping and preparing it for the descent of the Divine Mother as well as for the coming of the New Race. Thus Aswapathy, with his superhuman power and concentrated spiritual endeavour leads humanity from mortal to immortal planes:

His was a spirit that stooped from larger spheres
Into our province of ephemeral sight,
A colonist from immortality..
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. (*Savitri*, BI.C3)

Dyumatsena

The last description in Sri Aurobindo's Note is that of 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". Here we see that there are different facets of the person, Dyumatsena. First of all the name itself suggests, *dyumato vipran* (luminous sage), that he is one who is full of Light and Luminosity. He is therefore described as the "Lord of the Shining Hosts". What could be the meaning of the term "shining hosts" in this context? In Vedic symbolism, "the shining hosts" are the cows, "the rays of the luminous beings". So, we can say that Dyumatsena is the Lord of the luminous beings.

Secondly, we are told that Dyumatsena is the "Divine Mind". In order to get a deeper understanding of the "Divine Mind" we may have to re-visit the concept of Supermind as discussed by Sri Aurobindo in his different writings. Let us take up the definition of "Divine Mind" from the chapter "Mind and Supermind" in *The Life Divine*:

This subordinate process of the eternal Seer and Thinker, perfectly luminous, perfectly aware of Himself and all, knowing well what He does, conscious of the infinite in the finite which He is creating, may be called the

divine Mind. And it is obvious that it must be a subordinate and not really a separate working of the Real-Idea, of the Supermind, and must operate through what we have described as the apprehending movement of the Truth-Consciousness.¹⁴

Again, when Sri Aurobindo is differentiating Mind and Supermind, he writes:

We have seen that from this apprehending consciousness arises the movement of Mind, the movement by which the individual knower regards a form of his own universal being as if other than he; but in the divine Mind there is immediately or rather simultaneously another movement or reverse side of the same movement, an act of union in being which heals this phenomenal division and prevents it from becoming even for a moment solely real to the knower.¹⁵

Apart from these two definitions, we find another clarification in a footnote in his writings *The Secret of the Veda*:

Day and Night, – the latter the state of Ignorance that belongs to our material Nature, the former the state of illumined Knowledge that belongs to the divine Mind of which our mentality is a pale and dulled reflection.¹⁶

The second and the third notes quoted above are a further clarification of the first definition taken from *The Life Divine*. In order to understand this idea we may have to look into

Sri Aurobindo's concept of Supermind and its triple poise. Let me explain this thought with the help of an analogy. When we build any house, basically we go through three stages. First, we consult an architect who gives the master plan of the house. He gives the blueprint of the total concept; there is no division of the house into rooms, there is only a demarcation. Similar is the first and primary poise of the Supermind, called the "comprehending consciousness". Here, on this level, there is an inalienable unity of things without any sense of individuality.

In the second stage of making a house, we employ an engineer who gives the details of the rooms, open spaces, garden, staircase etc. The engineer keeps to the basic blueprint of the house and works on the practical differentiation of the rooms so that each part of the house gets its due importance and attention. Similarly, the second poise, the "apprehending consciousness" of Supermind distributes itself in different forms that are created, supporting "the individual play of movement" — "the same everywhere is soul-essence, but varying in

soul-form". It could very well be the stage of "the individual Divine" as against "the universal Divine" of the first poise. The play of the "Divine Mind" may belong to this level as it also deals with individual forms without losing the oneness behind the forms.

In the third stage different labour is employed to execute the detailed plan of the house. The labour follows blindly the task allotted to him by the engineer. He is not aware of the total plan of the architect or the full details of construction: he knows only the work he has to do for the day. He may not even know the engineer or the architect or the owner of the house. He involves himself fully in his immediate work in all sincerity and honesty. Similarly, the Supermind in its third poise is involved in the details of executing and realising the divine consciousness in the Many. It becomes the "labourer" of the manifestation, ignorant of its other levels of execution and planning. It is totally self-absorbed which results in Ignorance.

To summarise these three poises of the Supermind in Sri Aurobindo's words:

The first founds the inalienable unity of things, the second modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the Many in One and One in Many; the third further modifies it so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which, by the action of Ignorance, becomes in us at a lower level the illusion of the separate ego.¹⁷

Having traced the general nature of the three poises of the Supermind, we can now understand that the Divine Mind is "a subordinate and not really a separate working of the Real-Idea, of the Supermind" operating through its second poise, namely, the apprehending consciousness. Unlike the mind which is aware only of Ignorance, the Divine Mind contains both *vidya* and *avidya* simultaneously because it is identified with both the Infinite and the finite at all times without ever considering them as alternatives.

Dyumatsena has "fallen" from this Divine Mind, losing "its celestial kingdom of vision", which is the uniting consciousness of One in the Many. Like Satyavan who has "descended into the grip of death" so has Dyumatsena "fallen" into Ignorance, the third poise of the Supermind losing sight (both literally and figuratively) of the other two poises of the One and the One in Many. Both Dyumatsena and his son Satyavan have "fallen" or "descended" into Ignorance which at "a lower level becomes the illusion of the separate ego". However, at the same time Dyumatsena and Aswapathy regain and

prepare the earth for the Supramental consciousness so that “the earth may open to divinity” —

And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
And meet the deity in common things.
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine. (*Savitri*, BXII.C1)

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo in relation to *Savitri*

Savitri is a dynamic and dramatised presentation of Sachchidananda in manifestation. It presents the descent of the four aspects — Truth, Consciousness, Force, Ananda on the earth and also the ascent of earth consciousness to the Superconscient represented by the evolutionary leaders Satyavan, Aswapathy, Dyumatsena and Savitri respectively. In this manner, we may relate Sat with Satyavan, Supermind with Dyumatsena, Tapas with Aswapathy and Ananda with Savitri, the incarnation of Love. These four personalities have descended on the earth and made it the field of the full manifestation of Sachchidananda. They have plunged into Ignorance with specific missions: Satyavan descended to give a thrust to evolution beyond “the grip of death and ignorance”; Savitri came down to save humanity; Aswapathy took birth to “help” humanity rise “from the mortal to the immortal planes” by bringing down on earth the incarnation of the Divine Mother. Lastly, Dyumatsena, who has “here fallen blind” regains the “kingdom of glory” clearing the next step in human evolution. The link between these four personalities is inseparable as *sat-cit-tapas-ananda* is one single consciousness. Therefore,

these characters are not just personified qualities but “conscious forces”. They take human bodies to help humanity. They are not just symbols but spiritual truths. These spiritual beings, representative of Sachchidananda, take form eternally as incarnations or emanations of living and “conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch”.

Savitri is not only the fulfilment of the Vedic prayer – *asato ma sadgamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, mrityor ma amritam gamaya* but it goes beyond to liberate humanity from *dukham* and it brings *anandam: dukher ma anandam gamaya*. Avatars have struggled and suffered to save humanity from *asat* and *tamas* but not much could be changed in human consciousness. The probable

reason for the unsuccessful transformation of human nature is the grip of Death on human consciousness. It has denied to man higher reaches of consciousness, shadowed over all his aspirations for immortality and it has been the ultimate “Negation” in human life and consciousness. Hence, until and unless Death is conquered and transformed, “untruth” and “unconsciousness” will continue to rule over the world.

It is to this ultimate victory over unconsciousness, untruth, death and its corollary suffering that Savitri and Satyavan continue their aeonic struggle:

O Death, not for my heart's sweet poignancy
Nor for my happy body's bliss alone
I have claimed from thee the living Satyavan,
But for his work and mine, our sacred charge.
Our lives are God's messengers beneath the stars;
To dwell under death's shadow they have come
Tempting God's light to earth for the ignorant race,
His love to fill the hollow in men's hearts,
His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world.(*Savitri*, BX.C3)

The earlier book of Knowledge — the Vedas and the Upanishads — attempted to bring to man the knowledge and mantric power to change untruth to Truth, unconsciousness to consciousness, and even found the method to surpass Death and gain immortality:

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.¹⁸

But it is only *Savitri* which is the encapsulation of the Supramental Force which can liberate humanity from its sempiternal doom and death.

In the present times, we could say that it is Sri Aurobindo who carries the consciousness and mission of Aswapathy and Satyavan while the Mother symbolises the work and role of Savitri and Dyumatsena. They have worked ceaselessly to gain the “celestial kingdom” of the supramental consciousness. In fact, the Mother had declared in one of her writings that “Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of the Consciousness, I was there.”¹⁹ And did she not reveal that: “Since the beginning of earth history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great earthly transformations, under one form or another, one name or another.”²⁰

Similar to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Savitri too refuses all the boons and choices placed before her by Death because her only aspiration is to transform and divinise the earth:

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. (*Savitri*, BX.C1)

These issues are reflected in the lives of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo too. In one of his autobiographical poems Sri Aurobindo writes:

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
And heard her black mass' bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell....
On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.
The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
And glimmer from shore to shore.
Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn
Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss: ²¹

Man is condemned by limitation and desire leading to suffering and death. But Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have come to manifest the Supramental consciousness. When Sri Aurobindo was asked: "Is your real work this invocation of the Supramental?" "Yes," he replied, very simply. "I have come for that,"²² And this Consciousness will see through the transformation of the earth.

It is the tapasya of the dual avatars that has created this mantra called *Savitri*: it is not only a new vision of life but a very powerful living guru in

itself. Humanity may not believe in it because as usual “belief shall be not till the work is done” (*Savitri*, BI.C4) Human minds are both limited and incapacitated to understand the magnanimity of *Savitri*’s transformative effect. But a day will come when the earth will accept and recognise the truth of *Savitri* which is:

A scripture written out in cryptic signs,
An occult document of the All-Wonderful’s art.

(*Savitri*, BX.C3)

Questions and Answers

What exactly is the difference between Satyavan and Aswapathy?

I think we have discussed this quite at length: Aswapathy does the yoga of ascent and brings down the consciousness of the Divine Mother on earth. So his function is to raise the human consciousness to greater heights. He builds a ladder by which the human consciousness can ascend to the Divine Consciousness and Force. That is one of his main contributions to humanity. It is on the strength of his aspiration and tapasya that he makes it possible for the Divine to descend. This is well known in India that if the Divine is satisfied by the yogi’s tapasya, he is granted boons. In the case of Aswapathy when the Divine Mother grants him a boon, he requests her to manifest on earth.

Now what is the function of Satyavan? We now know that Aswapathy makes possible this descent on earth of the Mother as *Savitri*. Satyavan, the jiva of the earth has to welcome this descending Force which comes in the form of *Savitri*. This reception by Satyavan corresponds to the preparation of the earth to receive the force of *Savitri*. If the aspiration of the earth is not intense enough then the work of transformation cannot take place. It is important to understand this because it has happened in the past, sometime in the 1930’s, when there was the descent of the Ananda but the earth revolted and rejected it. Similarly, in the case of the Mother’s work of transformation, the body’s age old habits and rigid routine revolted violently. Therefore, the earth’s acceptance is very crucial for the work of transformation: it has to accept to change for the higher and better as well as to be receptive to all that is being done by the New Consciousness.

The main role of Satyavan was to prepare the earth for the descent of the higher Force represented by *Savitri* whom he asked: “Descend. Let thy journey cease, come down to us.”(*Savitri*, BV.C3) This means that the earth

represented by Satyavan had accepted the descent of the Supramental consciousness that is Savitri. Satyavan not only aspired for the new Force but also accepted and collaborated with it. As we all know, a conscious collaboration between the descending Force and the aspiration of the earth is needed, failing which the higher Force cannot descend.

So many times I hear people complaining why the Divine doesn't descend on this earth and transform it? It is not quite like that. Let us not forget the fundamental principle of creation: it is freedom. So it is out of this freedom of choice that the earth has to accept the Divine. The Divine never imposes himself. Take for example the Mother of our Pondicherry Ashram: she hardly ever imposed her will on us. She would always put forth the possibilities, give suggestions, explain the consequences, give an opportunity and a choice. The rest was left to the sadhaks to follow or not to follow. Several times, even if the mind of a sadhak accepted the Mother's advice, the vital being would revolt and disagree; it is the same thing with the earth. What is important is that Satyavan accepted the force of Savitri, it is not just that he married her. Satyavan could have refused and the whole story would have ended there. But Satyavan who represents the earth-soul was ready and fully prepared to accept Savitri. In fact it is because he was fully prepared for her that he even invites her to his hermitage and their union in marriage is but the symbol of the earth's readiness for the higher consciousness.

References:

1. CWM 13:24
2. *Perspectives I*: १०
3. CWM 16:292
4. CWSA 35: 83
5. "About *Savitri*": 7
6. *Perspectives I*: 46-47
7. CWSA 27: 272
8. CWSA 33: Author's Note
9. *Mother's Agenda 2*: 37
10. *Perspectives II*: xi-xii
11. Gayatri Mantra
12. *Perspectives II*: xvii
13. CWSA 18: 277
14. CWSA 21: 175

- 15. Ibid., 251
- 16. CWSA 15: 394
- 17. CWSA 21: 156
- 18. CWSA 17: 9
- 19. CWM 13: 37
- 20. Ibid., 10
- 21. CWSA 2: 537
- 22. *Life of Sri Aurobindo*:
313-314

Chapter 3

The Daily Record

The Mother once told a young disciple:

You know, before writing *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo said to me, “I am impelled to launch on a new adventure; I was hesitant in the beginning, but now I am decided. Still I do not know how far I shall succeed. I pray for help.” And you know what it was? It was — before beginning, I warn you in advance — it was his way of speaking, so full of humility and divine modesty. He never... asserted himself. And the day he actually began it, he told me: “I have launched myself in a rudderless boat upon the vastness of the Infinite.” And once having started, he wrote page after page without intermission, as though it were a thing already complete up there and he had only to transcribe it in ink down here on these pages.

In truth, the entire form of *Savitri* has descended en masse from the highest region and Sri Aurobindo with his genius only arranged the lines — in a superb and magnificent style. Sometimes entire lines were revealed and he has left them intact; he worked hard, untiringly, so that the inspiration could come from the highest possible summit. And what a work he has created! Yes, it is a true creation in itself. It is an unequalled work. Everything is there...¹

To describe “everything” that is there in *Savitri* the Mother wrote in a note about the four important aspects which form the essence of the epic:

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.²

These form the four aspects or four different angles from which we can study *Savitri*. We will now try to elaborate these aspects given by the Mother and bring out their magnificent and profound meaning just as we did with the four personalities in Sri Aurobindo's note on *Savitri*. If we look at her note closely, we will realise that there is an ascending evolution in the order of the four aspects. First, "The daily record..." represents Sri Aurobindo's sadhana when he had energised himself by the *saptachatushtaya*. Next, "A complete system of yoga..." is a guide for the sadhaka of the integral yoga. It encompasses all the three levels of sadhana – the aspects of aspiration, rejection and surrender – along with the three levels of psychic, spiritual and supramental transformations. In *Savitri* we find in great detail the steps of integral yoga to be followed in the vertical and the horizontal ways – the former leading to the realisation of the transcendent through the pathways of Supermind, while the latter ends up in the finding of one's soul. Third, there is "The Yoga of the Earth..." which takes us to the transformation of the earth which has been taking place since the beginning of its creation. Its life is divinised through the aeonic yoga of the earth since the beginning of its creation. The consciousness of the earth evolves and unravels itself through its representative protagonists Satyavan and Aswapathy. Lastly, there are the experiences of the Divine Mother who has descended on the earth to "save" it from death and doom. That is the work of the Avatar, the tapasya of the Incarnate, the holocaust of the Supreme Mother. In this manner, *Savitri* is not only a symbolic legend, but the book of yoga – union with the Divine, in which the Divine herself shows the path to the Supramental Consciousness.

We shall begin our study with the first aspect, namely, "The daily record of the spiritual experiences of the individual who has written" it. Indeed, *Savitri* is the record of a seeing, of the experiences which impacted Sri Aurobindo's consciousness, both on the physical and psychological levels. Sri Aurobindo expresses in a letter his daily experiences:

We know well what is the difference between a subjective experience and a dynamic outward-going and realising Force. So although we have faith, – and who ever did anything great in the world without having faith in his mission or the Truth at work behind him? – we do not found ourselves on

faith alone, but on a great ground of knowledge which we have been developing and testing all our lives. I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane.³

He has been experimenting and testing his yoga day in and day out or from dawn to night for year after year. It is based on a great amount of knowledge gained through experience. This actual testing, day and night, points towards the record of his yoga which Sri Aurobindo had maintained in detail from 1912 to 1920. This is the only daily record that is available to us for our study. He says that he has been more scrupulous than a scientist in testing his theory. Then he says he has been a yogi par excellence who presents to humanity a fully tested formula of the supramental sadhana on the physical plane from which future humanity can profit.

The period during which he kept a daily record of his sadhana published as *Record of Yoga* corresponds to an interesting fact in his life: on one side he was absorbed in an intense tapasya as a scientist and, on the other, he was writing all his major works in the *Arya*. It is as though here was a scientist who was noting the results of his sadhana and giving it to humanity in the form of his books. That is why the Mother says that every word written by Sri Aurobindo in any of his books is an experience on the physical plane itself.

Another important observation to be made here is from the quotation where he says: “That is why I am not alarmed by the aspect of the world around me or disconnected by the often successful fury of the adverse Forces.”⁴ The First War broke out in 1914 which meant that there was an outburst of “the fury of the adverse Forces”. Sri Aurobindo was bringing down the Higher consciousness and as it descended closer to the earth, the adverse forces resisted and revolted which resulted in the First World War. Their rage had taken the form of a brutal war while Sri Aurobindo was waging the inner war and conquering spaces of new consciousness for the next evolutionary step.

Having tested his embodied knowledge on the physical plane, in the spirit of a yogi-scientist, Sri Aurobindo translated the purely subjective knowledge into an objective verifiable experience. This makes his knowledge and experience more tenable and acceptable by the mind that is open to higher consciousness and flexible to greater ideas.

Although the period when he was maintaining his diary does not coincide

with the period of his writing *Savitri*, it is important to note that while he was engaged with his inner journey and noting down its progress on the different parts of his being, he was also pouring out in the *Arya*, like a cascade, his spiritual knowledge gathered hitherto as well as his knowledge acquired from his yogic sadhana during the period 1910 to 1914. That is why, as noted earlier, it has been emphasised by the Mother that all he wrote in his several books is based on his personal experience. The last entry of his record was on 31st October 1927, whereas he revised his earlier versions of *Savitri*, written in 1926-27, almost eight years later, in 1935. It is a researched fact by scholars such as Richard Hartz, that the three main chapters of Aswapathy's yoga, "The Yoga of the King", "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds" and "The Book of Yoga" which consists of Aswapathy's Yoga of Ascent, and which is recognised to be

Sri Aurobindo's own personal yoga, were written after 1927 when the documentation of the record of yoga had stopped. Even "The Book of Yoga", which contains the main journey of yoga towards the discovery of the soul, comes long after the period of the record of his yoga. In such a situation, how do we connect the book *Record of Yoga* to *Savitri*?

Basing oneself on the research done by Richard Hartz in this line, one understands that until 1920 Sri Aurobindo had maintained the records of his yoga rather systematically. After that there was a disruption, a break. The reason perhaps was the return of the Mother in 1920. After this point he no longer needed to go on with his experiments. When she returned to Pondicherry the line of advancement in his own sadhana took a diversion and there was a change of action plan. That is reflected by the discontinuation of his record. However, there are a few notations in 1927 after the Siddhi day in 1926:

It must have been around this time that Sri Aurobindo's conception of *Savitri* began to undergo a change implied by his first published letter on the poem, dated 1931, in which he said of the earlier version that "in that form it would not have been a 'magnum opus' at all" and, besides, that "it would have been a legend and not a symbol".⁵

This is an important research done by Richard Hartz about the period of composition of *Record of Yoga* and *Savitri*.

Sri Aurobindo himself writes that the earlier version of *Savitri* that he had written in Baroda was more a legend and not a symbol. Again he takes it up around 1926-27. It is then that the second version turns into a symbol and

that too the most magnificent symbol that the world of literature has ever seen. He seems to have poured in the version of 1935 his deepest and highest consciousness for he had climbed by then the first stages of the Supramental consciousness. He wrote:

Now I have got the hang of the whole hanged thing – like a very Einstein I have got the mathematical formula of the whole affair (unintelligible as in his case to anybody but myself) and am working it out figure by figure...The tail of the supermind is descending, descending, descending. It is only the tail at present, but where the tail can pass, the rest will follow.⁶

That was the historicity of *Record of Yoga* and its link with *Savitri*. However, on the deeper level, the issue of co-relating both these records can be resolved by interpreting “the daily record” on two levels. One, many experiences that Sri Aurobindo had gained during the years of his noting down in the record of his yoga were carried over to *Savitri* in whichever year it was written, revised or edited. In essence, the earlier experiences remained in his consciousness and they were collated in *Savitri* at appropriate instances. We take an example of two of his experiences, or experiments, he calls *aishwarya* and *trikaladrishti*. He writes, “Today the *aishwarya* & *trikaladrishti* suddenly developed an unprecedented force...”⁷ *Aishwarya* in general means “sovereignty” but here in yogic terms he says it is “effectiveness of the Will acting on object or event without the aid of physical means.”⁸

Aishwarya

“*Aishwarya* is the effectiveness of Will”, the will-power being used on an event or object without the help of any physical means. Now, if I want to move this glass of water on my table, how do I do it? I have to stretch my hand, hold it and move it. But here, he talks about applying one’s will or intense will-power to change an event or move an object such as this glass without any physical contact. This is something totally different and we shall see that in the context of *Savitri* it gains enormous importance. He says that *aishwarya* forms one of the *ashtasiddhi*, eight siddhis, which he describes in his programme of yoga that was revealed to him when he was in the Alipore Jail. In one of the records he notes:

All siddhis exist already in Nature. They exist in you. Only owing to habitual limitations you make a use of them which is mechanical and limited. By breaking these limitations, one is able to get the conscious and voluntary use of them.⁹

The use of siddhis, or such powers as these, is an inherent faculty in man. But we have lost the habit of using them as we have got accustomed to being guided by our mental precepts. Like the dogs and elephants we can't hear sounds from long distances. We have forgotten that we have, inbuilt within ourselves, the capacity of hearing from a distance which we call "subtle hearing" or *shabdabhedhi vidya* (the ability to hit the target just by hearing the sound alone, not by seeing it). The poet writes that there are "powers that sleep unused in man within..." (*Savitri*, BI.C3). Through yoga one can develop these hidden powers.

Sri Aurobindo realised these siddhis within himself which he later applied in real life situations and they are also reflected in *Savitri*. One of the experiments which he tested on himself was:

Today the aishwarya & trikaldrishti suddenly developed an unprecedented force; while watching the movement of ants on the wall opposite, it was suddenly perceived that every slightest movement of the particular ant observed in each case followed the anticipatory observation; wherever my idea turned, there the ant, with but slight variations, immediately corrected, turned to follow it; when the forceful will was applied, there was sometimes a slight, but unavailing struggle. This observation covered some half hundred successive movements of various ants & was marred by only one actual & final failure.¹⁰

This is an experiment with *aishwarya* – application of the will. He had just one room to himself as his laboratory. He was not free to go out in Nature, nor did he have a forest around. He was restricted to conduct all his experiments in his room itself. So he applied his will several times on the ants that crawled on the walls of his room trying to change the course of their movements. In these experiments he was trying to test if he could apply his will on another living thing. In *Savitri* he transcribed the same experience: "I have studied the methods of the ant and ape..." (*Savitri*, BVII.C4) However,

The apparent insignificance of these creatures should not lead us to regard Sri Aurobindo's references to them in the *Record of Yoga* as trivial and unworthy of comparison with his sublime preoccupations in *Savitri*. In a chapter of *The Life Divine* entitled "The Pure Existent", published in the *Arya* in April 1915 not long after his experimentation with ants, Sri Aurobindo wrote: 'If we look... not at mass of quantity but force of quality, we shall say that the ant is greater than the solar system it inhabits...'

Be it in *The Life Divine* or *Savitri*, he based himself on the experiences of his *aishwarya*. Let us now try to understand this example mentioned in *The Life Divine* “the ant is greater than the solar system that it inhabits”. It means that an ant is more conscious than the solar system in which the planets are unconscious. They are revolving mechanically but here on earth an ant has its own mechanism and technique, its own consciousness and will, its own system of organisation and a method of building an anthill structure. These anthills are so uniquely organised that today they are a source of inspiration for the architects as well as for the social scientists. Indeed ants’ consciousness is more evolved as compared to the solar system.

Living in a single room, Sri Aurobindo extended his *aishwarya* power to influence the unpredictable behaviour of cats and dogs or the flight routes of birds and the quixotic skipping of squirrels. We all know that later on he used the siddhis of *aishwarya* and *trikaladrishti* to influence events in the World Wars – for example, the war with the Balkans:

The day’s news about the Turkish acceptance of the Powers’ Note is a success for the *trikaladrishti* (*vyaptiprakamya*) & for the *Aishwarya* for the conclusion of peace, but a violent defeat for the *Aishwarya* about the terms of peace which were either the coast islands should be retained and Adrianople either not ceded or ceded with dismantled fortifications or war.¹²

So, after testing his siddhis on the ants, birds and animals, he extended it to human beings at great distances, so that he could control and guide not only the events but also human lives. In this context he writes in his diary on 23rd January, 1913:

If this force can be rendered permanent & generalised so as to apply to all objects & subjects, then human omniscience & omnipotence in the field permitted by the Infinite are attained. It is a matter of time only; the perfectibility of knowledge & power have today been finally & irrevocably proved.¹³

This realisation noted in his records is transformed into:

If human will could be made one with God’s,
If human thought could echo the thoughts of God,
Man might be all-knowing and omnipotent; (*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

Taking once again a clue from Richard Hartz:

This extraordinary conclusion, relating the movements of the ants to the

attainment of omniscience and omnipotence, brings us back to *Savitri*. While ants receive a passing mention in Sri Aurobindo's epic, the words "omniscience" and "omnipotence" express the very nature of Knowledge-Force whose manifestation, transforming the human mind and will, is the heart of the meaning of *Savitri*.¹⁴

In fact, Savitri's "omniscience" and "omnipotence" find their source not in *aishwarya* but in her transcendental consciousness. That was the basis of her soul issue:

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. (*Savitri*, BI.C2)

All along her debate with Death, Savitri refutes and rejects all his thought-force not merely by the strength of her *aishwarya*, but also by a will that is identified with her higher Self. It is by her omnipotent will that—

Her forehead's span vaulted the Omniscient's gaze,
Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe.

(*Savitri*, BX.C4)

And they smote Death:

A pressure of intolerable force
Weighed on his unbowed head and stubborn breast;
Light like a burning tongue licked up his thoughts,
Light was a luminous torture in his heart,
Light coursed, a splendid agony, through his nerves;
His darkness muttered perishing in her blaze.
Her mastering Word commanded every limb
And left no room for his enormous will
That seemed pushed out into some helpless space
And could no more re-enter but left him void. (*Savitri*, BX.C4)

Trikaladrishti

Next we come to *trikaladrishti* which "is a special faculty of jnana by which that general power is applied to the actuality of things, their details of event, tendency etc. in the past, present & future of the world as it exists, has existed

& will exist in Time. It deals with particular fact, just as jnana deals with general truth.”¹⁵ This theme is also central to *Savitri*. The prophetic line uttered by Narad: “This day returning Satyavan must die”(Savitri, BI.C1) is the future time on the level of the present manifested time. Narad prophecies not only the fate of Satyavan twelve months after his marriage to Savitri but he also foresees her fate:

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.

(Savitri, BIV.C2)

Narad is in fact known as a divine sage, *manas putra* of Brahma, who is equipped with *trikaladrishti*. He can see the past and connect the future to the present. That is perhaps his role – to hasten the future events by forewarning the protagonists of the event. He is a catalyst of the future; he reveals only that much of his foresight as is required for the immediate future – “He hid in his all-knowing mind the rest...” (Savitri, BVI.C1)

Through Narad Sri Aurobindo expresses his own experience of *trikaladrishti*: “O deathless sage who knowest all things here.” (Savitri, BVI.C1) In fact, the whole of *Savitri* is a vast chronical of Sri Aurobindo's *trikaladrishti* encompassing earth's past and its Supramental Future.

Sri Aurobindo notes that there are two types of *trikaladrishti*, the triple time-vision – the passive and the dynamic. Narad represents the passive aspect, meaning that he can see the future as Time but he is not given to know what is beyond Time-future. The dynamic *trikaladrishti*, like that of Sri Aurobindo, can see beyond the normal time-future sequences. It takes into account the Forces that act and intervene from beyond the spheres of earth-consciousness, from transcendental realms. Savitri is one such supracosmic will and power of intervention – “Her single will opposed the cosmic rule./ To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose.”(Savitri, BI.C2). She cancels Doom and Death that are predetermind on the frontiers of Time by her “unchanging will”. She comes to annul “the decree of death and pain”; to erase “the formulas of the

Ignorance” (*Savitri*, BXI.C1) that form the eternal decree of evolution.

What we have been taught by all the yogacharyas, the religious pundit, is that all that is born must one day die. It is a truth of the physical world. The death of Satyavan, foretold by Narad, belongs to the lower hemisphere, to the passive *trikaladrishti*. But

Sri Aurobindo focused more on the possibility of the intervention of the Truth-consciousness – the Supermind. He documented on 14th December 1914:

There is a struggle between static perception of event & dynamic perception of event (passive & active Chit). The latter which alters the event predestined by the ensemble of forces by a personal intervention (i.e. of higher forces) is becoming rapidly stronger & brings with [it] increasing satyam of trikaldrishti & increasing satyam of tapas-siddhi. The active Chit is either effectual trikaldrishti or effective will on the supramental plane (lower vijnana); but in higher Vijnana, they are twin actions and in Sachchidananda are inseparable & indiscernible.¹⁶

So, by 1914 Sri Aurobindo had already started acquiring the power and force to intervene and change the course of history. This power was becoming more intense and stable. On 16th April he writes:

The whole struggle in the siddhi now is between the present & the future, between the telepathic knowledge that sees & admits the present & the vijnanamaya that reaches beyond to the future, between the force that admits & manipulates present forces & the force that aims at annulling & replacing or transforming them rapidly into the image of their vijnanamaya & anandamaya equivalents...¹⁷

He was then at a stage when he was fighting against the forces of the past and the future: the forces of human consciousness which accept the present destiny and that of Supermind which is ready to intervene and change the destiny of the earth: “This *Savitri* is wonderful, he foresaw everything” says the Mother, “saw everything, everything, absolutely everything, there isn’t one point he left unexplored.”¹⁸

On a higher symbolic level Death and *Savitri* represent these two types of *trikaladrishti* – Time-future and beyond time-future. Death insists–

Touch not the seated lines, the ancient laws,

Respect the calm of great established things. (*Savitri*, BX.C4)

But *Savitri* is born to change the destiny of the earth; she refutes:

I trample on thy law with living feet;

For to arise in freedom I was born. (*Savitri*, BX.C4)

This indeed forms the crux of the debate between Death and Savitri – one representing the eternal law of horizontal time and the other vertical time which can intervene, cancel and remould Fate, Doom and Death.

Apart from the two faculties *aishwarya* and *trikaladrishti*, Sri Aurobindo had acquired many more siddhis which got later reflected in *Savitri*. It is not our present intention to go through all the seven *chatushtaya* namely – *shanti*, *shakti*, *vijnana*, *sharira*, *karma*, *brahma* and *sansiddhi*.

Sri Aurobindo through his tapasya during 1910-20 had already assimilated these forces in his own active consciousness which later on found their expression in *Savitri*. It is like the birth of a mantra which often expresses itself much later, once several deep experiences have become a part of the receiver's consciousness itself.

Dasyabhava

Now I would like to take up an important dimension of experience which forms one of the three pillars of integral Yoga – that of surrender, or the *Dasyabhava*, the other two being aspiration and rejection. “*Dasya*”, the term is used in the *Record of Yoga* to denote a state of complete submission, or of being a slave. This word *dasya* or slave reminds us of one of most formidable lines of *Savitri*, “For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!”

In fact the Mother seems to have said that this line gave her the most overpowering experience of the entire book. She explained:

You see, Mahalakshmi is the Divine Mother's aspect of love, the perfection of manifested love, which must come before this supreme Love (which is beyond the Manifestation and the Non-manifestation) can be expressed – the supreme Love referred to in *Savitri* when the Supreme sends *Savitri* to the earth:

For ever love, O beautiful slave of God! (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

It's to prepare the earth to receive the Supreme's manifestation, the manifestation of His Victory.¹⁹

It is this *dasyabhava* which is mentioned many a time in *Record of Yoga*. It is his own experience of the “slave of God” and it is perhaps because of this deep experience that Sri Aurobindo uses the word “slave” in the above quoted line and not the words “surrender” or “submission”. Interestingly, as we have been told by scholars, the word “surrender” is mentioned only twice in the whole of

Savitri whereas it occurs more frequently in *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

The first level of *dasyabhava*, or surrender, is that of the servant, the lowest level of relationship in which the master is obeyed. This is the general understanding. Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Synthesis of Yoga*: “Obedience is the sign of the servant.”²⁰ So, when we look at it from a spiritual angle, it implies an absolute obedience to the master, to the Guru. That is why in the *guru-shishya parampara* there is the need of an implicit obedience to the Guru. In the second stage of this process of surrender –

... we do not obey, but move to his will as the string replies to the finger of the musician. To be the instrument is the higher stage of self-surrender and submission.²¹

What is the difference in being an instrument and becoming a servant? The servant is given orders to do works. But as an instrument, one is able to access within oneself the will and the command of the Lord. In the first stage one reads the Scriptures to get to know the will of the Lord. But when one becomes an instrument, one hears the voice of the Lord within one’s own heart. Then the second stage finally ends transforming this living and loving instrument and his whole nature into a slave of God.

But this is the living and loving instrument and it ends in the whole nature of our being becoming the slave of God, rejoicing in his position and its own blissful subjection to the divine grasp and mastery. With a passionate delight it does all he wills it to do without questioning and bears all he would have it bear, because what it bears is the burden of the beloved being.²²

Note that this quote is from *The Synthesis of Yoga* written sometime in 1918-1919. Then again in the 1940s the same idea appears in *Savitri*. Obviously, this *bhava* was so important in his yoga that Sri Aurobindo gives it the highest place in *Savitri*, “For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!” And, now we understand why the Mother says that it is the most beautiful line in *Savitri*. It is mantric in its revelation and potential, packed with the power of self-experience. It surely speaks of the burden of the beloved being and the passionate love for the Lord!

Surrendering to the Divine never means that one has to lose one’s individuality. It means only entering into a great delight of being which is so tender and full of sweetness that Sri Aurobindo calls it *dasyabhava* and *madhura-bhava*. In this *bhava* one has the experience of the delightful sweetness and joy in the service of the Lord. Let us read these lines from Book

XI of *Savitri*,

Who hunts and seizes me, my captive grows:
This shalt thou henceforth learn from thy heart-beats.
For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!
O lasso of my rapture's widening noose,
Become my cord of universal love. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

So the poet is saying that if one truly hunts and seizes the Divine, one becomes his captive, his slave. The paradoxical situation is that the more one possesses the Divine, the more one becomes his slave, meaning that the Divine possesses him even more.

It is interesting to see how Sri Aurobindo has extended the experience of *dasyabhava* to the relation of Kali and Krishna.

Her surrender is sometimes referred to as “*dasya* of the power” and she is also called the *dāsī īsvārī*. If in relation to Krishna, her Lord, she is an enamoured slave, in relation to the world she is the *Ishwari*, the all-ruling Goddess.²³

This concept of Kali being *Ishwari* and “an enamoured slave” of Krishna at the same time, becomes clear in one of Sri Aurobindo's letters written to the Mother in 1916:

One we must see the Master and His Power, — Krishna and Kali as I name them using the terms of our Indian religions; the Power occupying the whole of myself and my nature which becomes Kali and ceases to be anything else, the Master using, directing, enjoying the Power to his ends, not mine, with that which I call myself only as a centre of his universal existence and responding to its workings as a soul to the Soul, taking upon itself his image until there is nothing left but Krishna and Kali. This is the stage I have reached in spite of all setbacks and recoils, imperfectly indeed in the secureness and intensity of the state, but well enough in the general type.²⁴

Much later in his life, almost after twenty years, the poet describes the same experience in *Savitri* :

Pursuing her in her fall, implacably sweet,
A face was over her which seemed a youth's,
Symbol of all the beauty eyes see not,
Crowned as with peacock plumes of gorgeous hue
Framing a sapphire, whose heart-disturbing smile

Insatiably attracted to delight,
Voluptuous to the embraces of her soul.
Changed in its shape, yet rapturously the same,
It grew a woman's dark and beautiful
Like a mooned night with drifting star-gemmed clouds,
A shadowy glory and a stormy depth,
Turbulent in will and terrible in love. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

Savitri feels a youthful face "crowned" with "peacock plumes of gorgeous hue" which suddenly grows into a "woman's" face "dark and beautiful", "Turbulent in will and terrible in love". These experiences of the interchange between Krishna and Kali also find several references in the *Record of Yoga*.

And yet beyond the *dasyabhava*, of surrender and submission, there is a greater experience, that of self-annulment, says the Mother:

And it came. It was like this: (gesture of self-abandon) the total, complete self-annulment, annulment of that which can know, of that which tried to know – even "surrender" isn't an adequate word: a sort of annulment. And suddenly it ended with a slight movement as a child could have who doesn't know anything, doesn't try to know anything, doesn't understand anything – but who abandons himself. A light movement of such simplicity, such ingenuousness, such extraordinary sweetness (words can't express it): nothing, just this (gesture of self-abandon), and instantaneously, the Certitude (not expressed, lived), the lived Certitude. ²⁵

Yes, everything will be changed on the earth when the hour of transfiguration dawns – a change that has been described by Sri Aurobindo in most rapturous poetry:

When all thy work in human time is done
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God.
Awakened from the mortal's ignorance
Men shall be lit with the Eternal's ray
And the glory of my sun-lift in their thoughts
And feel in their hearts the sweetness of my love
And in their acts my Power's miraculous drive.
My will shall be the meaning of their days;
Living for me, by me, in me they shall live. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

The second level of understanding what the Mother said about Savitri being the daily record of yoga is that even though Sri Aurobindo was writing *Savitri* in 1935 and onwards till 1950, he was undergoing further heightening of his consciousness and vast horizons of experiences were being opened to him which get reflected in the epic.

All of *Savitri* is undoubtedly the direct poetic expression of Sri Aurobindo's experiences. As the Mother confirms—

He walked in the darkness of inconscience, even in the neighbourhood of death, endured the sufferings of perdition, and emerged from the mud, the world-misery to breathe the sovereign plenitude and enter the supreme Ananda. He crossed all these realms, went through the consequences, suffered and endured physically what one cannot imagine. Nobody till today has suffered like him. He 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 appears now for the first time in the earth-consciousness.²⁶

It is because he walked “in the darkness of inconscience”, it is because he accepted earth's suffering that he could identify himself with earth's aspirations and sorrows. He did not want to leave it in lurch and escape into Nirvana or into other transcendental worlds.

He was convinced that the “purpose of the earth is a concentration of the Work (which means it can be done more rapidly, consciously and perfectly here), so there is a serious reason to stay on and do it.”²⁷ The Mother too has been all through with the earth's evolution: “In the history of earth, wherever there was a possibility for the Consciousness to manifest, I was there; this is a fact. It is like the story of Savitri, always there, always there, always there, in this one, that one – at certain times there were four emanations simultaneously!”²⁸ This struggle to deliver the sorrowful earth is beautifully depicted in *Savitri*,

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 !

(*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

One can go on endlessly describing the multiple experiences of Sri Aurobindo which have been crystallised into jewel-images or inspiring phrases. The Mother revealed that “every word corresponds to an experience, to a particular vibration.”²⁹ *Savitri* thus becomes his message for all future times: “I believe it’s his Message – all the rest is preparation while *Savitri* is the Message”,³⁰ emphasised the Mother.

Savitri is the “daily record” of a seeing of an adventure in consciousness of the dual Avatars — Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It thus becomes a double autobiography of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Although the Mother had not contributed directly to the writing of the book *Savitri*, it is her spiritual autobiography too because they were one consciousness but in two bodies. In fact, the Mother reveals this secret in one of her conversations:

All this is His own experience, and what is most surprising is that it is my own experience also. It is my sadhana which he has worked out. Each object, each event, each realisation, all the descriptions, even the colours are exactly what I saw and the words, phrases are also exactly what I heard. And all this before having read the book. I read *Savitri* many times afterwards, but earlier, when he was writing he used to read it to me. Every morning I used to hear him read *Savitri*. During the night he would write and in the morning read it to me. And I observed something curious, that day after day the experiences he read out to me in the morning were those I had the previous night, word by word. Yes, all the descriptions, the colours, the pictures I had seen, ...And it was not just one day by chance, but for days and days together. And every time I used to compare what he said with my previous experiences and that he had noted them down afterwards, no, he knew already what I had seen. It is my experiences he has presented of our joint adventure into the unknown or rather into the Supermind.³¹

References:

1. *Perspectives I*: 45
2. CWM 13:24
3. CWSA 35: 322
4. *Ibid.*

5. “The Composition of *Savitri*”: 757
6. Correspondance: 388
7. CWSA 10:214
8. Ibid., 20
9. CWSA 11: 1473
10. CWSA 10: 214
11. “The Composition of *Savitri*”: 760
12. CWSA 10: 215
13. Ibid.
14. “The Composition of *Savitri*”: 760
15. CWSA 9:19
16. CWSA 10: 708
17. Ibid., 447
18. *Mother’s Agenda* 4: 118
19. Ibid., 135
20. CWSA 24: 603
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. “The Composition of *Savitri*”: 1070
24. CWSA 36: 290
25. *The Mother on Savitri*: 107
26. Ibid., 47
27. *The Mother on Savitri*: 73
28. Ibid., 41
29. Ibid., 85
30. Ibid., 63
31. *Perspectives I*: 463

Chapter 4

A Complete System of Yoga

Introduction

I shall now take up the second aspect of *Savitri* which is “a complete system of Yoga which can serve as a guide for those who want to follow the integral sadhana.” Our study could help us get clearer guideline from *Savitri* for our sadhana. Beyond being a marvel of an epic of the soul it emerges as a palpable Presence vibrating with the consciousness of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In

the previous talks we came to know not only the symbolic significance of *Savitri* but the occult and the spiritual realities of Dyumatsena, Aswapathy, Savitri and Satyavan who descend upon earth at different stages of evolution to help humanity in its upward journey. In the present study we shall focus on the universal applicability of the sadhana that

Sri Aurobindo had started before launching himself “in a rudderless boat upon the vastness of the Infinite”. I shall divide my talk in two sections. In the first one we shall concentrate on the important features of the transformative yoga as well as other psychological features of integral yoga. In the second, we will see how the main steps of this yoga are applied in *Savitri*.

Let me start our study with a passage from a conversation of the Mother with one of her disciples:

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 him who wishes to follow this path, it is a concrete 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 its solution herein; indeed there is everything that is necessary for doing the Yoga.¹

Then she goes on to say:

It may then be said that *Savitri* is a revelation, it is a meditation, it is a quest of the Infinite, the Eternal...To read *Savitri* is indeed to practice Yoga, spiritual concentration; one can find there all that is needed to realise the Divine. Each step of Yoga is noted here, including the secret of all other Yogas. Surely, if one sincerely follows what is revealed here in each line one will reach finally 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 possessed by way of knowledge, and I repeat this, the words are expressed and arranged in such a way that the sonority of the rhythm leads you to the origin of sound, which is Om.²

Indeed when we read *Savitri* we are enamoured by its imagery, its language, its sonority, its inevitable words, its rhythm, its vision and so many other elements in it. As hinted by the Mother one could say that it is so powerful that if we were to read aloud some passages from *Savitri* the effect would be the same as chanting of AUM in our meditations or at other times.

Likewise, a silent repetition of some special passages from *Savitri* could lead one closer to the realisation of one's psychic being.

Well, the quote from the Mother is just a part of a long talk that she had with a disciple. Here she has opened for us the inner doors and hidden secrets of *Savitri*. It gives us the clue about what to expect from it. She says "that each step of yoga" is recorded here and it can finally lead to "the transformation of the Supramental Yoga".

The Mother's declaration that "The whole of *Savitri* is a Mantra for the transformation of the world"³ is crucial for it gives the very essence and highest ideal of this yoga of transformation. All the practices that we hold important in yoga – aspiration, rejection, surrender, concentration, meditation, etc. are meant for the transformation of our nature. We may get psychic realisation and other experiences but without transformation it cannot be the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo which does not aim at individual moksha or collective liberation. These practices are only a means for the ultimate transformation of the earth which implies:

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. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

I

Meaning of Transformation

In ordinary parlance "transformation" is understood as a turning into a better person, that is, to become saintly or sattvic personality who is god-loving, god-fearing, obeying the rules of the scriptures, etc. I have heard so many people claiming that "I am a transformed person now. I do meditation, go to temple, do pujas" etc. That is not the transformation we are speaking about. Certainly this kind of effort has its own undeniable value but the real change is when there is the transformation of the outer nature of man. The word "transformation" carries in itself its own meaning: trans + form. First, it brings change in the inner nature, then it is followed by the change of the external nature ending with the transformation of the physical form into something which is "light", "luminous" and "transparent". Sri Aurobindo

defines transformation as:

By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature – I do not mean, for instance, sainthood or ethical perfection or yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik's) or a transcendental (*cinmaya*) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfilment, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and yoga.⁴

Here he is very clear and there is no mincing of words: he talks about a consciousness which is very specific, radical and complete with a much greater degree of difference than that which exists between human beings and animals. We do know of the huge leap the mental man has taken since the last stages of development of the animal. But here he talks about a consciousness much vaster and larger even than that of the saints. Normally, the highest we can think of is ethical perfection or sainthood. But it is not sufficient. He writes:

Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent. Realisation by itself does not necessarily transform the being as a whole; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness at the top so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti.⁵

It is not sufficient to have a psychic contact and the descent of higher realisations; it requires a total change in our mind, vital and physical nature. Many have achieved the inner realisation of the psychic being but the insistence here is on the transformation of the outer being which is indispensable for this yoga. Elsewhere, he says: “One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they are... There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place.”⁶

It is very clear again that this is not just the process of ascension into higher

levels of consciousness, but a simultaneous change in the outer being that is needed. This change cannot happen unless there is the descent of the higher consciousness. This makes it sufficiently clear that we cannot stop at the realisation of the psychic being. Of course, this is the first necessary step but the psychic impact must reflect itself on the outer nature also.

In fact the major difference between the old yogas and integral yoga lies in this descent of a divine peace, a divine life and power which will reflect in our outer life. In *Savitri* we have a beautiful description of this descent in Aswapathy:

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. (*Savitri*, BI.C5)

Need for Transformation

The descent which can ultimately transform the outer human nature and the form is that of the Supramental Force. No other power can achieve physical transformation. This is perhaps the reason why so many Avatars have come and gone, while human nature has remained quite the same. Until now no one except Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been able to manifest the Supermind. What the other incarnations have done can be interpreted as a preparation of the earth for the descent of the supramental consciousness.

We often wonder as to why Sri Aurobindo emphasised so much on transformation. What is the need for it? Why is it that this is the highest ideal of integral yoga? We have some beautiful lines in reply to this question:

Only awhile at first these heavenlier states,
These large wide-poised upliftings could endure.
The high and luminous tension breaks too soon,
The body's stone stillness and the life's hushed trance,
The breathless might and calm of silent mind;
Or slowly they fail as sets a golden day.
The restless nether members tire of peace;
A nostalgia of old little works and joys,
A need to call back small familiar selves,

To tread the accustomed and inferior way,
The need to rest in a natural pose of fall,
As a child who learns to walk can walk not long,
Replace the titan will for ever to climb,
On the heart's altar dim the sacred fire. (*Savitri*, BI.C3)

It is because our lower nature is limited in its consciousness, untrained, unrefined and imperfect that it does not allow us to remain on the higher consciousness and therefore it needs to be transformed. Here in a poetic way Sri Aurobindo tells us that “the high and luminous tension” breaks too soon. We can reach higher levels of consciousness but we cannot remain there. What do we do even in meditation? For few minutes we manage to have a silent and peaceful mind, a higher contact and the minute we return to outer consciousness we get back the flood of distracting thoughts from all directions. The same happens when we go to any temple or church: we light a candle or incense sticks and concentrate only for a few minutes. We cannot bear this higher state of consciousness because of our limitations. In order to stay there we need to widen, heighten and deepen our inner and outer consciousness.

Transformation also implies a basic opening to the higher consciousness and receptivity to the spiritual power. I will give you an example from a previous talk with someone here. He asked me how to get over anger and conquer desire? Indeed, these are very vital questions – no doubt. But none of us can conquer these forces by our own efforts, no matter how determined we may be! It has to be a genuine and deep aspiration to change our nature. But when the Mother sends her force and power can we receive it? that is a big question in sadhana. This has happened to me. I had once written to the Mother about some problems in my vital being. She replied to me immediately and I wrote back to her saying that I do not understand at all what she has written. She replied that as I was not in the right consciousness, I was not able to understand it. What I want to tell you is that it is not enough to say: “O Mother, cleanse me, purify me, make me reject all lower emotions.” We must have the readiness, the right preparation in our being to receive the transforming force that accompanies her replies and messages. This message came to me in black and white, in clear hand and yet I wrote to the Mother that I did not understand her! It is not that I did not mentally understand the words she had written; I have had many replies from her and her language was simple and straightforward and anyone with some knowledge of English

and French could understand it. But in order to understand her words truly, we need a deeper consciousness. She had sent her message and her force but my vital could not receive it and blocked it. All this only goes to imply that we must go through the necessary inner preparation to receive her force.

So, the solution to all our questions is that we have to rise to a higher consciousness so that we can retain it when it comes. For that force to be effective in our nature we need to adapt the following process. Usually, we make the offering, we call the Mother, try to aspire and surrender – all of which is alright. But the basic thing which Sri Aurobindo is telling us in this line is lacking in us: “Only awhile at first these heavenlier states, / These large wide-poised upliftings could endure” – that is to say unless and until we have purified our lower consciousness we cannot remain for long in the ranges of the higher consciousness or as the poet writes, “wide-poised upliftings”.

Basic requisites of sadhana

What do we do in order to keep up that poise in us all the time? We cannot be sitting in meditation for long hours or keep doing only the *nama-japa*. We are workaholics compulsively working hard for our living or business. With all our multiple activities in which we spend all our time and energy how do we keep up the inner poise and live in the inner state of consciousness? Let me explain this with an example. Outwardly, we use our mind as an architect or an accountant or a housewife or a school teacher etc, but inwardly our lungs are functioning, our heart is constantly beating and supplying pure blood, the digestive system is working, so on and so forth. Likewise, when we are inwardly poised, a part of our being constantly remembers the Divine, continuously offering itself to Him. This is what brings about the *samata* in man. Once this inner poise is reached, all the outer problems of lower desires, or anger or passion are resolved. A momentary prayer, or a call, does not go too far; what is important is to practice inner renunciation. It is this inner detachment which is the central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita. However, we cannot be detached from the outer world as long as we are not attached to the inner Divine.

So, let us not limit our efforts by our small and negative resolutions. No amount of this negative attitude will work as this would amount to “negative sadhana”. Focusing at all times on rejection, on all that I should not be doing is a negative attitude

Sri Aurobindo advises us to do a “positive sadhana” which is to go towards the

psychic being with the entire load of our weaknesses and limitations. We have so many weaknesses in our lower nature that a constant rejection for an entire life-time will not be enough to purify us. When we attach ourselves to the psychic it becomes like the main engine that carries us forward with the load of all our weaknesses behind it. All the light and strength derived from the Divine conquers our dark areas. It is all a question of contacting that Light, bathing in it and not trying to reject or remove the darkness by ourselves. We do not have such light and power. Only the psychic has it. So Sri Aurobindo is asking us to be connected to that higher consciousness or that inner light for otherwise —

An old pull of subconscious cords renews;
It draws the unwilling spirit from the heights,
Or a dull gravitation drags us down
To the blind driven inertia of our base. (*Savitri*, BI.C3)

Let us remember that we cannot really fight our nature, especially our lower nature on our own. There are the universal Subconscient and the universal Inconscient which are constantly dragging us down. As individual human beings we cannot fight them. Instead it is much easier to seek the Divine help for this transformation. This is exactly what is done by Aswapathy: when he saw the deep sorrow and suffering of the earth, he understood man's limitation. For the sake of a solution, he ascends to the Divine Mother and prays to her to descend upon the earth. This is the exact solution that you and me have to seek in our individual lives also. We have to ask the Mother to do the work in us. Our individual effort all by ourselves could prove insufficient. In integral yoga our entire effort is to invoke her and to let her work in us. About this we get a hint in a message she had given to Champaklal, one of the early disciples in the Ashram:

Be simple,
be happy,
do your work as well as you can
and always remain open to me.
That is all that is asked of you.⁷

As I told you the other day, it rather looks like a simple message. But, with whatever reading I have done about yoga and personal effort, I can say that it is not so easy to bring her down and to keep oneself continuously open to her. It needs a great deal of focus and concentration. Nor is it easy to be “simple”

and “happy”. It implies much inner renunciation, surrender and total dependence on the Mother. These form the initial steps towards transformation of the outer being. We have to work on ourselves and be more vigilant to receive guidance from the psychic which symbolises the Divine Mother within us. In fact, I would say that we have to imbibe her consciousness in every part of our being to be able to do our best in life. As time passes by, she will rid us of all our weaknesses and put us on the sunlit path. Our aim will be to do our work as well as we can and offer it to her. These are the important steps for us in pursuit of the ideal of transformation.

I will give you an example from Nolini Kanta Gupta’s life. He was the Ashram’s secretary for many years. In the early years of the Ashram life he was made in-charge of washing lemons in the Dining Room and cutting them into half or quarter sizes. Each sadhak would be served one piece. One day he had a desire to take one more quarter of a lemon. Immediately he checked himself, consciously analysing this little desire. He was in-charge of hundreds of lemons in which one missing small piece would never have been noticed. But he checked himself. In sadhana there is no small or big desire that can be overlooked. So, one wrong gesture, one wrong thought, feeling or even one wrong act about which no one may ever know, if they are conquered then there is an immense joy. Ultimately, it was a sadhak like him who had attained the Supermind towards the end of his life — an achievement confirmed by the Mother herself.

The process of Transformation

We get detailed descriptions of the triple transformation in *The Life Divine*. The first one is the psychic transformation. In *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo he writes:

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 (*Savitri*, BI.C4)

There is a calm divine Witness hidden within us. It is he who knows and “regards through Time and the blind walls of Form...” The word “regards” means, in French, “to see”. This witness Purusha or the psychic being is the one who looks at the passage of time, at the play of Prakriti. However, what is

important is to contact this “burning witness in the sanctuary”.

Now the question is how do we get into the “sanctuary”? And why do we need to go into it at all? Well, we have to learn to go within so that we can see better what is outside. If we are ourselves in it, in other words if the soul thinks that it is the Prakriti, then how can the outer nature be changed? If I have to look at the vase on my table here, I have to be outside of it. Similarly, I cannot see my heart, my stomach or my lungs because they are part of my being. That is how we look at an object. Essentially, it is this sense of objectification that Sankhya philosophy teaches us. To develop this sense of subjective-objectification is very important in integral yoga. The Mother would always tell us to observe ourselves, to see what are the different parts existing in our being and to discover one’s inner being. Once this inner journey towards the “sanctuary” begins one comes across one’s Manomaya, Pranamaya and Annamaya Purushas and the subliminal being. It is only after traversing these inner layers that one gains entry into the “sanctuary” of the psychic being.

Three Stages

The “sanctuary” is the inner temple from where the soul is watching. Here, I would like to point out a slight difference between the witness Purusha and the psychic being, the Chaitya Purusha. The witness Purusha, the soul only observes our Prakriti, our Nature. It does not act on it, it remains only an observer. In the first stage the psychic being, as it is known in integral yoga, once contacted, can influence and guide our external nature. We can bring down the psychic light and power to act upon our anger, passions, desires and ego. But, unfortunately, the psychic by itself cannot fully transform us. It has its own limitations. It can bring us deep joy, unperturbed calm. Many saints and sages have reached the psychic and lived in peace without bothering the least for the society and the world. They did not want anything else other than the inner calm, beauty and Ananda in which they are lost.

In the stage of psychicisation the psychic being influences the outer being but does not transform it. It can only direct our outer being towards truth and unity. So it will always guide us in the right path and make us do the right thing. It will never allow us to run into falsehood of any kind and will always guide us towards unification. Therefore, if we want true collective unity anywhere in the world among communities it must be founded on psychic realisation. Otherwise, unity is not possible on the mental level. We may have

conferences, all kinds of congregations and theories about unity — all such attempts at harmony will end up as superficial groupings of self-interested individuals. Real unity is based only on the psychic being – this is the advantage of psychicisation.

Now, the second stage in this yoga is that of the spiritual transformation. In the first step that of psychic transformation one is led to a constant contact with the Divine on an individual level whereas in the second step one is led to the merger of one's consciousness with the Cosmic consciousness. Such an identity makes possible the descent of Peace, Force, Light, Ananda which are indispensable for the transformation of the outer nature. This Cosmic consciousness penetrates all parts of human being right down to the level of the subconscious – and it is such a total descent of the higher consciousness that makes possible a spiritual transformation of our mind, vital and the outer nature.

Beyond this is the third stage that of Supramentalisation in which one has the simultaneous perception of the One and the Many. This is the most important and also the most difficult step to accomplish. It implies seeing simultaneously the One Supreme and the Divine multiplicity. I am especially emphasising on the concurrence of the experiences because some acharyas and rishis in the past have either accepted the Supreme Reality alone or the manifestation. They realised either the Brahman and rejected the world or it has been the other way round. But the aim of integral yoga is to realise the Infinite and the finite at the same time – a realisation that is achievable only when one attains the supramental consciousness.

To conclude in Sri Aurobindo's words:

Psychicisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental Consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another.⁸

II

Sri Aurobindo's yoga has two movements: concentric and vertical. The concentric movement is the process of going within which is basically the yoga

of Savitri and the vertical one is the yoga of Aswapathy. In the first one, Sri Aurobindo gives us a clear picture of the different levels of our being in which the outer level is what we know as the mind, the vital, the emotions and the body. Most psychologists and psychiatrists are aware only of these levels. However, we also have the inner level known as the subliminal which encompasses the subtle physical, the subtle vital and the subtle mental. There is again a passage between these three – the outer which is grosser and the inner which is subtler. So, there are three layers outside and another three inside. And then deeper down there is again a triple sub-stratum – Manomaya, Pranamaya and Annamaya beings – the Purusha aspect of the mind, vital and physical. The Chaitya Purusha or the psychic being is behind all of them. And beyond the psychic being is the soul. So this is the concentric structure.

Unless and until we know this structure properly, we will not be able to understand Savitri's yoga clearly. Now, we are all aware that we have hardly any idea of all these layers within us. These are subtle perceptions. And the most important layer for us in our day to day living is our subliminal layer. Normally we think that our mind, emotions or body are very important but we do not know that all this is being controlled and influenced by the subtle-physical, the subtle-vital and the subtle-mental layers within. Let us take up an analogy of mango. The skin forms the outermost layer. It is hardly of any importance. The pulp inside is the subliminal and the innermost seed represents the Chaitya Purusha. So the bulk of the fruit is the pulp. Likewise the major part of the human being is the subtle layer which we call the subliminal.

With this image of the mango we are able to perceive the immense importance that subliminal has for us. We see that all great achievements in any field, all the great ideas always come from the subliminal. Remember the famous definition by Wordsworth that poetry is "emotions recollected in tranquility". This means that these emotions – when he saw the daffodils, their colour, the fragrance, the form – the whole image got embedded in his subliminal. It stayed there and later it burst forth as a beautiful poem "Daffodils". The experience returned to him from his subliminal. When I observe an object, its image along with the emotions it evokes, goes into my subliminal. There it resonates and comes out in a poetic form. That is why in integral yoga observation becomes extremely important not only for poetry, art or music, but even for learning lessons in life. Observation of very trivial

things which sink in the subliminal can serve as very important experience. So, in one word, our highest achievements are expressions more from the subliminal than from the outer mental, vital and physical levels which are but the instruments of the inner being. If I write a wonderful essay with a beautiful pen, the pen does not get the credit for it, but the writer does. So is my mind only an instrument of the subliminal.

Then comes the vertical movement. Here Sri Aurobindo gives us another image of a staircase. But first I would like to read a few lines from *Savitri* related to this level.

His soul was all in front like a great sea
Flooding the mind and body with its waves;
His being, spread to embrace the universe,
United the within and the without
To make of life a cosmic harmony,
An empire of the immanent Divine. (*Savitri*, BIII.C3)

Once we know this, we see all the stages reflected in the yoga of Aswapathy and Savitri. This is why the Mother calls it “a complete system of yoga”. Each and every stage that Sri Aurobindo elaborately states in *The Synthesis of Yoga* is expressed in *Savitri*. Here, we see the example in Aswapathy realising his own soul.

The experiences of the inner worlds open up to him and acquires Knowledge from far beyond the mind. Because of a large and wide consciousness he feels a much greater sense of oneness and unity with humanity and earth. This is one of the major milestones in sadhana. If we live only on the mental level we are not united with others and all the problems in the society are created by mind’s divisive consciousness. From whichever angle we analyse we see that Reason always acts as a separative consciousness. When this division starts melting away with the coming of the unifying consciousness, all problems of the emotional, psychological or mental levels will get solved gradually. I do not mention here the physical problems because the medical science is quite well-advanced to take care of them, although we are nowhere near the ultimate mysteries of the physical. Therefore, to reach this greater phenomenon with human consciousness one has to go through these layers of mind and climb up to the consciousness of unity and oneness.

Then, what are the other benefits of this ascent of consciousness? Our capacities increase, our faculties become sharper and our instrumentation

becomes tenfold more effective. If one is an artist, he becomes a better artist, if one is an engineer or working with the computers he becomes more efficient, brilliant or even receive intuitive ideas while working. In short, this is what is needed for the earth – a dynamic perfection. If perfection remains an ideal only, it is not of much use. It has to be realised, it has to be dynamic and only then it is relevant to life and its progress. So, this going up the ladder of consciousness helps us become much more effective and dynamic on the life plane.

But then there are two processes followed in this journey. One is this specific ascent in which one goes from Mind to Overmind which Sri Aurobindo had done in the beginning and is expressed in *Savitri* as Aswapathy's ascent. Second is the ascent to the Supermind. So, it is not enough to reach the Overmind. Many yogis of the past remained stationed there. In Vedic and Upanishadic times yogis reached the Overmind and some of them also had glimpses of the Supermind. It is mentioned as the "golden lid" in the Isha Upanishad.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were the only ones who went for the second ascent. We call it "ascent into the Paraprakriti," into the very nature of the Divine. The first ascent is from Ignorance to Knowledge. The next stage is an ascent from Knowledge to greater Knowledge. But an ascent is always followed by a descent. There have been descents of several levels of consciousness including that of the Overmind. But none of these descents are as effective as that of the Supermind. In the spiritual history, known to us, no one else seems to have ascended to the level of the Supermind and facilitated its descent other than the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Ego and egolessness

From here, I will now take up the most important problem, that of the ego. In chapter one of *The Synthesis of Yoga*

Sri Aurobindo talks about the three purifications required: the first one is egolessness, the second is desirelessness and the third is to acquire equality. Normally, we do not seem to understand clearly what is ego. The word "ego" implies a sense of identification of our existence with the outer self. This is because we are ignorant of our true self above and our psychic being within us. Sri Aurobindo defines clearly the purpose and role of the ego:

In the Ignorance Nature centres the order of her psychological movements, not around the secret spiritual self, but around its substitute, the ego-

principle: a certain ego-centrism is the basis on which we bind together our experiences and relations in the midst of the complex contacts, contradictions, dualities, incoherences of the world in which we live; this ego-centrism is our rock of safety against the cosmic and the infinite, our defence.⁹

In evolution Nature has not brought in the element of ego in plants, reptiles and animals. It is only in the human beings that it has been introduced for a specific purpose. Sri Aurobindo explains:

Nature invented the ego that the individual might disengage himself from the inconscience or subconsciousness of the mass and become an independent living mind, life-power, soul, spirit, co-ordinating himself with the world around him but not drowned in it and separately inexistent and ineffective. For the individual is indeed part of the cosmic being, but he is also something more, he is a soul that has descended from the Transcendence. This he cannot manifest at once, because he is too near to the cosmic Inconscience, not near enough to the original Superconscience; he has to find himself as the mental and vital ego before he can find himself as the soul or spirit.¹⁰

A beautiful passage which justifies and supports the formation of the ego in an individual. Children have an amorphous personality, not yet well-formed. Whatever their parents and grand-parents tell them, they obey. When they grow up to their teens and slowly develop an individuality of their own, through their adolescence, we find that they no longer obey their elders. We often complain that they go out of our control. What really happens is that their individual ego starts asserting itself. It is absolutely essential to bring the growing teenager out of the shell of inconscience so that he becomes somebody and knows the true purpose of his life. At this stage ego is a great helper. It is an important step in the ladder of evolution. First, what comes up is the physical ego. Youngsters start spending much time in front of the mirror and are very conscious of their appearance. They follow the existing trends of fashion because they want to look beautiful and attractive. Rich or poor, every boy and girl at that age feels that they are good-looking and beautiful. At that age they do not have to ask the mirror who is the most beautiful because they themselves feel that urge within which encourages them to be smart, confident and build a self-image about themselves that helps them in their outer personality. This is the law of Nature and it is extremely important at that stage for the elders to encourage them, of course in the right direction.

Next, from the physical one goes to the vital. It is at this stage that the vital ego comes forward. Emotions start surging up and the young boys and girls feel that now they are somebody and they want to communicate their feelings and emotions. They start looking for boyfriends and girlfriends, their suitable partners to communicate and be with. This is both natural and essential. After this, another stage comes: the period of mental ego which begins to take shape. They seek to establish themselves by choosing a career or a job, that of a businessman or a teacher or a computer expert or anything but they want to be successful; a mental success is what they seek first. They no longer look in the mirror as before. Usually they become busy – they pack up their laptops, or their office bags and rush to their offices because their boss expects them to complete their work.

Then, they are busy and life moves rather fast along with their energy level. At that time the physical and the vital ego recede a little though they certainly do not fall off. Subsequently, the mental ego becomes predominant in the individuals who then aim at fulfilling their ambitions and desires. It is much later, when they have experienced life and reality that they ask the question from within: “What is all this about? Am I going to eternally follow this race of a successful IT Engineer or a successful businessman? Am I eternally going to exhaust myself in this competition of survival? Is there nothing more to life? Is life just to pursue all this?”

There are not many who ask these questions about life. Most people get stuck at the levels of mind, vital and physical. Most keep to their mental ego striving to reach the highest position in the company and thereafter happily retire. Once they step down, they are nobody; their mental ego no longer supports them. All of a sudden they “feel retired”, having nothing to do, no one to consider them useful. However, going beyond one’s own ego is the first step towards the true self, the psychic being, the soul which is our real self. The truth is that “the individual is indeed part of the cosmic being, but he is also something more. He is a soul that has descended from the transcendence.”¹¹

Nature wants us to experience the world before it takes us beyond ego. The world is a truth and reality which is beautiful and is not to be rejected. If we can take all the experiences in it as occasions of growth, it becomes the field of spiritual maturation and makes us ready for a higher life. This is what our ancient social system gave us as *brahmacharya*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*. What a wonderful system! One goes through a long period of

learning as a student, then fulfill the life of a householder and leave the world to get merged in God.

Hence, our ancient ideal was also to live life fully and integrally. It is this same ideal that has been brought back by Sri Aurobindo in his integral yoga. In this context “all life is yoga” has to be taken in the right perspective. He tells us not to reject anything but experience every aspect of life and asks us to go beyond. Make use of every opportunity to grow inwardly. Only then can all life be yoga. We should not make a mistake of thinking that Sri Aurobindo has given us full license to do anything good, bad, or evil and enjoy life. It is only to the extent that we are conscious of each event in our life as being a step towards making an inner progress that we can say “all life is yoga”.

Now, how to get rid of our ego? We have seen its necessity and growth and I have also said that we have to go beyond the mental ego to turn to a spiritual life. We also know that spiritual growth automatically implies that we are becoming increasingly egoless. I am consciously using the word “automatically” because this is the way I understand it. According to Sri Aurobindo, as our consciousness heightens, deepens and widens, the ego can no longer survive. When we reach a wideness of consciousness this limited ego has no longer any role to play. That is how it is automatically dissolved. In such a resplendent “sunshine of thousand suns”, the ego is like a candle and it realises that it has no place. But let us not forget this little entity which had been guiding us all along was very useful in making us into what we are today. But now, we have opened the large window to bathe in the sunlight of spirituality. The candle says “I have no more any use now” and rather spontaneously withdraws and allows self-extinction. We do not have to say “I am selfish, I have to reject that.” However hard we may try, we cannot do it on our own. We certainly have to remain vigilant and constantly conscious but we have to open the windows to the Light. The Mother says, “keep yourself open to me”. It is she who does the sadhana in us if only we let her do it. Opening the window is calling her, allowing her to work in us. This is the positive sadhana in Sri Aurobindo’s view. We have to understand this simple truth that opening to the psychic window of Light is how we can deal in the right way with our limited ego.

However, this is not all that easy and simple for us. There are plenty of cobwebs and dirt on the curtains of our being. We have got to clear all that which calls for a great deal of sadhana and hard work. Only then are we free

from ego when –

...our consciousness changes into the height and depth and wideness of the spirit, the ego can no longer survive there: it is too small and feeble to subsist in that vastness and dissolves into it; for it exists by its limits and perishes by the loss of its limits. The being breaks out of its imprisonment in a separated individuality, becomes universal, assumes a cosmic consciousness in which it identifies itself with the self and spirit, the life, the mind, the body of all beings .¹²

Desire and desirelessness

Regarding “desirelessness”, I would like to read one short definition from Sri Aurobindo’s book *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

The root of desire is the vital craving to seize upon that which we feel we have not, it is the limited life’s instinct for possession and satisfaction. It creates the sense of want...¹³

The rejection of desire is essentially the rejection of the element of craving, putting that out from the consciousness itself as a foreign element not belonging to the true self and the inner nature.¹⁴

The root of desire is the vital craving for that which we do not have. This is the instinct of a limited life that is ruled only by the law of possession and its satisfaction. In our effort we may not be able to erase it but certainly can delimit it. Desire may be for anything, any object or any person. Even aspiring for a spiritual life is a kind of desire. It is a strange thing. We desire the company of a person or a home-theatre, we have a television and a music system but are not satisfied with them. Until the time we possess it our mind is constantly preoccupied with it. But it is amusing how desire lasts as long as we do not have the object. The day you get it, it is gone. Why? Because we experienced the happiness of owning the object we were missing. Today it is a colour TV, tomorrow it is the home-theatre, then it is marriage and then a world-trip! But if we get over all these and say that “if I connect myself to the Divine, I have everything I want”. Then we observe the beauty of this aspiration which makes us feel that “I no longer miss anything”. Then there is no missing element in our lives because I do not need anything more. No person can make us happy or no material object can satisfy us. In the Gita Lord Krishna describes so beautifully how this desire leads to possession and possession leads to fear. It is the fear of losing the person, of losing name and fame, of losing possession, money and property, objects or even power over

them that make us insecure. And once this cancer of fear invades us, we lose equanimity and peace of mind and “once we lose this,” says the Lord, “we lose clarity of thinking and discrimination.” We are no more worthy of being called “human beings”.

Look at this wonderful analysis of desire, possession, and fear that ends up in losing equanimity, mental discrimination and a complete *sthiratā* steadfastness of mind. Here you see the serious danger of desire: how from being “human” we become inhuman. This is the reason why our ancient yogis practiced a strict and stoic asceticism. The more we have the material possession the more is the insecurity. In fact, the truth about desires is, as writes

Sri Aurobindo:

The desires come from outside, enter the subconscious vital and rise to the surface. It is only when they rise to the surface and the mind becomes aware of them that we become conscious of the desire.¹⁵

There is an important hint here regarding how desire rises up to the surface of our consciousness. We imbibe all these different kinds of desires, be it material or physical, be it anger or passion or craving for name and fame etc. everything from outside of us. We do not have them within us but these forces do come inside and settle securely somewhere deep within us. Then, when the time comes and I happen to look at a beautiful TV set, I want to possess it. It is not that I chose the TV on the spot. No, this thought and desire had already made an inroad in me and I was preparing myself to possess it. Looking at the new model of the TV was just an opportunity to bring it up to the surface mind. All desires, or various kinds of desires, come from outside.

Well, what is the solution when these desires invade us? It is a fundamental truth that everything comes from outside – our ill-health, passions, cravings everything. Now, if we want to be healthy we have to stop them at the entrance itself. We should not admit them to enter the very subtle-physical layer. Similarly, on the emotional and mental levels, feelings and thoughts have to be stopped right there at the subtle-vital and mental layers. So Sri Aurobindo says that we have to stop these outer forces from entering us if we want to be healthy, our emotions to be pure and our minds to be silent.

Why are we trained in meditation? It is not only for gaining peace and quietude but to be able to observe these intruders, reject and stop them right at the gate. You see we have the psychic being within us and it can always

radiate its guidance in our being but why is it so difficult for us to realise this? It is because these outside elements come and lodge within us comfortably feeding on our lower impulses at the level of the mind, vital and body. They become blocks and then the soul says “you have blocked all my entrances and my influence cannot reach you. Therefore, I can no longer act”.

We should be conscious of this right from the beginning of our sadhana. This is the part of rejection, the part of purification. What is important to know is that we must not “own” these weaknesses and desires. It is fundamental in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga to realise that the moment we feel that all these thousand weaknesses and frailties are ours, they possess us so powerfully that we lose the real power to be able to observe them, leave alone the will to reject them. Then it becomes “my desire”, “my possession”, “my property”, “my object”, “my kingdom”. Where is the true “I”, my real self? Where is my psychic being? So the less we are stuck at the mental-vital-physical levels, the more we move towards the true “I”. This is the secret.

Equality

One important quality that we have to acquire is *samata*, the sense of equality that Sri Aurobindo mentions frequently in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. “The very first necessity for spiritual perfection is a perfect equality.”¹⁶ Also,

A perfect equality of our spirit and nature is a means by which we can move back from the troubled and ignorant outer consciousness into this inner kingdom of heaven and possess the spirit’s eternal kingdoms, *rājyam samr. ddham*, of greatness, joy and peace.¹⁷

What a wonderful state of consciousness it is when neither paeans of victory or defeat matter to our consciousness any longer! We are equal to both these conditions or to all contraries like creation and destruction, or happiness and sorrow. This is the secret of equality where the opposites are interconnected. In Indian yoga psychology we say “do good karma so that you do not have to suffer”. It is a very negative outlook. Just to escape suffering do I have to do good karma? Unfortunately, such is the common understanding of most of the people. The truth is that so long as we live on the mental plane of consciousness however healthy, happy, prosperous or joyous we may be we cannot escape sorrow or suffering as both happiness and unhappiness happen to be the two sides of the same coin. We can escape this only by reaching planes or levels beyond the mind; it is only then that we can gain this sense of equality. As long as we are in the domain of desire at the level of mind, we

cannot escape sorrow and suffering. The one and only way is to rise above. Sri Aurobindo says that only a change of consciousness can help us, nothing else.

III

Remember why thou cam'st:

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,

In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,

Then mortal nature change to the divine. (*Savitri*, BVII.C2)

This is the essence of integral yoga. In these four lines of advice given to Savitri by her inner Voice lie the essential philosophy and the practical steps that need to be taken in integral yoga. Savitri is given this advice at such a point in her life when she is, as it were, in her lowest consciousness. As the day of "ever-nearing Fate" approached,

She saw the desert of her coming days

Imaged in every solitary hour. (*Savitri*, BVII.C1)

A cloud of gloom overcame her consciousness, a negativity shadowed her thoughts, she wanted to die with Satyavan and follow him "seizing his robe/Across our other countries, travellers glad/Into the sweet or terrible Beyond":

Often it seemed to her the ages' pain

Had pressed their quintessence into her single woe,

Concentrating in her a tortured world.

Thus in the silent chamber of her soul... (*Savitri*, BVII.C1)

Such moods of grief and fear are the common lot of all mortals. Men and women fall prey to such dark and disillusioned moments, often leading them to suicide. The common remedy to deep depression is an escape from life, a belief that once the present body and form is rejected all problems of existence will be dissolved forever. We, the common people, are not perhaps aware that suicide is no remedy to life's misery – it continues even after the body is shed off and for all that one knows, the problems may increase tenfold in the next life!

But, fortunate is Savitri who "repressing in her bosom its load of grief", remained calm. She then gets "A summons from her being's summit" which asks her: "Why camest thou to this dumb deathbound earth". (*Savitri*, BVII.C2) This is the basic question that all of us ought to ask ourselves: "why am I here upon earth? What is the purpose of my life?" Surely, just as this

entire cosmos has a purpose, each individual being born on earth has a specific aim and purpose. It is “to find and to serve the Divine,”¹⁸ says the Mother.

Many religions and most spiritual masters have repeated this “purpose of life” in different ways and formulas. But, men and women can hardly follow it because of the revolt of the vital or the mental which don’t want us to escape the noose of their power and control. Or else, we often revolt against God who is not listening to our prayers or who is not hastening to redeem us from personal pain and sorrow. Similar is Savitri’s revolt who replied to the Voice:

My strength is taken from me and given to Death...
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 steps
And pass through night from twilight to the sun
Across the tenebrous river that divides,
The adjoining parishes of earth and heaven.
Then could we, lie inarmed breast upon breast,
Untroubled by thought, untroubled by our hearts,
Forgetting man and life and time and its hours,
Forgetting eternity’s call, forgetting God. (*Savitri*, BVII.C2)

The Voice, instead of chiding her, puts in front of Savitri the “Work” that she has come to do:

Canst thou not down to open the doors of Fate,
The iron doors that seemed for ever closed,
And lead man to Truth’s wide and golden road
That runs through finite things to eternity? (*Savitri*, BVII.C2)

When she is reminded of the wide and high aim of her life, Savitri responds to the call and says: “Command, for I am here to do thy will.” (*Savitri*, BVII.C1) She surrenders her own will to the Divine and seeks His guidance. We too ought to do the same when we face imponderable difficulties, overwhelming problems, unnerving issues or unconquerable weaknesses in our being. It is a difficult thing, no doubt, but the Mother explains:

...You can at every minute make the gift of your will in an aspiration — and an aspiration which formulates itself very simply, not just “Lord, Thy will be done”, but “Grant that I may do as well as I can the best thing to do.”
You may not know at every moment what is the best thing to do or how to

do it, but you can place your will at the disposal of the Divine to do the best possible, the best thing possible.¹⁹

You have been put upon earth, in a physical body, with a definite aim, which is to make this body as conscious as possible, make it the most perfect and most conscious instrument of the Divine. He has given you a certain amount of substance and of matter in all the domains — mental, vital and physical —in proportion to what He expects from you, and all the circumstances around you are also in proportion to what He expects of you, and those who tell you –

“My life is terrible, I lead the most miserable life in the world”, are donkeys! Everyone has a life appropriate to his total development, everyone has experiences which help him in his total development, and everyone has difficulties which help him in his total realisation.²⁰

...You have a special aim, a special mission, a special realisation which is your very own, each one individually, and you carry in yourself all the obstacles necessary to make your realisation perfect. Always you will see that within you the shadow and the light are equal: you have an ability, you have also the negation of this ability. But if you discover a very black hole, a thick shadow, be sure there is somewhere in you a great light. It is up to you to know how to use the one to realise the other.²¹

Savitri too is born with a special mission, a divine destiny to “vanquish Time and Death” and at the same time she has a source of Light and Strength specific to her own consciousness which is hidden within her. Hence, the Voice advises her: “Open God’s door, enter into his trance.” (*Savitri*, BVII.C1) It means that Savitri has to first go deep into her inner self and “find out” her soul. Her mission is high and the strength she has to draw to fulfil it is deep within her soul and high above in her transcendental Self.

The aim of life even for the common aspirants has to be “high and wide, generous and disinterested” says the Mother. Lest people misinterpret what she said, she herself explains:

For instance, there are those whose aim is to make a fortune, and there are those whose aim is to find a cure for a disease. That of making one’s fortune is obviously more self-seeking and lower than the one of finding a remedy for an illness. There are those who have for their aim in life a comfortable and quiet living, with a family and children, wanting the best in the best of possible worlds. That is a pretty low aim, in any case quite an ordinary one.

There are those who seek the betterment of the whole of society or those who study to make new discoveries, like Mr. and Mrs. Curie, for example, who discovered radium. That is a higher aim. “Disinterested”, that means what is not for one’s own small personal profit, for one’s personal pleasure, but solely for helping others. Naturally, the highest aim is to unite with the Divine and fulfil His work, but that, that’s right at the top of the ladder.²²

But still, it goes without saying that the discovery of the Divine in oneself and uniting with Him and accomplishing His work is the highest and most disinterested aim, and the least selfish.²³

Savitri stands out, undoubtedly, on the “highest” as she has come on earth for its transformation making way for the descent of the New Race. The Voice makes her aware of her “highest and most disinterested aim,” – to conquer “Time and Death”. Savitri “looked into herself and sought for her soul”. (*Savitri*, BVII.C2)

How does one go in search of one’s soul that is hidden deep inside, behind the layers of the subliminal and the outer nature? There could be many ways to do so, but essentially they all profess the same process:

...you must go in this way (gesture of going deep within), like this, draw back from the surface, withdraw deep within and enter, enter, enter, go down, down, down into a very deep hole, silent, immobile, and there, there’s a kind of... something warm, quiet, rich in substance and very still, and very full, like a sweetness — that is the soul. And if one is insistent and is conscious oneself, then there comes a kind of plenitude which gives the feeling of something complete that contains unfathomable depths in which, should one enter, one feels that many secrets would be revealed... like the reflection in very peaceful waters of something that is eternal. And one no longer feels limited by time.

One has the feeling of having always been and of being for eternity.²⁴

Savitri takes up the same path to contact her soul – to “draw back from the surface” and to “go down, down, down...” As she leaves behind the surface consciousness and plunges into the inner regions, what she sees, as in a dream, is the cosmic past. It is a fast-forward display of evolution from Matter to Mind. She sees how out of the indefinable chaos of the Inconscient, a consciousness stirred and pain and pleasure began to vibrate:

In the indeterminate formlessness of Self
Creation took its first mysterious steps,

It made the body's shape a house of soul
And Matter learned to think and person grew;
She saw Space peopled with the seeds of life
And saw the human creature born in Time. (*Savitri*, BVII.C2)

Man, the acme of evolution till now has in him the "glories" and the "darknesses" of Nature and even with all these "God's opposites", he works out in life "the dreams of God". (*Savitri*, BVII.C1) What Savitri ultimately realises is that in spite of the "awful guests" which grip "sometimes man's world",

There are greatnesses hidden in our unseen parts
That wait their hour to step into life's front:
We feel an aid from deep indwelling Gods;
One speaks within, Light comes to us from above.
Our soul from its mysterious chamber acts;
Its influence pressing on our heart and mind
Pushes them to exceed their mortal selves.
It seeks for Good and Beauty and for God;
We see beyond self's walls our limitless self,
We gaze through our world's glass at half-seen vasts,
We hunt for the Truth behind apparent things. (*Savitri*, BVII.C2)

Savitri is once again shown her role in this vast scheme of evolution.

For man thou seekst, not for thyself alone.
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.
In Matter's body find thy heaven-born soul. (*Savitri*, BVII.C3)

Even to fulfil her Avataric role, Savitri has to take the "triple stride" like Vamana and conquer the three worlds – the physical, the vital and the mental. Savitri has to do tapasya in a manner that could be followed by human aspirants for the realisation of the soul. The first thing that we need to

understand is that “there are two characters who are in the habit of making a lot of noise, the mind and the vital. And because they make a lot of noise, while the soul does not, or, rather, makes as little as possible, their noise prevents you from hearing the voice of the soul.”²⁵ That is why perhaps, the inner Voice marks out the central effort that Savitri has to make:

Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:
In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see.
Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight:
In the enormous emptiness of thy mind
Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,... (*Savitri*, BVII.C2)

Savitri comes to know these two “enemies” on the path of her search for the soul. The vital worlds’ power is so mighty that it demands even the “God’s submission”:

Enormous was its vast and passionate voice.
It cried to her listening spirit as it ran,
Demanding God’s submission to chainless Force.

(*Savitri*, BVII.C3)

Similarly, Mind claimed:

Ours is the home of cosmic certainty.
Here is the truth, God’s harmony is here.
Register thy name in the book of the elite,
Admitted by the sanction of the few,
Adopt thy station of knowledge, thy post in mind,
Thy ticket of order draw in Life’s bureau
And praise thy fate that made thee one of ours.
All here, docketed and tied, the mind can know,
All schemed by law that God permits to life.
This is the end and there is no beyond. (*Savitri*, BVII.C3)

Savitri through the process of meditation succeeds in stilling the thoughts and gain “the enormous emptiness of the mind.” Similar was the way that Sri Aurobindo had silenced his mind:

Now to reach Nirvana was the first radical result of my own Yoga. It threw me suddenly into a condition above and without thought, unstained by any mental or vital movement; there was no ego, no real world — only when

one looked through the immobile senses, something perceived or bore upon its sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without true substance. There was no One or many even, only just absolutely That, featureless, relationless, sheer, indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real... I cannot say there was anything exhilarating or rapturous in the experience, as it then came to me, — the ineffable Ananda I had years afterwards, — but what it brought was an inexpressible Peace, a stupendous silence, an infinity of release and freedom. I lived in that Nirvana day and night before it began to admit other things into itself or modify itself at all, and the inner heart of experience, a constant memory of it and its power to return remained until in the end it began to disappear into a greater Superconsciousness from above.²⁶

Stilling of the thoughts in the mind, quietening the vital and immobilising the body's sensorial responses seem to be the prerequisites to "discover" one's soul —

To find the birthplace of the occult Fire

And the deep mansion of my secret soul. (*Savitri*, BVII.C3)

For Savitri, it was an obligation to discover her soul because, "to find one's soul is to find God; to identify with one's soul is to unite with the Divine."²⁷ and union with the Superconscient could give Savitri the needed Consciousness-Force to conquer "Time and Death". The Mother spoke of the same mission of the psychic being while explaining the difference between the soul and the psychic being:

The soul and the psychic being are not exactly the same thing, although their essence is the same. The soul is the divine spark that dwells at the centre of each being; it is identical with its Divine Origin; it is the divine in man.

The psychic being is formed progressively around this divine centre, the soul, in the course of its innumerable lives in the terrestrial evolution, until the time comes when the psychic being, fully formed and wholly awakened, becomes the conscious sheath of the soul around which it is formed. And thus identified with the Divine, it becomes His perfect instrument in the world."²⁸

Normally, the individuality of human beings is unsteady, changing constantly like a river which keeps ever changing and yet it maintains a certain definite form by its outer contours. "It is only when one has made an effort for

inner development and tried to find something that is a little more stable in one's being, that one can begin to feel that this 'something' which is permanently conscious throughout all ages and all change, this something must be 'myself'."²⁹ For long one is led to think that it is the desire-soul which is "myself". After much self-control, self-analysis, self-offering, purification, one begins to realise that there is behind all our thoughts and feelings and actions "something else...which is hearing of our hearing, mind of our mind, speech of our speech, that too is life of our life-breath and sight of our sight..."³⁰

Savitri too, in her attempts to seek her soul, passed through "the press of bodily mind, the Inconscient's brood / Of aimless thought and will" (*Savitri*, BVII.C3):

The cycles of the infinity of desire
And the mystique that made an unrealised world
Wider than the known and closer than the unknown
In which hunt for ever the hounds of mind and life,
Tempted a deep dissatisfied urge within
To long for the unfulfilled and ever far
And make this life upon a limiting earth
A climb towards summits vanishing in the void,
A search for the glory of the impossible. (*Savitri*, BVII.C3)

Reading about "The infinity of desire" reminds us of the "Three conditions which are indispensable" for integral yoga:

For, first, life as it is a movement of desire and it has built in us as its centre a desire-soul which refers to itself all the motions of life and puts in them its own troubled hue and pain of an ignorant, half-lit, baffled endeavour: for a divine living, desire must be abolished and replaced by a purer and firmer motivepower, the tormented soul of desire dissolved and in its stead there must emerge the calm, strength, happiness of a true vital being now concealed within us.³¹

Next, life as it is driven or led partly by the impulse of the life-force, partly by a mind which is mostly a servant and abettor of the ignorant life-impulse, but in part also its uneasy and not too luminous or competent guide and mentor; for a divine life the mind and the life-impulse must cease to be anything but instruments and the inmost psychic being must take their place as the leader on the path and the indicator of a divine guidance.³²

...Last, life as it is turned towards the satisfaction of the separative ego; ego must disappear and be replaced by the true spiritual person, the central being,...³³

In Savitri's inner journey, we see that the focus is on the third condition, namely, "ego must disappear and be replaced by the true spiritual person, the central being,.." But, it is needless to say that there are stages of the growth of the soul in man. Although the soul or the psychic being longs to unite with the Divine, "it is not always able to prevail against the obscurity and ignorant smallness of the physical consciousness, the mistaken surenesses of the mind or the arrogance and vehemence of the vital nature".³⁴ So in the beginning, it identifies itself with "the human mental, emotive, sensational life as it is, its relations, its activities, its cherished forms and figures;...In the first long stage of its growth and immature existence it has leaned on earthly love, affection, tenderness, goodwill, compassion, benevolence, on all beauty and gentleness and fineness and light and strength and courage,..."³⁵ Savitri too suffered the human fate:

Still veiled from her was the silent Being within
Who sees life's drama pass with unmoved eyes,
Supports the sorrow of the mind and heart
And bears in human breasts the world and fate.
A glimpse or flashes came, the Presence was hid.

(*Savitri*, BVII.C1)

And yet, Savitri was humanly divine, her leaning on human love did not make her blind:

In all her acts a strange divinity shone:
Into a simplest movement she could bring
A oneness with earth's glowing robe of light,
A lifting up of common acts by love.
All-love was hers and its one heavenly cord
Bound all to all with her as golden tie. (*Savitri*, BVII.C1)

This, in fact, is the second stage of the growth of the psychic being in man:

It may still admit the human forms and movements, but on condition that they are turned towards the One alone. It accepts only the ties that are helpful, the heart's reverence for the Guru, the union of the God-seekers, a spiritual compassion for the ignorant human and animal world and its peoples, the joy and happiness and satisfaction of beauty that comes from

the perception of the Divine everywhere.³⁶

In the third stage of its growth, the psychic being “plunges the nature inward towards its meeting with the immanent Divine in the heart’s secret...”³⁷ This meeting “with the immanent Divine” is what is so very aptly described in *Savitri*,

A house was there all made of flame and light
And crossing a wall of doorless living fire
There suddenly she met her secret soul. (*Savitri*, BVII.C5)

This entire sequence of the growth of the psychic being as described in the quote mentioned above from *The Synthesis of Yoga* is caught in these poetic lines:

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;...
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.
In body weak, in its heart an invincible might,
It climbs stumbling, held up by an unseen hand,
A toiling spirit in a mortal shape. (*Savitri*, BVII.C5)

This is only the first stage of integral yoga: the awakening of the psychic being. That is to say, the psychic being “comes from behind the veil, its presence is felt already in the waking daily consciousness, its influence fills, dominates, transforms the mind and vital and their movements, even the physical. One is aware of one’s soul, feels the psychic to be one’s true being, the mind and the rest begin to be only instruments of the inmost within us.”³⁸ This transformation of the lower nature “bringing right vision into the mind, right impulse and feeling into the vital, right movement and habit into the physical — all turned towards the Divine, all based on love, adoration, bhakti.”³⁹ is

what is called “psychicisation”.

But, this stage of psychicisation needs to be followed by a higher one — that of spiritualisation — because being a part of the human being and belonging to evolution, “psychicisation” by itself

“will not carry one beyond the present evolution but will make the being ready to respond to all that comes from the Divine or Higher Nature and unwilling to respond to the Asura, Rakshasa, Pishacha or Animal in the being or to any resistance of the lower nature which stands in the way of the divine change.”⁴⁰ The spiritual change is the opening of the being to “descent of the peace, light, knowledge, power, bliss from above, the awareness of the Self and the Divine and of a higher cosmic consciousness and the change of the whole consciousness to that.”⁴¹ Both these processes of psychicisation and spiritualisation are magnificently described in the following lines:

A secret soul behind supporting all
Is master and witness of our ignorant life,
Admits the Person's look and Nature's role.
But once the hidden doors are flung apart
Then the veiled king steps out in Nature's front;
A Light comes down into the Ignorance,
Its heavy painful knot loosens its grasp:
The mind becomes a mastered instrument
And life a hue and figure of the soul.
All happily grows towards knowledge and towards bliss.
A divine Puissance then takes Nature's place
And pushes the movements of our body and mind;
Possessor of our passionate hopes and dreams,
The beloved despot of our thoughts and acts,
She streams into us with her unbound force,
Into mortal limbs the Immortal's rapture and power.
An inner law of beauty shapes our lives;
Our words become the natural speech of Truth,
Each thought is a ripple on a sea of Light. (*Savitri*, BVII.C5)

Yet psychicisation and spiritualisation are not the completion of integral yoga. For “much more still needs to be done”: the supramental transformation. Firstly, let's get some idea of this concept of the Supermind in Sri Aurobindo words:

Supermind is the grade of existence beyond mind, life and Matter and, as mind, life and Matter have manifested on the earth, so too must Supermind in the inevitable course of things manifest in this world of Matter.⁴²

Therefore, it is only the descent and manifestation of this truth- consciousness that will make possible the divine life upon earth:

For a divine life on earth need not be a thing apart and exclusive having nothing to do with the common earthly existence: it will take up human being and human life, transform what can be transformed, spiritualise whatever can be spiritualised, cast its influence on the rest and effectuate either a radical or an uplifting change, bring about a deeper communion between the universal and the individual, invade the ideal with the spiritual truth of which it is a luminous shadow and help to uplift into or towards a greater and higher existence.⁴³

This is Supermind's action on earth as a whole — the bringing of a divine life and the gnostic race. It will be the finale, as if, of the first cycle of the evolution — there will be the birth and rule of the gnostic beings who “will live in God and with God, possess God, as it is said, even plunge in him forgetting all separate personality, but not losing it in self-extinction. The love of God and all the sweetness of love will remain his, the bliss of contact as well as the bliss of oneness and the bliss of difference in oneness. All the infinite ranges of experience of the Infinite will be his and all the joy of the finite in the embrace of the Infinite.”⁴⁴

We get in *Savitri* extraordinary descriptions of this future of earth — its supramental destiny. One such description can be quoted here:

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. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

There is also the promise of the divinisation of the being and

immortalisation of the physical:

The frontiers of the Ignorance shall recede,
More and more souls shall enter into light,
Minds lit, inspired, the occult summoner hear
And lives blaze with a sudden inner flame
And hearts grow enamoured of divine delight
And human wills tune to the divine will,
These separate selves the Spirit's oneness feel,
These senses of heavenly sense grow capable,
The flesh and nerves of a strange ethereal joy
And mortal bodies of immortality.
A divine force shall flow through tissue and cell
And take the charge of breath and speech and act
And all the thoughts shall be a glow of suns
And every feeling a celestial thrill. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

This is the vision of the divinisation of earth though very far in future. The principle of the supramental consciousness has been established long back in 1956 and now it is for the supramental Power itself to take over earth-evolution and unravel the secrets of the future divine glories. But, nearer home what is the tangible future, what is of imminent importance is that at least a small number of pioneers of integral yoga take up this effort in finding the psychic being as the first urgent step in sadhana:

Let the whole dynamic nature led by the psychic make itself full of the dynamic spiritual light, peace, purity, knowledge, force; let it afterwards get experience of the intermediate spiritual planes and know, feel and act in their sense; then it will be possible to speak last of the supramental transformation.⁴⁵

That is the emphasis given in *Savitri* too — to concentrate first on “the spirit's ascent”:

But first the spirit's ascent we must achieve
Out of the chasm from which our nature rose.
The soul must soar sovereign above the form
And climb to summits beyond mind's half-sleep;
Our hearts we must inform with heavenly strength,
Surprise the animal with the occult god.
Then kindling the gold tongue of sacrifice,

Calling the powers of a bright hemisphere,
We shall shed the discredit of our mortal state,
Make the abysm a road for Heaven's descent,
Acquaint our depths with the supernal Ray
And cleave the darkness with the mystic Fire. (*Savitri*, BII.C5)

The yoga of transformation completed by the process of supramental transformation is the yoga of Descent preceded by the yoga of Ascent depicted in Aswapathy's tapasya. In fact, Aswapathy's travel through the "paths of Time" is an exploration into the meaning of God's creation as manifested on the cosmic level. If Savitri's yoga explores the individual's inner realms, Aswapathy's yoga discovers the "frontiers of eternity".

Aswapathy, in his ascent of the World-stair follows a path that is more like a spiral-ascent. He discovers the base of Matter as well as the heights of the Superconscient and all the worlds in between. This exploration of the cosmic worlds resonates with the discovery of the inner realms of consciousness. In fact, the Poet employs this technique which brings out simultaneously the meaning of God's creation: the depths of the being resonate with the higher ranges of the worlds or planes of consciousness. The Mother explains this aspect of the universe thus:

The individual being is made up of states of being corresponding to cosmic zones or planes, and it is as these inner states of being are developed that one becomes conscious of those domains. This consciousness is double, at first psychological and subjective, within oneself, expressing itself through thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations; then objective and concrete when one is able to go beyond the limits of the body in order to move about in the various cosmic regions, grow conscious of them and act freely in them ...⁴⁶

The worlds discovered by Aswapathy — the subtle physical, (*Savitri*, BII.C2), the vital, (Cantos 3 to 9), the mental, (Cantos IX, X and XI) and the spiritual (Cantos XII to XV) — are only macrocosmic counterparts of the physical, vital, mental and spiritual parts of the microcosmic individual being. This discovery of the macroscopic worlds that connect to our subliminal being is of deep importance in integral yoga which aims at primarily a "central inner revolution and new formation" of consciousness. One of the three indispensable conditions for the achievement of the "transformation of life in its very principle"⁴⁷ is that ego must disappear and be replaced by the spiritual person and the safest manner to do so is: "To get into

the universal Self – one in all – is to be liberated from ego; ego either becomes a small instrumental circumstance in the consciousness or even disappears from our consciousness altogether. That is the extinction or Nirvana of the ego”.⁴⁸

Between the two of them Savitri and Aswapathy complement and complete integral yoga: one goes through the opening of the heart centre and the other through the opening of the mind centres — the two most important ways of the sadhana of integral yoga.

However, these salient features of integral yoga as brought out in *Savitri* needs to be taken up and explained in a more elaborate manner in order to do any justice to this aspect about which the Mother spoke in relation to *Savitri*. For our purpose we will take recourse to explanations from *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* to explain it further.

The first opening is effected by a concentration in the heart, a call to the Divine to manifest within us and through the psychic to take up and lead the whole nature. Aspiration, prayer, bhakti, love, surrender are the main supports of this part of the sadhana — accompanied by a rejection of all that stands in the way of what we aspire for.⁴⁹

Savitri, by “concentrating in the heart”, goes through “A whole mysterious world” that is within. There is hidden in this world “A nameless god in an unapproachable fane” (*Savitri*, BVII.C2) as well as “occult shadows”, “tenebrous powers” and “The Titan and the Fury and the Djinn”. Savitri, with a constant aspiration burning within her heart does not succumb to any temptations or any threats, she moves on in search of her soul:

But I must pass leaving the ended search,
Truth's rounded outcome firm, immutable
And this harmonic building of world-fact,
This ordered knowledge of apparent things.
Here I can stay not, for I seek my soul. (*Savitri*, BVII.C2)

She surrenders herself to the Unknowable and the ultimate union with her soul —

Then through a tunnel dug in the last rock
She came out where there shone a deathless sun.
A house was there all made of flame and light
And crossing a wall of doorless living fire
There suddenly she met her secret soul. (*Savitri*, BVII.C5)

The meeting is sudden and quite unexpected —

Then with a magic transformation's speed

They rushed into each other and grew one. (*Savitri*, BVII.C5)

This realisation of the Atman gives her a simultaneous experience of the Brahman consciousness, the Transcendent:

She knew herself the Beloved of the Supreme:

These Gods and Goddesses were he and she:

The Mother was she of Beauty and Delight,

The Word in Brahma's vast creating clasp,

The World-Puissance on almighty Shiva's lap, —

The Master and the Mother of all lives

Watching the worlds their twin regard had made,

And Krishna and Radha for ever entwined in bliss,

The Adorer and Adored self-lost and one. (*Savitri*, BVII.C5)

Aswapathy too following the path of opening the inner centres realises the Supreme. In Sri Aurobindo's words,

The second opening is effected by a concentration of the consciousness in the head (afterwards, above it) and an aspiration and call and a sustained will for the descent of the divine Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda into the being – the Peace first or the Peace and Force together. Some indeed receive Light first or Ananda first or some sudden pouring down of knowledge. With some there is first an opening which reveals to them a vast infinite Silence, Force, Light or Bliss above them and afterwards either they ascend to that or these things begin to descend into the lower nature. With others there is either the descent, first into the head, then down to the heart level, then to the navel and below and through the whole body, or else an inexplicable opening – without any sense of descent – of peace, light, wideness or power, or else a horizontal opening into the cosmic consciousness or in a suddenly widened mind an outburst of knowledge. Whatever comes – has to be welcomed – for there is no absolute rule for all – but if the peace has not come first, care must be taken not to swell oneself in exultation or lose the balance. The capital movement however is when the Divine Force or Shakti, the power of the Mother comes down...⁵⁰

Aswapathy experiences the Supreme Divine Mother, the creatrix after going through two stages of yoga. At first, he achieves a psycho-spiritual transformation on the individual level. That is to say, he transcends his

individual ego and identifies with his soul. Next, as a typical representative of the aspirations of the human race, he ascends to higher levels of consciousness with the idea of possessing them for humanity. In this journey he reaches beyond the Overmind and finds Supramental consciousness which alone can bring to humanity a divine life and transform earth. On that transcendental world he meets with the Supreme Divine Mother. There is the hymn of adoration of the Supreme Mother:

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.
In her confirmed because transformed in her,
Our life shall find in its fulfilled response
Above, the boundless hushed beatitudes,
Below, the wonder of the embrace divine. (*Savitri*, BIII.C2)

With the splendid vision of the Supreme, he is granted the vision of the future supramental world:

A new and marvellous creation rose.
Incalculable outflowing infinitudes
Laughing out an unmeasured happiness
Lived their innumerable unity; (*Savitri*, BIII.C3)

This indeed is the ultimate aim of integral yoga — “to bring down the supramental power”:

... not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter.⁵¹

So, Aswapathy is anxious to see the descent of Shakti:

How shall I rest content with mortal days
And the dull measure of terrestrial things,
I who have seen behind the cosmic mask
The glory and the beauty of thy face? (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

He who has travelled from the Inconscient to the Superconscient, he who has foreseen the golden future, is eager to see humanity redeemed and the earth peopled with golden beings. He implores:

Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
Mission to earth some living form of thee. (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

And the Supreme Divine grants him the boon:

O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature's doom by the lone spirit's power.
A limitless Mind that can contain the world,
A sweet and violent heart of ardent calms
Moved by the passions of the gods shall come.
All might and greatnesses shall join in her;
Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth,
Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair,
And in her body as on his homing tree
Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings...
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. (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

The One who descends to the earth is Savitri,
The superconscient was her native air,
Infinity was her movement's natural space;
Eternity looked out from her on Time. (*Savitri*, BVII.C7)

We have thus covered in the context of *Savitri* the most important concepts and practices of integral yoga. This being essentially a transformative yoga emphasises on the two movements of sadhana — the concentric and the vertical — while underlining the need for triple-transformation.

Indeed, as in many other yogas the pre-requisites of this yoga are also the three purifications — egolessness, desirelessness and equality. The concept that is not important in other yoga but crucial to integral yoga is that of the Divine Mother who in this epic is represented by Savitri. It is thus seen that this magnificent epic is indeed a living guru for those who want to follow integral yoga-sadhana.

Questions and Answers

1. *Could you please explain a little about the subtle physical?*

You see, in Indian psychology we believe that we have different layers of body which we call *sukshma sharira* or subtle body because they are not visible with our naked eyes. These subtle layers of bodies are around our gross body, but we cannot see or touch them easily. Those who practice Reiki, or pranic healing, develop certain perceptions, a special sensitivity to feel the existence of these subtle layers. In fact, this science is quite developed in Tibetan Buddhism. They have a great deal of experience in this field. The layer nearest to our body is called the “subtle physical”. It plays its own part in protecting the gross physical and it is also a contact point with other universal forces. In a way it is both an advantage and a disadvantage: in terms of protection it is good, but there are times when the universal forces attack the subtle physical layer. If the subtle body is strong and healthy then it does not allow those forces to penetrate its sheath. But if it is weak then the gross body is affected. This is how we get illnesses and other disorders. Healers try to work on this subtle layer for the wellness and health of the physical body.

2. *In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy what is the meaning of the words “soul”, “psychic”, “spirit” and “self”?*

Well, truly speaking this question needs a whole hour to answer. However, I will reply in brief for it is important to know even if mentally, the subtle

difference between these three terms. The subtleties can be felt more concretely when we go a little deeper in sadhana. From the point of view of philosophy or psychology, “spirit” or “self” connotes its cosmic status; sometimes they are interchangeable. Sri Aurobindo would say “spirit is the Transcendent” or else he would put a capital “S” in “spirit” implying the “Supreme Self”. We can understand the meaning within the context of the discussion.

There is a slight but distinct difference between “soul” and “psychic being”. In common parlance, whether in the East or the West, there is practically no difference between the *atman* and the soul. It is only when we come to integral yoga that this distinction is perceived. I am going to present to you the example given by the Mother. I cannot think of a better example than that. All of you have seen an electric bulb. She says that the filament inside the bulb is the *atman* and the bulb is the psychic being. Now without the filament, the bulb has no function. Inside the filament, there is tungsten which is connected to electricity thus enabling the bulb to light up. Following this analogy, let us understand that the generator, or the dynamo, with which the tungsten “connects” itself is the Supreme Lord from whom all the light, energy and force come to it. Our soul has to connect itself to this supreme dynamo which energises each atom of Matter. It is there in the whole of this creation, animate or inanimate, because each creation takes place within the womb of the Divine, so the presence of this soul or divine spark is everywhere in the universe.

Now, a difference is perceived in the process of evolution. It is through the process of evolution that this divine spark evolves from matter to life and from animal to man. As this single divine soul spark enters into man it is called “the psychic”. The glow and the warmth of tungsten, or the soul, can be felt by man. Some poets especially feel great peace in Nature. They don’t perceive the soul necessarily but they feel the Spirit. When you see beautiful flowers you feel delighted with a sense of divinity because it is the same divine spark in the flower which generates this delight. Where does the delight come from? Where there is Existence, *sat* there is automatically the consciousness accompanying it which is *chit*. And wherever there is *sat* and *chit*, naturally there is *ananda*, the delight, which is why the Supreme Lord is called *sachchidananda*. So the joy we feel by looking at a rose comes from the divine spark in the flower. When it enters man, or the human body, for the first time, this divine spark acquires a form or a body which is called “the

psychic being”. If the bulb is broken then the filament cannot glow. So these two combinations of filament and the bulb together form the psychic being.

3. Then, why are some bulbs 40 or 60 watts and some are 200 watts, or even 0 watt? Or to explain myself further does everybody has the same intensity and the spark of the psychic?

I was expecting this question from one of you. Some are 40 watts, while others may be 60 watts and may be there are psychic beings who are much more powerful. Here comes the question of the “evolving soul” or the “evolution of the psychic being”. The psychic being which is seated within us keeps fulfilling itself by several rebirths upon the earth by enriching itself through various experiences; so its power grows more and more. It is only by following a life of yoga sadhana that a psychic being can grow from 60 to 80 watts and so on. In each birth it tries to fulfill the particular aspiration it came to experience on this earth. It endeavours to realise it sincerely from birth to birth. Thus, does the soul increase in its power and luminosity, its voltage and light so that it can take away darkness. A less powered bulb has no power at all to remove darkness. Our body, vital and mind down to the subconscious are a dark storehouse in which only a 100 watts bulb can penetrate to purify it. I hope you now understand the meaning of an evolved soul — it is the psychic being which has been growing in its flame through the constant fuel of yoga or tapasya. The simplest way to provide this fuel to the fire is through constant aspiration in daily works.

As told by the Mother let us do our work as well as possible and always aspire to offer it to her. This is the fuel to the fire – any activity outer or inner, personal, social, national, spiritual, temporal or religious – every activity is to be consciously offered to this inner flame called the “psychic being”. The difference between the common man and a sadhak is only in this act of offering. The common man works for hours and hours every day but his fuel goes waste because he knows only how to acquire name and fame, to make money, to live comfortably and to fulfill his vital and mental ambitions. There is nothing wrong in what he does, but unfortunately his fuel is offered at the altar of his ego instead of the psychic. It results in an automatic increase of his ego. You have to remember that this fuel is given to us by God because work is the best and the easiest sphere of sadhana for man. Why do I say that? You can meditate for some time and feel a silence and peace within you. You can have devotion, *bhakti* and feel close to the presence of the Lord. But that work

as the fuel is like a log of wood burning for long hours. Devotion and faith are like “ghee”, the clarified butter we pour into the fire: six spoons or ten spoons and the psychic fire increases more in luminosity for a while but then it burns out. The log of wood is like our work and once we offer it sincerely, it burns for a long time on the Divine altar. In the context of sadhana this is what is called “remember and offer” all thoughts and feelings and works to the Divine who alone can purify and liberate us from our lower nature.

The true taste of the pudding is in the eating. The same is the case with sadhana. Unless and until we experience and get a taste of this joy of constant offering and our connection with the Mother, we cannot feel the tender and soft warmth of that inner flame in our heart. It is an inexpressible feeling. And then, you will see the boundaries between the psychic and the spiritual melt away. Once we start this inner journey it is an altogether different field of experience: the outer, the inner, the spiritual, the subliminal all merge into each other. It is a kind of a strange blending and mixing which takes place. Of course, it depends on each one of us.

4. Where do we go after our death? Secondly, do all the Avatars have more or less the same role to play and the same way to leave the body?

In brief I can say that when we leave the body our soul lays down the different mental and vital sheaths one by one in their respective worlds and finally it goes and rests in its own *anandaloka*, which is the psychic world.

Regarding the second question we have been told by Sri Aurobindo that each avatar comes down on earth for a very specific work and then when the work is over he chooses to leave the world in his own manner. A common man may not be able to understand the cause and the manner of their leaving of their physical sheath.

However, what we understand about the passing away of Sri Aurobindo is that he sacrificed his body for the sake of hastening the descent of the Supermind in the physical. So, it was a conscious strategy and a self-chosen sacrifice. In fact, the Mother said that Sri Aurobindo left his body for a very specific purpose and the kind of circumstances he created and prepared, after his leaving the physical, was very favourable for the work and Mother and because of his strategy ultimate victory of their work is certain.

5. When we offer all things to the Mother, does it mean that she is doing everything? Then who am I and where is my individuality ?

Well, as there are several devotees from the West here, I was expecting this question much earlier. This is indeed a very good question, rather a very important one in terms of understanding this whole yogic process. You see, there are religions which say that when God is doing everything then nobody needs to take any responsibility. Therefore, in the name of religion one can hurt or destroy others without scruple because it is not his/her responsibility. This brings a great deal of misunderstanding, superstition and division among people.

Try to understand one truth: whatever we understand about all these deeper truths of spirituality is only on the mental level. We always go by what the “Scriptures have said”, the “Mother has said”, the “Buddha has said” or “Christ has said” and believe that God is everywhere and is doing everything. Because of our faith we “believe” in all these utterances. But it is not at all our own experience nor our realisation. Try to perceive this difference: it is one thing to read philosophy, Scriptures and be a part of *satsang*. But all this has not yet become our life-breath. Unless and until we experience some of this truth ourselves, through our own sadhana the Bible or the Gita, or *The Life Divine* remain only a teaching, it may be a living teaching or a very influential one, still it remains theoretical. In fact, we have to consciously practice these do’s and don’ts so that these truths become the truth of our daily existence. Today it is only a truth of my faith not of my living.

Yes, we cannot preach or speak of this to the common people. In fact, in the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna himself cautioned that an uninitiated human being should not be given his teaching. This is the reason that true spirituality does not believe in any teaching. It will be useless to speak about Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy or about the Mother’s work of transformation to an unprepared man. If I go and tell him that the Mother is doing everything, then one will take a gun, shoot someone and affirm that the Mother has done it. Then, the police will say that it is not the Mother but it is he who has to go to jail, for at that time the police has to do his duty. So, you see, it can become very tricky and messy. We have to understand that we can talk about yoga-sadhana or spirituality only to an initiate and not to someone who does not have an aspiration, an awakening or a deep urge to know about the path to God realisation. If we speak to any ordinary man that God is doing everything and that we are mere instruments then the evil will increase and there will be anarchy in the society. It is therefore necessary to have a code of conduct, morality and levels of ethics, several do’s and don’t in the framework of the

social dharma. Man has to go through all these levels and stages in evolution. In the Gita Sri Krishna says that first we have to be the doer, we have to do works; one cannot become an instrument of the Divine without going through these stages of self growth. Otherwise, anyone can declare that he is the instrument of God — this could be detrimental.

Therefore, we have laws: social, political, legal, religious and, mind you, even an avatar is bound by all these laws. This world is like a maze. It is made up of multiple circles hidden within each other. No circle is independent. So, when the avatar descends he has to fit into these circles of the physical body, its pain, limitations and even ailments – he cannot bypass them. What you have to understand is that in this world there is not just one law of spirituality; there are laws and laws, circles and circles. We have to learn to go through these circles and yet be above them. “Above” is not the distance, but “inner freedom”. Then even being within the four walls of a jail, one can be free inwardly. It is only when we realise our psychic being that we can feel this sense of immortality and freedom. You feel that you no longer belong to this humanity.

When you have realised God within you, then, you have become the possessor of a unique joy. With that inner joy, you have to perform the outer duties and follow the outer laws. So you have to follow both the outer and the inner dharmas. But Sri Krishna has said that leaving all dharmas take refuge in him alone and he shall undoubtedly liberate us. But before seeking shelter in the Lord, if you start breaking the social dharma, then that is wrong. It is only after one has found one’s soul or realised one’s psychic being, or one is able to surrender oneself completely and totally at the feet of the Lord that one can say “I don’t want this world, I don’t want this family and I don’t want to surrender to these material things.” But even if you want to live with this grandiose consciousness that you have realised, God would not like you to leave this world. He would say – continue to work in the world but be stationed in my consciousness.

Now the second part of the question is: *When the Mother is indeed doing everything, who am I?*

A very good observation indeed. That “I” is the ego – the mind, vital, body egoself – which is offering itself to the Mother. Then, when she takes you over completely after a long sadhana, you are the psychic being. What you have to understand is that, in the beginning when you are going on only with your

personal effort, the ego is very much there. After a considerable effort you reach a point in your sadhana when the Mother takes over your sadhana, then you no longer have an ego, you are only the psychic being.

As seen in our talks, there are three stages in integral yoga: psychicisation, spiritualisation and supramentalisation. The fulfilment and success of the first depends entirely on the human or personal effort. You cannot say “Jesus-Christ, Buddha, my dear Krishna, or my sweet Mother is there to help me, I need not worry.” They are all there in their glorious form in the subtle physical, but they also say “if you put your hands in your pocket and expect me to do it for you, I am helpless; if you stretch both your arms upwards, and ardently call me to help you, I am there for you. If you seek me with deep aspiration and love and devotion, I take you in my arms”.

6. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother told us not to make a religion out of their teaching, but I have a feeling that we are already doing it?

Well, you do have a very good feeling and if you feel it then do not do it. Be very conscious about it. Certainly, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother told us not to make a religion out of their teaching. Why did they say so? We must understand. The Mother even went to the extent of saying that the days of religion are over. Quite naturally they could not encourage their teachings and experiences to be turned into a religion which is on the surface. It means working through the dimensions of the outer consciousness. For example, religion thrives on the number of people as its followers. Then it comes to the limelight through propaganda and preaching. Then, as you all know, it believes in conversions. I am not going to go into dogmas of religion. When it is a question of religion, then any emphasis on experience is neither encouraged, nor considered valid, because one must abide by the rules and formulae laid down by the Scriptures. Your personal experience through your spiritual journey has no place there. You have to follow all the prescribed rules and rituals.

The other day, someone asked me the difference between the old religious practices and ours. We are also putting in front of the photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo special incense sticks. We are very regularly decorating them with flowers and sitting for meditation at regular hours. Are we not turning them into a religion? Sometimes I am afraid I also ask the same question. But it depends on the way we understand. In the West, leave alone any kind of flower worship or doing pranams, they sometimes don't have the

photographs. But this is not going to displease the Mother nor does it go to prove that you are not a devotee or a follower. It is a very external way of sharing our love for the Lord even though it is genuine and honest. The difficulty comes in when one particular day, for some reason you have not been able to put the flowers, or do *pranam*, you start feeling very guilty and blame yourself. Those are the guilt feelings generated by religion.

Religion plays with man's emotions. It likes to keep man in constant fear and feeling of guilt, but spirituality means doing everything with one's inner consciousness. There is no outward show therein. But it is a passage one has to go through. So long as one feels guilty before God, one is definitely within the orbit of religion. There is nothing wrong in putting the incense stick on the Samadhi or a candle on the altar in the church. The difference is in the aspiration and attitude. Then, you will put it as an outward expression of your inner prayers and aspirations; if you feel guilty you may not do it. The first steps are to move away from all routine, surface mechanical activities. Spirituality is a life within but whenever you feel like performing any ritual do it by all means but only to express your inner feelings. There is no harm in it but if it is only mechanical then one day it will die.

If you unite the inner with the outer, then there is nothing wrong. If you do not forget the true inner significance and aspiration, or meaning, then there is nothing wrong with religion, says Sri Aurobindo. But we always tend to forget the inner as we become more and more involved with the outer form. Some people have asked me "Why do we celebrate the darshan days?" That is out of inner adoration and love for what they have done for us, not as a compulsion.

In spirituality, there is no sin, but there is sincerity and insincerity. There is no *paap* or *punya*: either you are sincere or insincere. This is the only thing that keeps you on the path, or stops you from doing yoga. If you talk about sin then negative sadhana comes in. Religion is full of that. God is a feared person: always waiting to punish you. "You cannot do this. You cannot do that." One is always full of fear and guilt. In spirituality it is absolutely different. If you are going to the Samadhi or putting some flowers on the relics of Sri Aurobindo, you are doing it out of your love and adoration, not out of fear or a mechanical feeling of duty. If you feel you are doing things spontaneously and genuinely, do it by all means, but if you do not feel from within then stop it.

7. What you are saying is right. But I wonder in spite of knowing the right

attitude why do we all turn everything into religion.

The natural tendency of human beings is to turn everything into a kind of religion, all he adores or finds awesome within his limited consciousness. In this context, Champaklalji had told me that because of this tendency in man for some time even the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's philosophy will follow the same fate. But thanks to the advent of the Supermind this will not happen. He told me that when the avatars touch the heart of the common man, the only way he can express his gratitude is by worshipping them. But Champaklalji felt confident that it will not be for long because Supermind will help break the old mould and set the deeper realisations of Truth gain ground. In our *Savitri* studies, we have seen that the deeper we go into Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings, the more we understand and feel that they are not just a name or form. They are not even divine beings but a universal consciousness, a transcendental consciousness equally available to all of us, for our sadhana. A very small example that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy has transcended all human barriers is the fact that, today, it is attracting all the people of the world beyond caste, creed or religion – be they Christians, Muslims, Jews or Buddhists.

Sri Aurobindo is not a Hindu or an Indian yogi, he is a Consciousness. And if he is a consciousness, where is the question of any religion coming in here? If we take him as a mere person, there could be the danger of a religion being formed around him. But if we truly meditate and live deeply his teachings, then we see that he is a living vast oceanic Consciousness – and this consciousness cannot be given a form or be put into a formula. So, in one word, what Champaklalji said is a good answer to all of us.

8. If there are no more avatars after Sri Aurobindo then what will happen to evolution?

If I have heard you correctly, you said that there will no longer be any avatar after Sri Aurobindo. What I understand is that whenever the world is overburdened with human ignorance and adharma, the Supreme manifests in a human form, as an avatar, to save the world and correct its working. Now the question is: if there is no longer any avatar, what will happen?

You heard me correctly and your question is also clearly understandable. You have quoted the Gita and you have rightly quoted it. But what you have not heard is the sentence prior to that: the Mother has said that Sri Aurobindo is the last avatar in the physical. Now how do we understand that? Unless the

avatar comes in the physical form, how does he work for the earth? Then the idea of Sri Krishna regarding adharma or unrighteousness, *yuge-yuge* meaning “millennium after millennium”, how does it get solved? That means: different ways will emerge in handling the various untruths, ways of adharma or perhaps it will not be necessary for one being or another avatar to come down and handle this problem. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the last avatars in the physical, it only means that there is a paradigm shift in the order of the world “administration” and that is now possible because the Supermind is on the earth. Since the beginning of creation, all the avatars have been trying to fulfil only one mission: to prepare the earth’s receptivity for the advent of the Supreme Consciousness. This is now on our planet. Then why is any avatar needed to do the work? If the function of the avatar is over, then who will take care of all the wrong doing on this earth? Quite naturally, the Supermind. It will not work through people claiming that the Supermind has descended on their head and in their body: it will work at the grassroot level, through common people living anywhere, in any country, belonging to any religion, any creed or belief – all they will need to have is an ardent aspiration and an awakening to spirituality.

Supermind has already begun to grow below the surface, preparing the roots. One fine morning you will see the lawn in full glory. Now it looks dry, there may be just some patches of green here and there, but one day the lawn will look fresh and green and very different. With the lawn the garden always looks more beautiful. The weeds will have been uprooted, some will come up here and there but they can be cleared and dealt with. You don’t need a special gardener to uproot them. Likewise you will not need a physical avatar to take care of the *adharma*. The situation will be very different then. Until now ten avatars came to prepare humanity for this consciousness of the Supermind. Now this consciousness is among us, we don’t have to go back to the theory of *yuge yuge* that the avatar has to come to establish the dharma. We have to understand your question in this light.

9. Please explain the meaning of “japa” and its types.

We have already indirectly talked about japa. In Indian spiritual practice japa is a constant way of remembering the Divine by taking either His name or repeating a *mantra*. This is the common understanding of japa. Japa is important in its own way and we have known the Mother using japa: *om namo bhagavate*. Sri Aurobindo himself did not use

any japa because he did not want to depend on any external means in his yoga. But then the Mother said that had Sri Aurobindo then been in the physical, he would have agreed to the Mother using such support of japa. At that particular stage of the cells' physical transformation, it had helped the Mother immensely and we can imagine the important action of japa in the sadhana. As a simple example: very often doctors or psychologists tell us to have positive thinking. This has almost become the keyword in all personality development courses, as well as in all wellness programmes.

What is the meaning of positive attitude or positive thinking? It is a kind of simple auto-suggestion which works very effectively on the physical level. It strengthens the will-power and the mind to fight the negative influences or negative thoughts and suggestions, as auto-suggestion is to think of all right and good things for oneself. Remember the Mother advising a lady who had a problem of hairfall. She told her to go to the mirror and say every day "my hair is growing, my hair is growing everyday"; such auto-suggestion the doctors might think is foolish. But it is not. This question of the relation between the mind and the body or the influence of the mind on the body is now coming back again. So if an auto-suggestion can influence the body, then the japa influences the whole being — the mind, vital, and body. It is usually a brief utterance of a name "ma, ma, ma" or Sri Aurobindo or namah shivaya or even a small sentence

"Sri Aurobindo sharanam mama". If it is a short phrase easy to repeat. The Mother has said that repetition of japa has a penetrating effect on our consciousness, to purify and help to transform it. It is very important to choose the right word, the right name. For example, if you choose the word "rose", and keep repeating it, it will not have the expected result: so choose a name which has the spiritual potential. So the first effect of japa is penetration. Secondly, because of the repetition it creates a special vibration in your environment. Why do you think you should not have negative thinking. That is because vibrations of negativity always attract fear of accidents, mishaps etc. Whatever are your thoughts, the surrounding atmosphere or environment will reflect them. Similarly, the Mother says that the japa's wonderful vibrations always protect, guide and keep you on the right path. This is one of the functions of japa.

Then, there are many types of japa. The first one is, of course, the oral repetition so that the mind is not diverted and keeps focused on the name. It

is important to learn to focus. You see, while in meditation we think of the Mother, we try to concentrate on her image in the heart centre. We have to hold onto this image. This focus creates a penetrating concentration and once that concentration is fixed, it is like a burning magnifying lens. Concentration on a picture of the Mother creates this “energy line” and after some time we may suddenly feel an inroad to our inner being. It is as if a crack has taken place and slowly a door begins to open. Then, she says, that once you enter this door, the journey for everyone is different. You may take any path without being apprehensive about it. Because the Mother will always be with you to guide, until the door is opened, we all have to work very hard with integral concentration and focus. Now, to reach that level of a deep penetration japa, or constant prayer, is a great support. Then she says that we should keep on knocking at this door because it separates us from our psychic being.

So, for us, meditation is this experience of psychic realisation. At present going beyond the levels of mind in meditation is a secondary issue. Even on the heart level it is very tough. The Mother tells us to have tremendous perseverance and keep banging the door relentlessly with a prayer: “please open the door, open the door, for me to meet you there”. It can be called a “spiritual obstinacy”. Then, one day the psychic door will surely open with all its effulgence and radiance. It is not a pastime job, or meditating for a fixed time, twice or thrice a day. This has to become the highest priority in our lives. We will have to live only to fulfill this aspiration.

The picture that we need to have in our heart during meditation is that of the Mother. She is the conscious positive Force of transformation. One can think of Christ or Buddha or any other master; but they have not worked for transformation. If we aspire for the transformation of the lower nature into the higher, then we will have to keep the Mother in our heart and proceed. So let us take advantage of this name and form called “the Mother”. Let us concentrate on this Shakti alone. Let us keep banging at the door softly, slowly, persistently, tirelessly and with deep love and devotion. This is the focus of meditation that I know. There are many doors within towards the psychic. We get confused. Our mind cannot direct us anywhere. There she becomes our guide who is the only safety for us. Japa can help us the most in this stage: by now our japa becomes a constant part of our being on a deeper level. It is no more verbal. Sri Aurobindo says that whatever we may be doing outwardly, it becomes a parallel living consciousness within us. The Mother used to say that

while meeting people, while talking or taking any decision or while sleeping, every time she was doing japa. That is the parallel consciousness that Sri Aurobindo speaks about. But this is a very advanced stage in japa which can be achieved only by intense work on our outer and inner being.

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Chapter 5

The Yoga of the Earth

I

The Evolutionary Destiny of the Earth

While explaining about the earth's importance in the universe, the Mother had once said that "The earth is a kind of symbolic crystallisation of universal life, a reduction, a concentration, so that the work of evolution may be easier to do and follow."¹ Hence, it is important to understand first the evolutionary role of the earth before we can delve into its yoga of ascension towards the Divine.

Earth – A Symbol

Like the Vedic Rishis, Sri Aurobindo too realised that the entire universe is only an objectivisation of the Supreme. It is as though the Supreme had brought himself out of himself in order to know himself as infinite Many. It is the Being growing gradually aware of himself in an eternal self-becoming. The goal of this becoming is a gradual union of the created with the Creator — a union achieved in absolute freedom, full consciousness and a loving willingness.

In this eternal Becoming, the earth is the chosen centre of the material universe and its evolution. It is a kind of "symbolic crystallisation of universal life". It is, as it were, the reduction, the concentration, the focus of the entire universe and it holds within itself the concentrated force and the secret which will awaken, develop and finally reveal a total manifestation of the Supreme Spirit which is hidden deep in Matter. The earth is a symbol of the divine possibility and potential in Matter and as it reveals the hidden Divine Consciousness, the material universe shares in and benefits from the unravelled Light, Consciousness and Ananda. To manifest the Spirit's secrecies, to transform Matter, is the destiny of the earth:

The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

However, there is a method by which the earth's destiny will be unravelled: it is the great process called Evolution.

Emergent Evolution or Special Creation?

A spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness in Matter in a constant developing self-formation till the form can reveal the indwelling Spirit, is then the key-note, the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence. This significance is concealed at the outset by the involution of the Spirit, the Divine Reality, in a dense material Inconscience.²

According to Sri Aurobindo, the cosmic manifestation is the result of a double movement: involution and evolution. Involution is the first movement by which the Supreme Consciousness-Force undergoes a process of self-limitation and simultaneous densification until it assumes the form of a dense Inconscience. Between the plane of the Supreme Consciousness and the Inconscience are formed in this process of involution many planes of consciousness and universal principles and worlds each characterised by certain powers and forms of consciousness.

The highest triple planes, the planes of Sachchidananda — the unity of the Divine Existence, *sadghanaloka*; the Power of the Divine Consciousness-Force, *chidghana-tapoghanaloka*; and the bliss of the Divine Delight, *anandaghanaloka* – form the basis of manifestation and are beyond the reach of the human mind. Below, comes the intermediary level of the Supermind which can be characterised as self-effectuating Truth-Consciousness, it is the *ritam* of the Vedas. After a series of descending planes, we have the lowest three planes of Mind, Life and Matter. The lowest of the low is the level of Inconscience which is an apparent negation of the Spirit. But, just as in an antenna, all the upper segments are telescoped into the lowest segment, so too all the powers and planes above it are involved in the Inconscience.

Evolution is the opposite process by which the Consciousness-Force emerges again step by step, level by level revealing itself, manifesting itself on each level. The starting point of the evolution is therefore the Inconscient out of which, under the pressure of the involved Consciousness-Force and that of the involutory subtle-physical plane that Matter emerged. It gradually developed into the physical cosmos as we know it and of which the earth is the symbolic representation of the material evolution.

The unconscious Matter was then churned until a point of tension, when, under the pressure of the involved Consciousness-Force and the Life principle, it gave birth to Life. Inert Matter changed enough to express a little more of the Spirit. Through the transition of species that belong neither to the mineral

nor to the vegetal kingdom, the semi-conscious plants appeared on the surface of the earth. And little by little, over millions of years of incubation going through another transitional passage between what is no longer a plant and still not yet an animal, the Life principle brought forth the conscious animal. Once more, by a double action of a descent from above and a pressure from below, the Mind principle was born in the physical world and the intelligent and self-conscious Man was delivered by Life. Unlike the earlier species, Man is the only progressive animal that can by will and training bring forth his latent faculties and capacities and acquire things that he did not possess spontaneously. Most important, man can mould his future.

The evolutionary nisus cannot stop short with the incomplete ignorant man. Man is only a transitional being, a rung in the eternal unravelling of the Spirit's evolutionary ladder and cannot be the last term in evolution. If Matter gave birth to Life – that can only be because Life was involved in Matter, and on the same basis if Mind followed Life, it was because Mind was involved in Life. There seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and admit that the Mind itself is only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. If the animal has been a living laboratory in which Nature has fashioned man then man too “may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation She [Nature] wills to work out the superman, the god. Or, shall we say, rather to manifest God?”³

For if evolution is the progressive manifestation by Nature of that which slept or worked in her, involved, it is also the overt realisation of that which she secretly is. We cannot, then, bid her pause at a given stage of her evolution, nor have we the right to condemn with the religionist as perverse and presumptuous or with the rationalist as a disease or hallucination any intention she may evince or effort she may make to go beyond. If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realisation of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth.⁴

In this ascent of evolution, man, though ignorant and limited in his consciousness and capacities, has to bring out of himself the fully conscious being, “divine manhood or a spiritual and supramental supermanhood which shall be the next product of the evolution.”⁵ That transition is the beginning of a new evolution from knowledge to greater Knowledge unlike the present process of evolution which is from ignorance to Knowledge.

This is the “desired destiny” that the earth has put before man and if out of his attachment to the ignorant mind and life man is incapable of exceeding himself, then Nature may surpass him and the superman may take the lead of creation. If man betrays earth’s trust in him, he may be inviting upon himself the catastrophe that befell all the species that Nature withdrew from the face of the earth as redundant and otiose in its evolutionary travail and purpose.

Supermind in Evolution

Looking at the present deplorable condition of humanity many thinkers may voice Beatrice Bruteau’s opinion:

Perhaps Aurobindo’s attitude of optimism and his belief that his program is correctly practicable may seem a distortion of our experience. Is it not his expectation that the Gnostic being [Supramental Being] will evolve on earth, and the divine life as he describes it be lived here, somewhat fantastic? ⁶

Sri Aurobindo himself had foreseen the objections and the disbelief of philosophers to his vision of the supramental race. The materialistic philosophers would deny any possibility of a divinised Matter; “the religious philosophers” would suspect earth’s capacity for a divine life for they would not be ready to relinquish their ideal of attaining heaven beyond earth. The common man cannot even think of any kind of transformation of the earth into a perfect divine embodiment. Everyone would ask for a concrete proof of the supramental consciousness! As if in answer to these, such doubting Thomases, who take pride in their rationalism and stand only by “scientific proof”, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

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. (*Savitri*, BI.C4)

The root cause of this disbelief and incertitude is our imperfect idea of spirituality which has been at its best a construction of our intellect in its ignorance of the whole truth of the world. We have largely thought of the Spirit as something supraterrrestrial, looking down upon us and attracting us out of the earthly existence. Naturally, we conclude that a departure from the earth is the highest salvation, the sole release. Or, we convince ourselves that the world is a place of suffering, of ignorance and the only worthy future for man is an escape into heavens beyond: there is no divine prospect for us here upon earth!

If we look closely at the process of past evolution on earth, we notice that at each step there is an intimation of what the following step will be. “As plant life contains in itself the obscure possibility of the conscious animal, as the animal mind is astir with the movements of feeling and perception and the rudiments of conception that are the first ground for man the thinker..”⁷ In like manner, we find that the evolutionary Consciousness-Force is endeavouring to develop out of him the supramental being of which the first signs in man are his emphasis on spirituality, his awareness of his imperfection and limitation and his striving towards something that is beyond what he now is. This straining towards something that is beyond what he now is the sure signal of man’s conscious effort towards self-exceeding, towards some divine fulfilment, towards the perfection of his body, mind and life. These aspirations of man cannot be accomplished without the descent of the Truth-Consciousness into Matter anymore than the lotus can rise from mud by the power of the mud, ‘sunlight is needed’. The sunlight that humanity needs in its onward ascent is what

Sri Aurobindo has called the Supermind. He argues,

There is no conclusive validity, in the reasoning that because this is a world of Ignorance, such a transformation [of man into Superman]... cannot be achieved at all... This conclusion could only be solely valid if Ignorance were the whole meaning, substance and power of the world-manifestation... But the Ignorance is only a portion of this World-Nature; it is not the whole of it, not the original power or creator... In universal Mind itself there are ranges above our mentality which are instruments of the cosmic truth-cognition, and into these the mental being can surely rise; for already it rises towards them in supernormal conditions or receives from them... intuitions, spiritual intimations, large influxes of illumination or spiritual capacity. All these ranges are conscious of what is beyond them, and the highest of them is directly open to the Supermind, aware of the Truth-Consciousness which exceeds it.⁸

What Sri Aurobindo is alluding to – “spirituality and the levels beyond mind,” – has hardly anything to do with religion as it is understood or practiced today. It is obvious that Reason cannot be the directing light, the regulating and harmonising principle, the highest guide to the deepest aspirations of man, namely, his urge to reach the infinite, the transcendent, the universal, the One. The legitimate function of Reason is to justify and illumine for man his various experiences and to give him faith and conviction

in the enlargement of his consciousness. It cannot ultimately arrive at any final truth because “it can neither get to the root of things nor can it embrace the totality of their secrets.” Its limit is reached, states Sri Aurobindo, its function is finished when it can say to man, “There is a Soul, a Self, a God in the world and in man who works concealed and all is his self-concealing and gradual self-unfolding. His minister I have been, slowly to unseal your eyes ... until there is only my own luminous veil between you and him. Remove that and make the soul of man one in fact and nature with this Divine.”⁹

Borrowing the ideas and phrases from Sri Aurobindo’s work *The Human Cycle*, we can say that because of these inherent limitations of reason, the guide to human life and society was sought out in religion. “apart from its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony and symbol,”¹⁰ the essence of religion is to seek God. It teaches man to live out the true and intimate relations between man and God. But, unfortunately, this spiritual and core experience of religion is always shrouded by particular creed, cult, sect, religious society of Church which ends up in religious fanaticism – another name for superstitions, “aberrations”, “violence” and “crimes” sanctioned, admitted and supported by the particular religious creed. Therefore, religion as it is today, has failed to be the proper guide to human life because it has confused “the essential with the adventitious”, true religion with religionism.

True religion is spiritual religion, a seeking after God, the opening of the deepest life of the soul to the indwelling Godhead, the eternal Omnipresence. Spirituality has therefore nothing to do with renunciation and mortification of life, it offers only but does not impose upon man moral codes as aids and props.

Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul – because it is itself fulfilled by freedom; and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one’s own nature, dharma.¹¹

“In spirituality then would lie our ultimate, our only hope for the perfection whether of the individual or of the communal man,” concludes Sri Aurobindo. “A spirituality that would take up into itself man’s rationalism, aestheticism, ethicism, vitalism, corporeality, his aspiration towards beauty, his need of love, his urge towards perfection, his demand for power and fullness of life and being... is a power which even man’s too self-sufficient reason can accept or may at least be brought one day to accept as sovereign and to see in its own

supreme light, its own infinite source.”¹²

The highest of the spiritual capacities in man have been limited to Overmind according to Sri Aurobindo, but man's immemorial quest has been, covertly, to strive towards that zenith of his consciousness in manifestation – the Supermind. Sri Aurobindo strove all his life for the sovereign manifestation, a descent into earth-consciousness of this highest evolutionary status in ignorance of the Supermind. His concrete experience is that the New Consciousness is now upon earth working out its luminous destiny. It is this certainty that authorises us, says

Sri Aurobindo,

...to believe that mind and humanity also will tend towards the realisation that will be far beyond our present dreams of perfection. A mind of light will replace the present confusion and trouble of this earthly ignorance; it is likely that even those parts of humanity which cannot reach it will yet be aware of its possibility and consciously tend towards it; not only so, but the life

of humanity will be enlightened, uplifted, governed, harmonised by this luminous principle [the Supramental Principle] and even the body become something much less powerless, obscure and animal in its propensities and capable instead of new and harmonised perfection.¹³

It was Nietzsche who first coined the word Superman and insisted upon the imperative necessity of the present human race to be replaced by a stronger one. According to Sri Aurobindo Nietzsche's superman is an embodiment of absolute power, has the supreme sense of ego and lives dangerously. He is one who towers far above the vast multitudes of people and has the power to impose upon them his own sovereign will. The Superman arrogantly repels all suffering and misery and is a complete stranger to the ideal of sorrow and service as liberating forces.

Conceived as it is, the concept of superman in Nietzsche is completely devoid of knowledge and Love and the Superman becomes a destructive and malevolent force. He becomes the deification of the demon in man. The Superman or the Divine Man, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, has on the contrary –

...for his distinguishing mark a thorough divine transformation of all the parts of his embodied existence including even the grossest physical. He will have the infinite power of God, but he would be loath to make any personal

or egoistic use thereof. As a playmate of the Divine, he would unreservedly offer his body, life and mind, as plastic instruments in the hands of God so that life on earth may be turned into a sacred poem of divine ecstasy. Again the Superman is not, as Nietzsche thinks him to be, the highest embodiment of the biological force of Nature, not even as modified and refined by the aesthetic and aristocratic virtues of which the higher reaches of humanity seem capable.¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo's Superman is essentially a new species that is to come after many intermediary stages of human transfiguration.

George Bernard Shaw, in his play *Man and Superman* stresses on the need of the collective evolution of man into Superman, "if any genuine progress is to be made beyond what has already been achieved". What we require most today is "a democracy of Superman" says Shaw, if "we wish to eliminate the possibility of recurrent catastrophes. We must eliminate the yahoo, or his vote will wreck the Commonwealth." Shaw rightly stresses on the radical change of human nature but he believes that this change will be enforced upon man by the "omnipotence of the objective circumstances of human living."¹⁵ Unlike others, Sri Aurobindo insists on a total conversion, transformation of man's being and consciousness from within outwards. And this can be done only by bringing into active operation the dynamic principle of Truth-Consciousness, Supermind, of which mind is only a poor delegate.

Perhaps, Prof. Alexander comes a little closer to Sri Aurobindo in his concept of the "fourth principle", "the deity". "We cannot tell what is the nature of deity, of our deity, but we can be certain that it is not mind, or if we use the term spirit as equivalent to mind, deity is not spirit, but something different from it in kind."¹⁶ The emergence of deity does not in any case affect the earlier species, according to Prof. Alexander. The space-time matrix remains as a fixed backdrop for the new species. Man's fate is thus sealed, for he himself cannot evolve into the higher principle or race. Such is the dark suffering destiny of man.

However, in Sri Aurobindo it is the destiny of man to receive the Higher Consciousness and to be transformed into the Divine Man. The coming of the Superman would be a great event of joy and harmony not only for human species but for all creatures on earth. The advent of Superman and Gnostic beings would, therefore be the crowning event of the evolution of the Spirit on Earth.

Finally, a word about Jivanmukta and the Superman: while the Superman of Sri Aurobindo must needs be a Jivamukta Purusha, not all Jivanmuktas are Supermen. Supermanhood is a far richer concept and a greater achievement than Jivanmukti. There have indeed been numerous instances of Jivanmuktas in the past, but Supermanhood is yet to blossom forth in the course of further evolution... And while 'Jivanmukta only identifies himself, by means of a make believe, with body retained for cosmic purposes by God and is seen to perform actions,' the Superman enters into conscious co-operation with the Divine Power which secretly guides the process of evolution.¹⁷

Earth's Goal

The Prithivi Sukta mentions:

Earth is the matrix of many things, the wide arena
Of man's struggle against Darkness. The gods
Have set up her goals to increasingly achieve and fulfil.
May the Lord of life make available and
fulfil to us all her regions.¹⁸

The next goal of the earth, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, is a "new humanity" which would be a race of human beings but delivered from ignorance and possessing the "mind of light". This humanity would be a part of the later divine life upon earth which would be governed by the Supramental race. It would be an inseparable part of Nature's evolution and not an exception. It will probably be the dominating force of the coming age, the Spiritual Age. In his book, *The Human Cycle*, Sri Aurobindo traces the progress of human society through distinct psychological stages which he terms as

(a) Symbolic, (b) Typal, (c) Conventional, (d) Individualist, (e) Subjective and (f) Spiritual. The evolutionary nisus has brought successfully the elite of humanity to the subjective age. But in doing so, "the evolution of mind working upon life has developed an organisation of the activity of mind and use of Matter" in such a way that it has now become a burden to man and it can no longer be supported by human capacity without an imminent inner growth, an inner development of consciousness. The burden of materialisation seems to be too great for "the petty mind and small life-instincts" and humanity seems to be heading perilously "under the drive of the vital ego" towards a "darkness of violent shifting incertitude." Nature in

man seems to be confronting herself with a critical choice and “an accommodation of the ego-centric human individuality, separative even in association, to a system of living which demands unity, perfect mutuality, harmony, is imperative,”¹⁹ warns Sri Aurobindo. He further says. fortunately for man, the choice seems to have been taken by its spiritual pioneers and the elite of humanity is heading towards the Age of Spirituality.

It is this transition to a new age, a new cycle of human progress that there is the inevitable turmoil in humanity. The crisis we face today is essentially a crisis of evolution and as always, “The end of a stage of evolution”, Sri Aurobindo said in 1910, “is usually marked by a powerful recrudescence of all that has to go out of the evolution”.²⁰ It is this “recrudescence” that is being experienced all over the world today. It is taking different forms, names, excuses, but basically everywhere it is the replacement of “the mental government of intelligence by the government of spiritualised consciousness”.²¹ The obvious and irrefutable sign of this transfer of governance is the state of universal tension which has reached such a point where “it must break through and emerge into a new consciousness or else fall back into the abyss of darkness and inertia.”²² “We may take it as a sure sign of the infusion into Matter of a new principle of force, consciousness, power, which through its very Presence, is producing this acute state,” observed the Mother. She continued to say, “This tension is so complete and so widespread that something obviously has to break. It cannot go on in this way.”²³

Such then is the destiny of man and mankind – man to rise to higher heights of consciousness beyond mental reason that are not governed by the principle of unity, identity, mutuality and totality. In other words, he will take his seat in the status of his soul, his inner and inmost being, his divine personality where he is one with all beings and with the world. This is a rare and difficult realisation for man as he is today, but tomorrow it will be his normal nature.²⁴

In the poetic and prophetic expression of Sri Aurobindo:

Earth's doubting future hides our heritage:
The Light now distant shall grow native here,
The Strength that visits us our comrade power;
The Ineffable shall find a secret voice,
The Imperishable burn through Matter's screen
Making this mortal body godhead's robe.

The Spirit's greatness is our timeless source

And it shall be our crown in endless Time. (*Savitri*, BII.C2)

This vision and prophecy of the next goal of the earth and man's destiny, as analysed by Sri Aurobindo in his study of the psychological cycles of human society find their echo in other theories of cosmic and astrological cycles as enunciated by Indian and other ancient cultures. The Hindu tradition of the *yuga* holds that the Kali yuga is the most negative and dark of all the four yugas. However, as we have now approached the closing phase of this yuga, "a human and planetary transition between the old age of darkness and the new upswing of consciousness towards the New Age of light is coming about. It is sometimes called the Golden Age", notes Moira Timms. And her interesting conclusion, very similar to that of Sri Aurobindo, is as follows:

The human race will be fully equipped to complete the remainder of this Earth sojourn in a state of perfection: harmony with each other, nature and the Creator. By gaining mastery over the physical plane, this life-wave will then be ready to progress to a higher sphere of existence on its evolutionary journey.²⁵

In Mayan culture there is a tradition of Hopi creation which speaks about four successive worlds. This tradition also mentions that the fourth world, the present earth, is being purified by the Great Spirit. Be it the tradition of the Mayan, the Incas, the Greeks, all of them speak in one voice about the purging that will take place in "the present age, a purging that may seem as the end of the world" but in fact it is the end of the old world and beginning of the birth pangs of a New Age. "However, they can more accurately be described as a healing crisis and cleansing of the Earth, the Karma that is due and payable before the new phase can become operable. Only the purest water can become vapour, and this is how it will be with us humans caught up in this evolutionary process."²⁶

According to the astrological cycles, Polaris is our present polar star and it – ...represents the point of polarity between cosmic winter/summer, night/day, Pisces/Aquarius. It governs the re-polarization of Earth's consciousness... As Aquarius pours forth the waters of life from the fullness of his vessel the Earth will be purified by his gift. But when the waters settle and become calm, we shall see reflected in their stillness a new reality. An expanded state of harmony and wisdom awaits as the New Order of the Ages stabilises.²⁷

Truly, as the *I Ching* or *The Book of Change* describes, “After a time of decay comes the turning point.”²⁸ The time of decay is now and the period of awakening of the greatest spiritual possibilities of man is also now. The worship of gods and the worship of Matter have kneaded the human consciousness and have made Matter less unconscious, more responsive to the touch of the Higher Spiritual Consciousness paving the way for a total manifestation of the Divine Consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo’s vision of a divine life upon earth seems to be the culmination and fulfilment of all the past prophecies and calculations of a new world, a new earth, a new race. The crucial difference between others’ views and Sri Aurobindo’s is his emphasis upon the radical transformation of human nature. Without an inner change man can no longer cope with the gigantic development of the outer life. “In our present life of Nature, in our externalised surface existence, it is the world that seems to create us; but in the turn to the spiritual life it is we who must create ourselves and our world. In this new formula of creation, the inner life becomes of the first importance and the rest can be only its expression and outcome.”²⁹ In practice, this is the first preoccupation for creating a new earth-life, for bringing in a new order of beings: to create the inner life first and then to convert our thought, feeling and action in the dynamic world into perfect instruments of that inner realisation.

Our second preoccupation would be the perfection of the spiritual and pragmatic relation between the individual and the collective. This can come about only by a complete universality and oneness with all life upon earth. Then the third and last desideratum is a new world, a new earth-life, a new race that would serve as the link between man and Superman. “This calls for the appearance not only of isolated evolved individuals acting in the involved mass, but of many Gnostic individuals forming a new kind of beings and a new common life superior to the present individual and common existence.”³⁰

The fulfilment of the third desideratum is the mission and meaning of Sri Aurobindo’s life. He is the harbinger of the New Consciousness.

Since the beginning of earth history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great earthly transformations, under one form or another, one name or another.

It is said that Sri Aurobindo in a past life took an active part in the French Revolution. Is it true?

You can say that all through history Sri Aurobindo played an active part. Especially in the most important movements of history he was there – and playing the most important, the leading part. But he was not always visible.³¹ And this time too, he has come to fulfil the next future of earth's destiny, to welcome children of the new race of the second stage of evolution. About his own work for the new earth,

Sri Aurobindo once wrote in the poem "A God's Labour":

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth ...
But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate.

The gulf twixt the depths and heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour ...
Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stair-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end.³²

Sri Aurobindo has shown the direction of earth's destiny and has prepared the path for all those who choose to walk consciously on that Sunlit Path and hasten the Golden future of the earth. In simple terms, the aspirant for the New Earth has first to increase control over his own lower nature and live in inner self. Second, the individual must surrender consciously, willingly, joyously his whole inner being to the new light, to the new truth of Supramental force. Thirdly, this inner harmony and unification of the being must be extended to the cosmic consciousness. As the Mother puts it, "First the consciousness must be transformed, then life, then the forms. It is in this order that the new creation will happen."³³

All the individuals who would follow these steps of self-transcendence and self-transformations would be on their way towards Supermanhood. The large mass of humanity might still remain for long content, satisfied, happy with only a partially uplifted human nature. And this would form a sufficiently good base for the advent of the new race –

In any case these would be beginnings only and cannot constitute the fullness of the divine life upon earth, it would be a new orientation of the

earthly life but not the consummation of its change. For that there must be the sovereign reign of a supramental truth-consciousness.³⁴

The consummation of the earth's destiny would be when the body will become a faithful and capable instrument, perfectly responsive to the spirit; when Matter will reveal itself as an instrument of the manifestation of the Spirit; when there is "the sovereignty of the Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of itself and its possession of life in the power of the Spirit, a new consciousness in which humanity itself shall find its own self-exceeding and self-fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity that is striving for birth within it. This is the sole true supermanhood and the one real possibility of a step forward in evolutionary Nature."³⁵

If there is an evolution in material Nature and if it is an evolution of being with consciousness and life as its two key-terms and powers, this fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life must be the goal of development towards which we are tending and which will manifest at an early or later stage of our destiny. The Self, the Spirit, the Reality that is disclosing itself out of the first inconscience of life and matter, would evolve its complete truth of being and consciousness in that life and matter. It would return to itself, — or, if its end as an individual is to return into its Absolute, it could make that return also, — not through a frustration of life but through a spiritual completeness of itself in life.³⁶

If this be the golden vesture of the New Earth, let us pray to the Lord:

O Goddess, Mother of all, maker of many races
That live across your vast stretches, O Earth,
Grant all our prayers: May the Lord of all,
The Right – incarnate, furnish you all that you may need.

May all your regions free from waste or decay
O Earth, ever grow luxuriant to make us prosperous.
Living a full span of life, always conscious and vigilant
May we always offer you our loving homage.

O Earth, sweet dispenser of human destiny
Grant me my luminous lot that I may be at peace –
With myself and in harmony with powers celestial.
Set me, O Mother-Seer, in good grace and transforming Truth.³⁷

II

As Symbolised in the Ascent of the Avatars

Having understood the role and importance of the earth in the universe we can now study its ascension towards the Divine as seen in the Indian mythology of the *dashāvatar*.

Once the Mother narrated in one of her classes the story of creation to the children. She started with these words:

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.³⁸

We see here that the Supreme brought forth knowledge and power which is known as *chit-tapas* in Vedantic philosophy. The Supreme *sat* brings forth out of himself the *chit-tapas* because Knowledge or Consciousness do not become effective without the Force. For example I may have a great deal of knowledge about spirituality but unless I put it in practice using my energy and will, it remains ineffective and is not of much use on the practical level. On the other hand, if I have the energy and not the knowledge, I get stuck again. So these two have to go together.

Another interesting thing which she mentions is that in the principle of creation there are two other essential elements: joy and freedom. Of course, in the Upanishads too we have seen that this entire creation was born out of Delight. It grows and exists in Delight and to Delight again it returns. This is the first principle much emphasised in the Upanishads which the Mother calls “joy”.

The second principle is that of freedom which we see manifesting in many forms in humanity. It is mentioned as one of the four immortal aims of human civilisation right in the very first paragraph of *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo writes that “God, Light, Freedom, Immortality” have been humanity’s “ultimate preoccupation”. One can look at human life from any angle, be it philosophical, scientific, religious, aesthetic or spiritual, human beings have followed persistently these four principles. Man can do anything to gain freedom on any level – social, political, religious or individual. In India we have always had a very strong social dharma. But those who wanted to be free

from it and wanted to become sannyasins, freedom was granted to them too. They had to move out of the circles of social dharma and seek a different kind of freedom. The West also sought freedom in its own way. It is not just the revolutions or the struggle for a country's independence or women's liberation movement – it implies human beings' struggle for self-determination in every way because any growth, both material and spiritual can take place only in freedom.

It is also true that people blunder a great deal while handling this freedom. But it has its worth because any coercive government or rule can never give the desired result. Therefore, freedom is the first condition of creation itself. How can one suppress freedom and delight in human beings? This is a constant aspiration in human consciousness. It is unerringly on these principles that involution took place, hence evolution too must be based on these two principles. To continue with the Mother's narration:

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.³⁹

As seen earlier, in chapter two, as soon as these beings 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... 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.⁴⁰

In order to bring back order in the Universe the Supreme consented to descend into Matter. And this descent became the primordial source of the Divine in material in the Inconscient. This descent is what is known as the first descent of the Supreme into Matter. Why do we call it “the first descent”? It is because the Supreme descended into Matter essentially in the form of Love. Later, in the process of evolution there is the second descent which is popularly known as the incarnation or the Avatar.

In fact, this is the origin of all Avatars. He is, so to say, the first universal Avatar who, gradually, has assumed more and more conscious bodies and finally manifested in a kind of recognised line of Beings who have descended *directly* from the Supreme to perfect this work of preparing the

universe so that, through a continuous progression, it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety.⁴¹

Indeed, it is this event of the conscious intervention of the supreme Lord in the darkest Matter that has been narrated in different ways with emphasis on different details. In India, this line of “recognised line of Beings who have descended directly from the Supreme” is presented in the concept of the *dashāvatara*. Each Avatar comes in his particular time and age with a specific mission and gives a thrust to humanity to reach a higher rung in consciousness. Their work has been essentially to prepare the earth for the descent of the Supramental Light and Consciousness. Hence, each Avatar has a different contribution to make to the earth consciousness in its ascent to the Divine. Secondly, as is believed, each Avatar descends from the same source and whoever he may be, be it Sri Rama or Sri Krishna or the Buddha, each has contributed a greater dimension of Divine consciousness to enrich the earth and to prepare it for the great Event – the descent of the Supramental Light and Force.

It is important to understand that no Avatar is greater than the other. Just imagine that we are climbing up twenty steps in which we know well that the first step is as important as the nineteenth one. In this process of evolution there is no superiority or inferiority, there is only continuity. The line of beings that have descended directly from the Supreme have prepared the universe and made the earth ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety. It suggests that all the previous Avatars have, until now, prepared the earth for the descent of the Supermind on 29th February 1956! Now it becomes amply clear to us that since its creation, this earth has been preparing itself for this momentous hour of the Descent of the Supramental Consciousness when began the second cycle of evolution. The first cycle of evolution that ushered in Matter has now reached its climax in Supermind. After this Golden Day (29.02.1956) earth’s evolution has acquired a new meaning and a new direction.

While expanding on the concept of the avatars, the Mother adds a very significant idea: “The intervals separating these various incarnations seem to become shorter and shorter, as if, to the extent that Matter became more and more ready, the action could accelerate and become more and more rapid in its movement, more and more conscious too, more and more effective and decisive. And it will go on multiplying and intensifying until the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme.”⁴² This is so because at each

stage earth becomes more and more ready to receive the higher consciousness. Then, the Mother foretells that this repeat movement of effective consciousness will multiply and intensify till a day comes when the entire universe becomes the “total Avatar of the Supreme.” In another context she also adds that Sri Aurobindo “is probably the last Avatar in a human body.”⁴³ If this is so, then will there be other Avatars at all? We do not know and, if they will be there, then how would they be without a human body? We can perhaps get a hint from what Sri Aurobindo told the Mother that he will return in a supramentalised body in a Supramental manner. Putting together all these ideas we may say that the new Avatars will work in such a way that a Gnostic society of supramental beings will manifest. And then, one day, the world will be so flooded with the supramental consciousness that it will become the very body of the Divine. That is when “the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme”.

III

As Symbolised by the Protagonists in *Savitri*

We have seen in the yoga of the Earth as analysed in the concept of the Dasavatars that Sri Aurobindo is the last avatar in the physical. Then who is the first avatar? For an answer, we will have to look into the relevant passages from *Savitri*. In this study we may be referring to some of the ideas and passages already quoted in earlier chapters. But, as the context here is different the apparent repetitions take a different connotation.

We have been given this truth directly by the Supreme who tells Savitri about Satyavan:

Through life and mind and supernature's Vast
To the supernal light of Timelessness
And my eternity hid in moving Time
And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space...
He is my soul that gropes out of the beast
To reach humanity's heights of lucent thought
And the vicinity of Truth's sublime.
He is the godhead growing in human lives
And in the body of earth-being's forms:
He is the soul of man climbing to God
In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance. (*Savitri*, BXI.C1)

This brief passage gives us the essence of Satyavan's being. Indeed the Mother gives a single word which conveys the entire idea described in this passage from *Savitri*, when she tells us that Satyavan is "the soul of the Earth, the Earth's *jiva*." So, the emanation of the Supreme that had descended into Matter is Satyavan. He is the soul, the Jiva of the earth.

The word Jiva has a great significance in the context of the yoga of the earth. It refers to the Atman or the psychic being. What exactly is the role of the Jiva in a human being? It goes from life to life, from birth to birth, not only enriching itself with its experiences on the earth but also enriching earth itself. Each time it returns it brings down something of the divine Consciousness and injects it into Matter. So this is the double role that a psychic being plays: it enriches earth's Matter, the physical Matter while maturing itself. And that is what Satyavan is doing as the Jiva of the earth. There is an explanation in Sri Aurobindo's "Author's Note" on *Savitri*, "Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance."⁴⁴

Juxtapose this line with what the Mother said about Satyavan being the Jiva of the Earth and you will get the whole significance: *sat* is Truth; Satyavan is the one who carries this Truth, and carries this truth into the grip of death and ignorance. He has descended into ignorance and death. And what is he doing? Right from Matter, it is this Jiva, this Satyavan who with his tapasya, with his consciousness, has been preparing Matter's womb through billions of years. And eventually, because of this preparation, Matter gave birth to Life.

In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy evolution is not unilinear. There is always a preparation, an ascent of the lower and there has to be a corresponding descent of the higher principle. It is only when these two movements meet that there can be the birth of the next higher principle in creation. And this has been the eternal role of Satyavan. He prepared Matter and only then Savitri descended – we do not know in what form and name – as the principle of Life when displaying her rich green robes. It took millions of years for all the forms to manifest upon earth – in the form of trees, insects, birds, and animals. All this was not only an enrichment of the world but also a preparation at the same time, I would say, a celebration of the great delight of Life. Therefore, once this was there, which took millions of years, it is again Satyavan who has been the essence, the quintessence, the aspiration of this Life-element upon earth; because Satyavan is the soul climbing from the beast upwards, or he is the soul who is climbing from Matter towards Mind. So once

Life was prepared, when it was ready for the descent of the Mind principle, there was then again the descent of Savitri, and when that descent met the Life principle there was the birth of Mind.

What is important to understand is that while the ascending principle is always Satyavan, the descending principle is always Savitri. To put it a bit differently: it is again Satyavan who has prepared Life for the descent of the Mental principle; he has aspired as the representative of the mind of man and it is he who has called forth the descent of Savitri. Very interestingly, it is said in the story, that Satyavan is the son of Dyumatsena, who is blind. Sri Aurobindo tells us that he represents the Divine Mind here fallen blind because it has lost its own true vision, and because of that it also lost its kingdom of glory. So Satyavan is born to this blind Mind, and breaking the barriers of Mind he has prepared for the advent of the “New”, the advent of the Supramental consciousness. That is what we see in Book V Canto III – Satyavan invoking and requesting Savitri to “descend” upon earth and to embrace it:

Descend. Let thy journey cease, come down to us ...
Come nearer to me from thy car of light
On this green sward disdaining not our soil.
Wilt thou not make this mortal bliss thy sphere?
Descend, O happiness, with thy moon-gold feet
Enrich earth's floors upon whose sleep we lie.
O my bright beauty's princess Savitri.
By my delight and thy own joy compelled.
Enter my life, thy chamber and thy shrine. (*Savitri*, BV.C3)

This is the symbolic significance of the meeting of Savitri and Satyavan, when he invites Savitri upon this “green” earth. Thus all along Satyavan has been the representative aspiration of earth. This much perhaps we can understand. But my interest does not stop there; I see that there is no separation between Satyavan and Sri Aurobindo. In fact, the Mother herself writes:

Sri Aurobindo is the Soul of Matter, the aspiration of the whole humanity. He is the Light in Matter or the Spirit incarnated in Matter. Sri Aurobindo has separated himself from the Supreme and has plunged in this Matter, in a body, with this load of inconscience and ignorance upon himself to

awaken them to the divine life.⁴⁵

The significance is obvious. The Mother uses almost the same words when she says that Satyavan is the Soul of the earth, and again when she says that Sri Aurobindo is the Soul in Matter. In fact, Sri Aurobindo writes about himself in a poem called “A God’s Labour”:

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river’s song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter’s night
To bring the fire to man; ...
Heaven’s fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;...⁴⁶

Sri Aurobindo brought down “Heaven’s fire” and “the undying suns.” But what do we understand by this? To understand the inner meaning we may have to take clues from the Mother’s explanation of the lines from *Savitri*,

The great stars burn with my unceasing fire
And life and death are both its fuel made. (*Savitri*, BX.C3)

Explaining these lines, the Mother said,

According to what he says here, it is the principle of Love that is transformed into flame and finally into light. It isn’t the principle of Light which is transformed into flame when materialized; it is the flame that is transformed into light. The great stars give light because they burn; they burn because they are under the effect of Love.

Disciple: Love would be the original Principle?

That seems to be what he is saying. I didn’t remember this passage. But I told you, my experience is that the last thing as one rises – the last thing one reaches is love. According to the experience, it’s the last thing to manifest now in its purity, and it is the one that has the transforming power. That’s what he appears to be saying here: the victory of Love seems to be the final victory.⁴⁷

There is absolute clarity that comes through: that even the light we see, the sunlight, the light of the stars, all these exist because this light is essentially a flame, and that flame is essentially Love. So we can understand how Love has created this world or how Love is in and behind this entire universe. And we see clearly the steps: Love, the supreme Love, transforms itself into Flame and it is this Flame that gives light to the stars or the suns. And remember that this same Flame is also the psychic flame within man. What has come of the supreme Love into man is the psychic flame and the essential feature of the psychic flame is Light.

We thus can see the whole connection when we find Sri Aurobindo telling us that he has brought down “the undying suns” and “Heaven’s fire”. He is the harbinger of divine Love, the Flame of that divine Love. In the last lines of the same poem, “A God’s Labour” he suggests that he has brought down the Mother so that “The living truth of you” may “move on the earth embodied and fair” and

Down a gold-red stair-way wend,
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness’s end.⁴⁸

If Aswapathy has appealed to the divine Mother, if Satyavan called upon Savitri to descend on earth and make it her home, that is exactly what Sri Aurobindo has done in his own life – he has brought down the Mother. The similarities are too obvious to be missed. Here is the passage in the Mother’s own words as recorded by Mona Sarkar, in his book *The Supreme*:

He is the Light in Matter or the Spirit incarnated in Matter. Sri Aurobindo has separated himself from the Supreme and has plunged in this matter, in a body, with this load of inconscience and ignorance upon himself – to awaken them to the divine life. For this He has invoked the Supreme, the Grace, to descend here below on this earth to help in His work. That is why, having heard His call, I have come down here into matter in a physical body, into this world of pain, suffering and death.⁴⁹

It is so clear! Crystal clear!!! The Mother says about herself:

That is why, having heard His call, I have come down here into matter in a physical body, into this world of pain, suffering and death. And it is in the union of both of us that the world will witness gradually this miracle of a divine life. It is because of Him that I have descended.⁵⁰

Extraordinarily clear and self-evident – there is no room for doubt or

debate: “It is because of Him that I have descended” says the Mother. To continue with her explanation:

What a blessed hour for the earth. It is an occasion for a tremendous progress so that the whole universe may blossom in a great *élan* towards the goal of its existence. With Our help which will be at its disposal and a will to pursue, what could be there that would be impossible to realise! This is the moment.⁵¹

In this passage, what we said about the yoga of the Earth becomes very clear if we understand the essential meaning of the word yoga, which all of us know to be “union with the Supreme”. So in the yoga of the Earth, Earth itself is wanting to reunite with the Supreme. It is written in the book *The Mother* that in integral yoga two elements are required: the call from below and the Grace from above. These two elements are necessary for all yoga and especially for the yoga of transformation. If we extend this explanation to the yoga of the Earth, we see the same conditions. The call from below is represented by Sri Aurobindo, the eternal Avatar, or at every stage by the same universal Avatar, Satyavan. The descent from above, the descent of Grace, of divine Love, is none else than Savitri, the Mother. It is as if the Mother from above and Sri Aurobindo from below are holding this earth, moulding it, transforming it. Is it not simply wonderful to realise that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are holding the earth in their hands and are carrying it safely towards that New Creation!

Again, the uniqueness of Sri Aurobindo, as revealed by the Mother, is that he is “the Light in Matter” and we know now that Light means Love. So, it is the principle of this eternal Love which is ascending from below and it is again the principle of Love which is descending from above. And when they meet, there is the birth of the New Creation.

Now let us see whether what we have been saying is reflected in *Savitri*. We see that it is precisely this aspiration in Life and Mind which gets represented in the tapasya of Aswapathy, who at the end of his ascent invokes the Supreme Mother:

O Bliss who ever dwellst deep-hid within ...
Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
Mission to earth some living form of thee...
Let thy infinity in one body live, ...
Let a great word be spoken from the heights

And one great act unlock the doors of Fate. (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

In these lines we can see the announcement of a clear prophecy: the descent of the Supermind on 29th February 1956, when “one great act” unlocked the doors of the fate of the earth, of the universe itself. Aswapathy knows that the descent of the Divine Mother alone can solve the suffering of humanity, so he says,

How long shall our spirits battle with the Night
And bear defeat and the brute yoke of Death,
We who are vessels of a deathless Force
And builders of the godhead of the race? (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

To this deep anguish and intense call the Divine Mother replies: “O strong forerunner! I have heard thy cry...” The Mother says exactly the same words, “having heard His call” in the quote: “That is why, having heard His call, I have come down here in matter in a physical body.” To resume the lines from *Savitri*,

O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature’s doom by the lone spirit’s power...
Immortal Love shall beat its glorious wings...
A seed shall be sown in Death’s tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil; (*Savitri*, BIII.C4)

The one who descends to break the iron law is Savitri, the principle of Love, who alone has the power to transform Death. Explaining this descent the Mother clarifies:

Savitri is really a condensation, a concentration of the Universal Mother, the eternal Universal Mother, the Mother of all universes from all eternity in an earthly personality for the earth’s salvation.⁵²

So, Savitri is “an earthly personality for the earth’s salvation”. And it is in this context that the Mother says that Satyavan is the soul of the earth, the earth’s jiva. Explaining this further, She says:

Let’s take Savitri, which is very explicit on this: the universal Mother is universally present and at work in the universe. But the earth is where concrete form is given to all the work to be done to bring evolution to its perfection, its goal. At first, there is a sort of emanation representative of the universal Mother which is always on earth to help it prepare itself. Then when the preparation is complete the universal Mother herself will descend

upon earth to finish her work. And this she does with Satyavan. Satyavan is the soul of the earth. She lives in close union with the soul of the earth and together they do the work. She has chosen the soul of the earth for her work, saying, “Here is where I will do my work”. Elsewhere,... it is enough just to be and things simply are. Here on earth you have to work. There are clearly universal repercussions and effects of course. But the thing is worked out here, the place of work is here.⁵³

This place of work is the earth. Savitri could not have chosen anyone else upon earth but Satyavan. There might have been greater princes, more powerful princes than Satyavan. But why did she choose Satyavan? A person who didn't even own a kingdom! A person who lived in a hut, in the forest! She chose him because Satyavan represents the soul of the earth and Savitri's work is upon this earth. As the Mother says, in other regions, beyond earth, it is enough just to be and work simply. But here one has to work in unison. So it is only the coming together of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo that will open the doors of the New Earth, of the New Race.

It is always this togetherness of the principles of Savitri and Satyavan which is the basis of evolution. The meeting of Savitri and Satyavan or of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is mandatory for the work of transformation on earth. However, on a deeper level we have to take into account another extremely important principle in order to understand their work or the work of Savitri and Satyavan. In one of her conversations the Mother explains,

Every time there is, ... it is more than an aspiration, much more than a will, it's what they call in English an 'urge' – 'thirst', ... an urge to let Divine Love be expressed completely, totally, everywhere, the basis, the propitious ground (is): Truth. Naturally Sri Aurobindo said it and wrote it in every letter: The pure divine Love can manifest safely only in a ground of Truth.... If you wanted to say it poetically, you could say, 'In a land of Truth.'⁵⁴

So, before being able to proclaim, “Love, manifest, bring Victory,” the ground of Truth has to be made ready. And here again lies the significance of Satyavan. Until and unless Truth is established Love cannot manifest fully. And this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have done. Before the Mother could be called back from Japan in 1920, there had to be first the preparation of the new Truth upon earth. So from 1914 to 1920 what Sri Aurobindo perhaps did was to establish in the subtle physical the truth of the Supermind. In the *Arya*, there was only an indirect reference to Supermind,

for he had yet to realise it in its fullness. Maybe he had by then only glimpsed the Supermind, the new Truth, and by writing about it on paper, he had, as if, set the signature of Truth upon earth's bosom. The higher mind of earth had been prepared, so that the incarnation of Love, of Supramental Mahashakti, the Mother could return to Pondicherry. It was not just by chance that she had gone away to Paris in 1915. The ground of Truth had to be prepared so that the Mother could return.

Apply the same beautiful truth to the individual life. If we want the Mother to work within us, transform us, change us, help us even, we have got to be truthful, honest, sincere and not deceive or cheat or be insincere. It goes so far that this great principle of creation is absolutely applicable to our day to day living. We cannot on one side call the Mother to help us and on the other have untruth, falsehood hidden within us. So this is where the necessity of purification comes in. Purification of oneself is a must if the divine Grace is to act. This is the great principle that we see, the principle of the establishment of Truth as a preparation for the working of Love.

I am telling you all this directly in relation to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, parallel with Savitri and Satyavan, and directly applying it to Earth, because the work is happening here and now. So how does this incarnation of Love act upon this earth, how does Love transform? Here is a beautiful explanation from the Mother. She says:

If we want to know or understand the nature of the Force or Power that permits and accomplishes this transformation, we see that of all powers Love is obviously the mightiest, the most integral...⁵⁵

You might have heard about this, that love is a mighty force. But how does it act? What is its strength? How does it transform?

It is even mightier than the power of purification, which dissolves bad will, and is in a way master over the adverse forces, but which doesn't have the direct transforming power; because the power of purification must first dissolve in order to form again later. It destroys one form to make a better one from it, while Love doesn't need to dissolve in order to transform; it has the direct transforming power. Love is like a flame changing the hard into the malleable, then sublimating even the malleable into a kind of purified vapour. It doesn't destroy, it transforms.⁵⁶

An extraordinary explanation! We understand the connection of Love with flame and with life. If we invoke this Love, what does it do? It is like a flame

changing the hard material into a malleable one. You might have seen at an iron-smith's workshop how he puts an iron rod into the fire. The dark hard iron softens yet it retains its form. It is not yet changed in its solid state, but it heats up in that fire and then the impurities are burnt off making it malleable and ductile. Then comes "the sublimating even of the malleable into a kind of purified vapour". So, if you heat it further the iron loses all its impurities. Then without destroying the form, without destroying the content of iron, a new form is given. Whereas, the Mother says, the power of purification and all other things destroy the form and replace it with a new one. So that is how Love brings forth the Truth from our being and gives us a new form.

It is so beautifully described in *Savitri* itself. Savitri conquers Death exactly in the same manner. She doesn't destroy him, but with her immense Love she brings out the truth of Death, and then he realises his own infinite self. It is as if in that Flame of Love the false appearance of Death gets burnt off and his truth comes forth. For, in the Upanishads we see that Death is the son of Vivaswan, son of the Sun God. So he is not an evil, anti-divine force as is normally understood. He is himself the son of the Sun God, the supramental Sun. Originally he is that. But he has taken upon himself or he has been given this form only to force humanity towards its own perfection. In a line in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo says that Death is the "gate of immortality" – that is because all that is false, all that is incomplete cannot enter the realm of immortality. In this manner *Savitri* is such an extraordinarily new approach to the vision of Death. Death is no longer the hated thing but a purifying force in humanity. It obstructs all that is false. Therefore, Savitri does not destroy Death but brings forth by the flame of her Love the real truth of Death.

To continue with our discussion on how Love works, let us read further the Mother's explanation:

...it corresponds to a state where you are so perfectly identified with all that is, that you concretely become all that is anti-divine, and so you can offer it up, it can be offered up and really transformed through this offering.⁵⁷

That is the transformative power of Love. It gets identified, as She says here: "it becomes all that is anti-divine". So Love transforms and does not destroy because of its capacity to embrace, unify, identify itself with the other. So apply the same thing to Savitri and the power of Death: she embraces Death, identifies herself with it. We know of the last transfiguration that comes upon Savitri. She brings upon herself her omnipotent transcendental Power and

Puissance, then she embraces Death. With that identification, she offers all that is untrue to the Supreme. That is the real transformative capacity of Love. It identifies itself with falsehood and then offers it to the Divine to transform it.

We can apply it to our own lives. When somebody behaves rashly and there is a problem, instead of hatred, arguments and disharmony, if we have the capacity to love, miracles can take place. This love identifies, and on his behalf – they may know it or not know it – you offer it to the Divine’s Grace and let that light flood upon the person. Perhaps we say that we pray for the other person. But that prayer isn’t sufficient. We have to love the other person, loving truly, not for selfish reasons.

As we have been explaining, Truth has to rule first before Love can manifest on a wider scale in manifestation. In this light the relation between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, or Satyavan and Savitri, is more on the level of manifestation and transformation of the earth consciousness. Only when the Truth of the supramental is brought down can the power of Love manifest on a wide scale. Sri Aurobindo, the principle of Truth, brings down first the Supramental Consciousness before the Mother, the Principle of Love, could take up the work of the transformation in herself and for the earth. Very interestingly, the same lines are there in *Savitri*, when Savitri says,

Nor for my happy body’s bliss alone
I have claimed from thee the living Satyavan,
But for his work and mine, our sacred charge.
Our lives are God’s messengers beneath the stars;
To dwell under death’s shadow they have come
Tempting God’s light to earth for the ignorant race,
His love to fill the hollow in men’s hearts,
His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world.
For I, the woman, am the force of God,
He the Eternal’s delegate soul in man. (*Savitri*, BX.C3)

I am putting forward some suggestions, some secrets that I came to understand, or rather I was given to understand. When Savitri says, “I, the woman” what is the implication? Is there something different between “I, the woman” and “I, the Mother”, “I, Savitri”, “I, the wife”? There must be something different, otherwise Sri Aurobindo would not have used these words. In the phrase “I, the woman, am the force of God” the woman is the

Force, the Chit-Shakti. And what does it mean when she says “He the Eternal’s delegate soul in man”? Does it not mean that the male power is the Purusha aspect?

We are all familiar with the Mother's message: “Without him I exist not, without me he is unmanifest.”⁵⁸ She herself explains this relation between herself and Sri Aurobindo on a deeper level which is astounding:

You know, it is like this: in the terrestrial evolution, man, who is emerging out of the inconscience and ignorance, is guided by the Supreme. And the Supreme, in order to manifest His reign upon earth, labours to uplift the human consciousness so as to establish the Divine Consciousness; and for this He does not delegate someone but He Himself manifests physically, even in the Ignorance, to accomplish His work. And it is I who have been appointed to raise up man and the creation out of this Inconscience. It is I who am responsible. What I wish, the Lord also wishes. I am the Supreme in the Unmanifest. But in the creation the Supreme acts only through me, exists only by me and wills nothing but what I will. There is no distinction to be made.⁵⁹

So now we understand what she means by, “Without me He is unmanifest”! To go further into their relation, here is another passage from the Mother:

And still deeper down in this purifying Flame resides

Sri Aurobindo – Immutable Ananda, All-Powerful, the Invincible, the Supreme Lord of our existence, the manifestation of the Omnipresence in existence, the Omnipotence in His effectuations, the Omniscience of the Supreme Power manifested; one who is the Goal, the Master, the Beloved, – who is also the Supreme Lord.

When one truly calls Him, it is from there (Mother indicates the heart) that Sri Aurobindo answers. It vibrates by His Name, with His consciousness; there resounds the name of

Sri Aurobindo because His imprint is there (*gesture*).

In the very depths, it is He who resides. . . All existence lives by Him. It vibrates by Him. The whole universe vibrates by Him. He is there in everything, vibrant and animating by His Presence. The delight of His Name penetrates and purifies all, rings and resounds everywhere in the sublime Joy, eternal and true. With His Name the existence takes on a meaning.⁶⁰

After a short trance the Mother continues,

Me, I am there as a Presence in the Eternal Flame, the Power that animates

and initiates the action, the Peace that renders all sweet and peaceful, the Joy that overflows and sublimates, the Light that purifies, and the Vibration that sanctions.

Sri Aurobindo is there as a sustaining Entity, and me I am there like a Guide. In fact, it is a same identity in two. One, who observes, – the Witness, and the other that effectuates, – the Shakti.⁶¹

Finally she concludes:

Yes, my child, he who recognises Sri Aurobindo and me – in fact, it is the same thing, the same identity – for him all obstacles, all difficulties, all traps, all the so-called interruptions on the march towards the Truth, are swept away and removed for ever – in this life, as well as after death and in the lives to come – till Eternity.

Yes, for him, the Lord is all powerful. Only to repeat:

“Ma – Sri Aurobindo, Ma – Sri Aurobindo”.⁶²

So in the final analysis it is Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who will accomplish the yoga of the Earth. Since its creation, it is they who have taken care of its evolution. Through all these travails and tapasya, it is they who will take it to the ultimate stage of the supramental realisation, and the Mother has been given already the vision of its completion. The work will be done – that is the promise given to humankind by the Mother herself.

They have always said that their sole work in their past lives has always been to take forward the evolution of the earth. So it is they who are doing it and it is their work that is described in *Savitri*. It is thus the legend of earth's creation and the pivotal symbol of *Savitri* is Ma-Sri Aurobindo.

Questions and Answers

1. When and how was Matter formed?

Well, that is a philosophic question. We cannot say when because there is no “when” attached to the creation, even though we use a past tense to refer to a point in time. It is not that fifty billion years ago it all started masses of matter on the earth with planets and milky ways etc. Matter is not created once and for all. It is not like I say that I have manufactured three thousand cars. I have sold them and now my work is over for the year. The concept of creation is very different from this.

Creation is an eternal ongoing process since eternity, because it is not that somebody is creating something from the materials

taken or gathered from outside. Here, the Supreme is not creating but himself becoming the universe. The word “becoming” means manifesting himself, or creating from within himself or multiplying himself from the One that he is. In Vedantic terminology we call it “Being” and “Becoming”, a constant present tense, a process that is continuing forever with no beginning and no end. So, it is not a thing like once created, finished and done with. It is a continuous becoming of the Being and that Being is the Brahman, Sachchidananda or the Supreme Reality.

The second part of the question is, “how was Matter formed?” I shall give you an analogy to understand this. If I were to ask you “how is ice formed?” You would say: first, there is vapour, then, by the cooling process vapour densifies into water. And, further on, by the process of cooling water is densified into ice. So, actually, there is no difference between vapour and ice except for their density. In essence they are the same, but there is a difference in their density.

Similarly, by a process of densification which can be called Involution, the Supreme manifested himself. Now here comes along another process – that of self-limitation. Just as ice as the form is measurable, likewise Brahman also limits himself into a form which can be measured. This example is the best I can think of because it comes close to the abstract concept of the creation of Matter. Do not take it too literally, but it is through this process of self-densification as well as self-limitation that Brahman becomes Matter. So Matter is not formed out of anything but the supreme Sachchidananda himself. On my table I have this steel glass which is made of material from outside of myself, but in Matter there is nothing apart from the Spirit. This is the reason why Sri Aurobindo says that essentially there is no fundamental difference between Matter and Spirit: they are one and the same.

Once Spirit becomes Matter, its quality obviously changes; it becomes rigid and hard, it is no longer malleable nor transparent; it becomes heavy and immobile. So, I hope, now you can understand that in this process of involution the last stage of densification is called “Matter”. Now keeping to the same analogy we may say that you heat the water and it goes back to the stage of vapour. This is the heat of tapasya, which is otherwise called “integral yoga”. The only difference is that vapour can vanish whereas Matter does not vanish but is transformed into another stage of existence as the heat of tapasya, or yoga, removes Matter’s impurities.

In one of her explanations the Mother talks about true and false Matter, false in the sense of having impurities. Do you remember I gave you the example of a rod which loses its impurities when thrown into the furnace with a very high temperature, the flame melts the impurities which is the false Matter. When our impurities are removed by yogic discipline, then true Matter reveals itself. True Matter is transparent and light, because then it has no tamas or inertia: it is full of Light. For example, this watch on my table will retain its form but will be transparent so that you will be able to see everything inside it through and through. You know, the Mother gives the example of having seen the room of

Sri Aurobindo we visit in the ashram, but there in the subtle physical world, everything was exactly the same as we see in his room in Pondicherry, except that each object, each piece of furniture, the photograph, the bed, everything was glowing from within. Each material thing in that room, had an aura of light and color around it. Normally, our eyes can see a thing glowing from outside with outer lights and external shine, but there in the subtle world each thing was glowing because of its purity and transparency of true Matter.

2. At what time in the universal creation does the Supreme Consciousness enter into Matter?

Again, as I told you, you will have to forget the concept of time in the universal creation. There is no time factor there. We can never pinpoint and say whether it was fifty or thousand billion years ago. Because it is a continuous process, it is a continuous becoming; the Supreme Consciousness does not enter Matter as I enter in my new house built by me. It is more like the image of a mother with a child in her womb: the child is being created by the very flesh, blood and energy of the mother inside her body; the difference is that we cannot say that the earth and the planets are “delivered”, they are continuously part of the same consciousness of the Spirit.

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Chapter 6

The Experiences of the Divine Mother...

I

Today we are going to take up the last aspect of *Savitri* which describes “the experiences of the Divine Mother in the effort to adapt herself to the body she has taken and to the falsity and ignorance of the earth upon which she has incarnated.” Frankly, this is the most difficult aspect to corroborate with Savitri as we do not find very many obvious and direct references to the Divine Mother adapting herself to the body she has taken upon earth. In the book itself, it is true that Savitri represents the incarnation, the “body” that the Divine Mother has taken. But, we do not find much the “process” of adaptation to the falsity and ignorance of the earth. We find more the vision of a fully transformed earth. Perhaps, a deeper study is required to discover this fourth aspect in Savitri itself.

However, for the sake of our present discourse I have chosen to take the Mother as the incarnation of the Divine Mother and study the way she has not only adapted herself to the human body but the path she has trodden to transform it into a divine body. It is needless to say that this is something beyond the understanding of the human mind and we have to depend exclusively on the Mother’s explanations given in her writings and talks published in *Notes on the Way* and her other books.

Basically, the chapter is divided into two parts: The first part will be the discussion on the efforts of the Mother to adapt to this ignorant earth taking upon herself immense sorrow and suffering. The second part of the discussion will dwell on the work of physical transformation taken up by her in order to prepare for the next evolutionary step of the earth.

We will look into her attempt at physical transformation exclusively from the point of view of the Mother as a yogi, that is, as a human body attempting the physical transformation. While discussing this we have to suspend the idea of the Mother being an incarnation of the Divine Mother, of the supreme Aditi. If we do not do so, we will be undermining the colossal yogic efforts of the Mother in her pioneering attempts at transformation. Hence, the first part deals with the Divine as the human and the second part will emphasise on the human body making efforts to transform itself into a Divine body. Of course,

details of the second part are not given in *Savitri* as they were not perhaps available to Sri Aurobindo when he was writing the epic. Hence, we will take recourse to the Mother's *Notes on the Way* and other writings for procuring details of the Mother's attempts on her own physical transformation.

Well, a disciple in the Ashram once asked the Mother something to the following effect: "What is the nature of suffering and pain that the divine Mother in *Savitri* feels for her children?" The Mother replied that the Divine Mother has descended upon the earth first of all to partake of human nature so that she could lead them beyond suffering. Had she remained in her supreme consciousness and knowledge where there is no suffering, she could not have had any contact with the human beings. It is only for this that she had to take upon herself this descent into the human consciousness. But even though she has adopted this human consciousness she remains in contact with her own real supreme Consciousness. Thus, it is by joining the two that she can lead humanity towards the sublime.

Had she not taken upon herself the human body and its consciousness and suffered its sorrows, she could not have helped it. Hers was not a suffering of ignorance, it was a suffering through identity. She accepted the human beings' inconscient nature and darkness and falsehood in order to come in contact with them and pull them out of their sorry state. Without identifying on the physical level she could not have gauged human sorrow and suffering. A complete physical identification with the human body is obligatory because it is the human body which suffers the most and ultimately it is the body that has to be divinised in order to come out of the suffering permanently. Here are the most poignant lines from *Savitri* that describe this sacrifice of the Divine Mother:

The Great who came to save this suffering world
And rescue out of Time's shadow and the Law,
Must pass beneath the yoke of grief and pain;
They are caught by the Wheel that they had hoped to break,
On their shoulders they must bear man's load of fate.
Heaven's riches they bring, their sufferings count the price
Or they pay the gift of knowledge with their lives.
The Son of God born as the Son of man
Has drunk the bitter cup, owned Godhead's debt,
The debt the Eternal owes to the fallen kind
His will has bound to death and struggling life

That yearns in vain for rest and endless peace. (*Savitri*, BVI.Cʻ)

This passage makes it amply clear that those divine incarnations that came down to save humanity are all put on the “Wheel” which symbolises sorrow and suffering. If the Divine comes here to break the eternal law of suffering he has to participate in this movement of suffering. Hence he assumes the double role of the victim as well as the saviour.

It is interesting to know that by this descent into Time and Space, the Eternal also pays a “debt to earth and man”! What could that be? The “debt” exists because the Eternal has created man as a being full of suffering. In order to get even, it is as though he were saying: “If you think I’ve created you dipped in sorrow and suffering, then I will myself come down to you to partake of the same sorrow and liberate you from it.” So his descent is like repaying a long pending debt of God to man. Much has been said in various ways about this supreme sacrifice of the Divine who, leaving behind his eternal state of perfect consciousness, perfect bliss, perfect power, accepted the state of ignorance and falsehood in order to release man from his pain and suffering.

One could ask why the Mother could not have built such a relation with us from her higher level of consciousness. She was even asked this question as to why she came down to us on our level. She replied that if she had not come to us in this form, we would not have related to her. Without the physical contact the Divine remains impersonal, far-off and respectfully distant and becomes for humanity merely one more ideal. Physical touch is of primary importance to man because it gives him greater confidence and assurance. Some of you may ask: “What about now when the Mother is physically no more with us?” I would certainly agree that there is a difference but at the same time, we must know that when the Divine leaves the body, his or her presence remains on the subtle physical level. That is how so many people around the world hear her voice and even see her form. Her subtle physical is very powerfully present around us. Her form is not at all lost to humanity and she appears to whoever she wants, to a devotee or a non-devotee, it makes little difference.

To resume our discussion about the suffering of the Incarnate, let us take up a paragraph from Nolini Kanta Gupta’s writing on *Savitri*,

Savitri, the divine Grace in human form is upon earth. The divine consciousness has abandoned its own supreme transcendental state as to enter into human consciousness and partake of the earthly life. It has taken

up a mortal frame to live and dwell here below. Only thus she can transform the lower animal nature into the divine nature, raise man to godhead, make of earth heaven itself...¹

Now let us read these lines from *Savitri* which carry the same thought:

But when God's messenger comes to help the world
And lead the soul of earth to higher things,
He too must carry the yoke he came to unloose;
He too must bear the pang that he would heal:
Exempt and unafflicted by earth's fate,
How shall he cure the ills he never felt? (*Savitri*, BVI.Cʸ)

We are trying to understand the deeper meaning of an Avatar's suffering, both on the physical and psychological levels because we often fail to appreciate and understand them assuming that as they are avatars, they have no problems or suffering, that they are above human pain and sorrow! Obviously, it is far from truth:

He carries the suffering world in his own breast;
Its sins weigh on his thoughts, its grief is his:
Earth's ancient load lies heavy on his soul;
Night and its powers beleaguer his tardy steps,
The Titan adversary's clutch he bears;
His march is a battle and a pilgrimage.
Life's evil smites, he is stricken with the world's pain:
A million wounds gape in his secret heart. (*Savitri*, BVI.Cʸ)

We complain about our suffering and discomforts, small or big. But they suffer quietly, for after all who would they share their suffering with? They are divine beings so they keep enclosed all the "million wounds... in their secret heart". We would not be able to understand their suffering. When I used to go to the Mother, I would tell her about my problems. Keeping silent about her own "million wounds," she would advise me, console me. Outwardly she was all smiles and sweetness and calm, always. But we now know how much she struggled and suffered just as it is mentioned in *Savitri* in the contexts of Aswapathy's journey:

He journeys sleepless through an unending night;
Antagonist forces crowd across his path;
A siege, a combat is his inner life. (*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

On the physical level she had to manage the whole working of the Ashram

which is replete with life's problems. It is not like one of those traditional organisations with women and men in separate quarters, with rigid unalterable rules and regulations. This Ashram represents the whole dynamics of life and its forces, and it is based on a principle of inner and outer freedom which, so far, has not been much attempted in a spiritual organisation. Hence, here there is a concentration of all kinds of problems that need to be solved in a new light so that deeper and lasting solutions can be found and made available to the world at large.

Avatars have to battle not only the individual human problems, but also universal forces which attack and obstruct their workings with great intensity. It is a constant battle with the adverse forces. Sri Aurobindo says:

Even worse may be the cost, direr the pain:
His large identity and all-harbours love
Shall bring the cosmic anguish into his depths,
The sorrow of all living things shall come
And knock at his doors and live within his house;
A dreadful cord of sympathy can tie
All suffering into his single grief and make
All agony in all the worlds his own. (*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

Notice the words "in all the worlds": it is not just the human physical world. There are the subtle physical worlds of which we have detailed descriptions in *Savitri*. Savitri too, when she meets the Madonna of suffering, the Madonna of might and the Madonna of light, promises each one of them:

One day I will return, His hand in mine,
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute...
There shall be light and peace in all the worlds. (*Savitri*, BVII.C4)

So they have to take care of all the worlds, both gross and subtle, because when incarnations descend upon the earth, then all the subtle worlds closely connected with the earth also descend seeking help from them: "The sorrow of all living things shall come/And knock at his doors." (*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

Hence, the incarnations have to battle on all fronts. It is truly not comprehensible to the human mind. You might remember a similar experience in the Mother's life when she was thirteen years old. How every night she would rise above the city and her robe would spread out and become so wide that people in sorrow could take refuge underneath and those who touched it would be relieved of their suffering instantly. She had this

experience night after night for a whole year! She had become conscious of her divine mission even at that age.

Sri Aurobindo refers to his own suffering and pain in many of his sonnets written even before his writing *Savitri*. In the sonnet, titled “The Indwelling Universal” he writes:

The world’s happiness flows through me like wine,
Its million sorrows are my agonies.

And further in the poem:

Around my way the Titan forces press;
This earth is theirs, they hold its days in fee;
I am full of wounds and the fight merciless.
Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?²

Through these descriptions we come to understand but a little of their struggle and sorrow in the human body. All the Avatars in the past have had to go through such suffering in more or less the same intensity. This time, the intensity of suffering is relatively much higher because Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have taken upon themselves the specific task of physical transformation. Without living “the million wounds” in their own body, they could not have solved the issue of suffering. When you read their letters, even such as those of Swami Vivekananda, we come to know about their sorrow and physical pain in detail.

Another thing apart from their pain is the element of doubt that is constantly whispered in their ears by the anti-evolutionary forces trying to break their confidence in the success of their mission. Here is a graphic description given by the Mother:

This poor body says to the Lord, “Tell me! Tell me. If I am to last, if I am to live, that’s fine, but tell me so I may endure. I don’t care about suffering and I am ready to suffer as long as this suffering isn’t a sign that I should prepare to go.” That’s how it is, that’s how the body is. Of course, it could be expressed with other words, but that’s it. When you suffer, for instance, when the body suffers, it wonders why, it asks, “Is there something I have to endure and overcome in order to be ready to continue my work, or is it a more or less round about way to tell me that I am coming undone and I am going to disappear?”...

But it isn’t even told that – I haven’t been able to obtain a clear answer.

It is not necessary, probably...I cannot say that a single day passes entirely

without my having to fight against one suffering or another, one difficulty or another – the feeling that things are grating. Of course the body notices that when its entire consciousness is exclusively centered on the Divine, it no longer feels its suffering: if it has a pain, it no longer feels it. But the minute it is slightly aware of the outer world, it sees that pain is there alright.

There are moments – moments of illumination. Then it has the certitude of the Triumph. But almost immediately, something comes to contradict it violently, like a reminder: “Don’t get carried away! You are not yet there, you know.”...

It has the feeling it knows nothing – it knows nothing, it isn’t told anything. It knows nothing. It isn’t told what will happen.

On the top of this, there are lots of adverse forces, of adverse suggestions... that come and harass... I don’t believe them – it doesn’t believe them, but it does not have the assurance that would allow it to laugh in their face.³

These suggestions of doubt increased manifold after Sri Aurobindo left his physical body. For the adverse forces took advantage of the situation and continuously disturbed her. She said:

There is one thing you know, which is so difficult, so difficult, it’s that Sri Aurobindo left... That’s at the root of everything. Before, my body was not like this;... there was an absolute certitude. That, you know, it was... a collapse.

It clearly came to teach something that could never have been learned before. But it is always on this that the adverse forces base themselves – always. All the adverse suggestions, all the adverse forces, all the ill-will, all the disbelief – it’s all based on this: ‘Yes, but He left.’ At the same time the Mother used to tell them [these forces], “try hard as you may but you cannot succeed.”⁴

You see how doubt works through the adverse forces. It is incredible, but had it not been for the Mother’s explanation we could have never understood or even believed that the Avatars also are harassed by these forces.

Sri Aurobindo did leave his body and so did the Mother, but they did not die as human beings do. In India we call it *ichhamrityu*, leaving the body at will for a purpose. The adverse forces say that they managed to pull them down but it is not so. The Mother said Sri Aurobindo knew that she wanted to leave instead of him and yet he left because he decided that it should be so, that it was the best thing to do in order to hasten and accomplish the mission.

I am trying to draw a parallel between the suffering of both but especially to highlight the daily suffering of the Mother, particularly the attacks of doubt. Now I can understand this problem a little more clearly, especially after reading Savitri's dialogue with Death. Death, constantly discourages Savitri saying:

The Ideal is a malady of thy mind,
A bright delirium of thy speech and thought,
A strange wine of beauty lifting thee to false sight.

(*Savitri*, BX.C2)

Similarly, the whole effort of the anti-divine or the adverse forces has been to demoralise and erase the ideal for which the Mother was working. It tried to implant doubt and depression and all negative elements that may alter her way of thinking so that she leaves her pursuit for the Supramental Truth leaving the world forever in their hands. These forces do not want to harm one physically, for physical attack is nothing as compared to this psychological and spiritual attack.

She reiterated very often that as long as Sri Aurobindo was in his body, she hardly ever worried about her body and its protection because he provided a great wall of protection for her so that she could be completely relaxed. Ten years after he had left his physical body, these forces started harassing her. She says:

Now it has come back.

“Well, well – why has that returned?” I wondered. And then I saw that this body has been built in such a way that it instinctively attracts ordeals, painful experiences. And in the face of such formations, it is always passive, consenting, accepting, and totally confident in the ultimate outcome, with such an ingrained certitude that even at the moment of greatest difficulty, it will be helped and saved, and that the purpose behind all those ordeals is to speed up, to gain time, and to exhaust all the... I can't say the evil possibilities, but all the hindrances – things that hamper, block the way and seem to negate the goal – so that they are pushed back into the past and no longer hinder progress.⁵

Look at this marvellous passage: “this body is so built that it instinctively attracts ordeals, painful experiences.” This is something we come to know only from the Mother that the body “attracts ordeals.” Why does it do that? This “ordeal” is there to speed up evolution itself, to speed up the process of

transformation. Perhaps now we can understand why Sri Aurobindo said, after discussing with the Mother, as to who should leave the body: “What I see is that your body is the only one that has sufficient endurance to go through the ordeal”.⁶

That must be the secret when she says that her body instinctively attracts ordeals, so that she can purge them and cleanse them to save humanity. We have been told that during the first great War, when she returned to Paris, how her very physical body absorbed the pain and suffering of those dying soldiers in the War. It was so intense that her body became swollen with injuries and she was about to sacrifice her body! Savitri likewise went into the eternal darkness of Death and came through after a grim battle with dark forces. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo too had gone down the dark region of Inconscience and “tread the dolorous way.”

The Mother confirmed that Sri Aurobindo was the first one to tread this dangerous path. As she said “No one has ever followed this path! Sri Aurobindo was the first, and he left without telling us what he was doing. I am literally hewing a path through a virgin forest – it’s worse than a virgin forest.”⁷ Yogically speaking it is very easy to become a saint or a sage. One knows all that needs to be done and doing it is as easy as knowing. But what is to be done about the transformation of Matter? How is it to be done? What is the path? Is there a path at all or any procedure to follow? Nothing was said before or even known before. The Mother emphasised:

To be in a condition in which all is the Supreme, all is wonderful, all is marvellous, all is marvellous love, all is... all is profound Joy – an unchanging, immutable, ever-present condition. To live in That, and then to have this bodily substance contradict it through every possible stupidity – losing sight, losing strength, pains here, pains there, disorders, weaknesses, incapacities of every type. And at the same time, the response within this body, no matter what happens to it, is, “O Lord, Your Grace is infinite.” The contradiction is very disconcerting.

From experience, I know perfectly well that when one is satisfied with being a saint or a sage and constantly maintains the right attitude, all goes well – the body doesn’t get sick, and even if there are attacks it recovers very easily; all goes very well... as long as there is not this will to transform.⁸

This is something we need to look into. If one is following the ordinary path, trying to be a saint or a sage one may not face such problems in the physical.

But once you say you take up this yoga of transformation then things become very difficult. They could even become dangerous. All forces rise up in protest against one's will for transformation. The body does not resist so long as one is satisfied with things as they are. But when one takes up integral yoga or this yoga of transformation, the body begins to suffer. It suffers because all the difficulties rise from the physical to the vital, to the mental, to the psychic. To summarise the Mother's explanation given in the *Agenda*, we can say that all problems come up front when something new is introduced in Matter and naturally the body protests. Resistance from the Inconscient and the Subconscient follows with a "disgusting persistence" as well as with the usual suggestions too.

"Sri Aurobindo himself didn't do it. How do you expect to succeed when he didn't?.. But my answer is always the same: when the Lord says it is all over with, I will know it is over with; that will be the end of it, and so what! This stops them short."⁹

I have chosen this answer from the Mother especially because several people have this question in their minds as to what is happening now to the work of transformation? The Mother replies:

[As for Sri Aurobindo],... he refuses to acknowledge that anything is stopped. Nothing has stopped. He came for that, and he arranged things to...to give a maximum number of chances,... of possibilities – to put the winning cards on our side.¹⁰

This is important to understand that he did not leave his body leaving his work incomplete. Leaving his body was one of the strategic moves of his success. It is not that he had to leave his body. He had no disease and nothing could have compelled him to leave. It was a divine diplomacy. That is why the Mother says, "He put the winning cards on our side," on the side of the Divine. It is all a divine strategy so that ultimately their work gets accomplished.

Obviously, were I to leave now I can say there would be a halt, because I don't see anyone at the moment who could continue...

For example, as I was saying at the beginning, the body's formation has a very minimal, a quite subordinate importance for a saint or a sage. But for this supramental work, the way the body is formed has an almost crucial importance, and not at all in relation to spiritual elements nor even to mental power: these aspects have no importance at all. The capacity to

endure, to last is the important thing.

I have never been told the contrary either. I have been told nothing and when I turn towards that, not to question but simply to know the answer is always the same... carry on. It is not your problem. Don't worry about it.¹¹

Once we have handed ourselves over to the Mother, to the Divine, we need not worry. This is a wonderful attitude if we can follow because we often end up in utter frustration: "Ten, twenty, thirty years have passed and I have not yet found my psychic," I know people say that and lament. It is here that we have to learn not to worry and yet keep total faith and allegiance to the Mother. It is all a stage of preparation. I can give here the example of the chicken inside the egg. It prepares itself sufficiently and one day it breaks out of its shell. The mother hen has to do enough tapasya before the chick is out of the egg. Until then it has to wait inside the shell. That is why the Mother says when one takes up sadhana, one ought not to hanker after results. I know quite a few who exclaim, "O, I have been meditating for twenty years, I should have achieved the silence of mind by now." It is their ambition. It may be our goal but we have to surrender totally into the Mother's hands so that she "moulds" us the way she wants to. We set our own goal of achieving certain goal-posts in a certain number of years. But when the path is endless and eternal, how can we have a goal-post at all? To put a certain target is alright as that kind of resolution keeps us going and does not let inertia settle in our body and mind. But to despair is not right.

What we truly lack is sincerity which is the basic prerequisite of sadhana. This is the most important key, in fact it is the golden key of sadhana. If we are sincere, all the doors in our sadhana open up, sooner or later. Our whole attitude to life and its problems change; we live exclusively for the Divine, we keep offering all of ourselves constantly to the Divine. And then we do not hanker impatiently for any short or long term results, or siddhis, or realisations. When we run after a goal or a result, our present gets hampered. Yoga means being conscious of each moment: how one can best offer oneself, how sincerely and truthfully one can act for the Divine. The Mother puts it more philosophically:

In the final analysis, everything obviously depends upon the Supreme's Will because, if one looks deeply enough into the question, even physical laws and resistances are nothing for Him. But this kind of direct intervention takes place only at the extreme limit; if His Will is to be expressed in

opposition, as it were, to the whole set of laws governing the Manifestation...¹²

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother suffered intensely because they took upon themselves the yoga of the transformation for humanity. They came close to each one of us so that they could lift us to a higher level. Usually, we call for divine help, but very often we do not find much support. But here, they came down so close to us because they had to fulfill the promise they have given to humanity: to establish the Supramental consciousness in Matter. Once that Consciousness is established, all sorrow, suffering and pain will be abolished. What was of prime importance was to bring down the Supramental consciousness. This was the mission for which the Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived, suffered, hoped and worked for all their lives. By their efforts—

Earth shall be made a home of heaven's Light ...

Then shall the world redeemers task be done. (*Savitri*, B XI.C')

It was the most special boon that the earth has asked from the highest, the Supreme. Earth has asked for a transformation most difficult to realise, in most exacting conditions which can be achieved only by the descent of the supreme Truth and Force in Matter. It is when the Supermind will be firmly established in Matter that the work of all the Avatars will be completed. Therefore, their emphasis has always been on the body and the earth. They could have given us the silence and joy of the mind, the bliss of the heart but all that is temporary, not permanent in evolution. But once this body, which is the most resistant and ignorant, catches a glimpse of the Truth and holds on to it, it can never retreat into its old den of inconscience. Once the Supermind is anchored in the body's cells, they are transformed for good. Once it holds on to the truth of the Supramental principle, it will also become immortal. Matter alone knows the secret of manifesting the Divine on a permanent basis. Only on two levels is there the possibility of divine manifestation: on the level of Matter and in the soul. Connecting the atman to the Brahman, to the Supreme, was achieved by the Vedic Rishis; on the level of Matter, it is Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who have achieved this stupendous task.

II

Now we shall take up the second part of “the experiences of the divine Mother in her efforts to adapt herself to the body she has taken and the ignorance and the falsity of the earth on which she has incarnated”. In the

previous section we discussed the intense suffering an incarnation has to go through while in his body even though it is his voluntary decision. On the one hand it is the Avatar's willful choice and on the other it is the Divine paying his debt to man. Humanity suffers and blames God for it. So God descends from time to time as an Avatar in a human body not only to go through this suffering but to absorb it. We have seen many examples in *Savitri* how this is done by the Divine through his body.

This second part is about the Mother's work of transformation in her own body. Prior to this I explained that in this transformative work there is "a kind of separation" between her consciousness as the incarnation and her body. I suppose she had to take this stand because otherwise the human body cannot, in the future, undertake the work of transformation. It would then be regarded as an event which can be achieved only by incarnations and not by human beings. That is why I am talking about the "separation" between the avatic consciousness and that of the sadhak-avatar. It is as if to tell man "look, I am working with the same body as yours with the very same problems leading to suffering and illness." Therefore, to make it more realistic, to bring it more within the reach of the human beings, the Mother had, so to say, created this "split" within her own self. Human beings will know and experience its transformation and will no longer doubt that it is possible only for the avatars. This work of transformation in the physical was taken up by the Mother only after the passing of Sri Aurobindo. We shall see the reason for that.

Sometimes in late sixties or early seventies, in one of her talks the Mother said:

Earlier, fairly long ago, when I became aware of the possibility of the transformation of this body however, I knew well that this body would be transformed – but when I was given the indication and I saw the concrete possibility before me. Then I began to work, and it was really a challenge against Nature who did not want to change, who did not want to be transformed. So she began to revolt, to resist in hundreds of ways to block here, to remove something there, to oppose me in such a way that I would abandon this movement against Her. Nature is formidable in her own domain. And she began to send all sorts of discomfort aimed at me. They would literally hit me and the body would undergo acute anguish and suffering – frightful pain everywhere, everywhere... it was unbearable – it was as if the devil had been let loose with all his tricks to do mischief.¹³

We know that for the first time in the history of human creation, someone is attempting this kind of transformation. So Nature seems to be upset with the Mother and she revolted and opposed the her efforts in every way possible. Nature is used to her own rhythm of seasons, volcanic upsurges, illnesses, death and decay etc. But when the Mother worked against her and challenged her ways, she naturally got very upset.

And the poor body which was not accustomed to endure all these misfortunes, would groan, would cry out in pain and had all sorts of reactions against these attacks. And my only defence was to endure courageously, to try to cut the connection with my body; or else tried to detach myself from the pain. But nothing would work. It was as if Death was staring at me. But I do not give up so easily. Thus a tremendous battle began. A fierce fight ensued, in which neither of us would give up. The effects and consequences were disastrous. The poor body suffered. But like a conqueror it voluntarily endured, even if it meant that it had to perish or get dissolved.¹⁴

This is an indication of what kind of unimaginable and intense work the Mother was doing in her agenda of transformation. She had to face death and its perilous consequences when she said “as if the death was staring at me” – it was truly one of the first major turning points in her physical transformation. In 1961 she had to go through the experience of death anticipated in *Savitri*,

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.

(*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

These lines, the last ones dictated by Sri Aurobindo, foretell about the Mother's experience of the battle with death. At the time when she was standing over this “last desperate verge” most people around her thought that she had crossed over to the other side, so close was she “to extinction's edge.” Her position was “to conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.” In 1961 if she had given in to death, the whole work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, this whole battle against Inconscience and Falsehood would have come to a halt. So, those moments of immense struggle were of great importance not only for

the conquest of death but for the continuation and success of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's work on the earth:

Her single greatness in that last dire scene
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. (*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

It was indeed "a perilous bridge", a crucial moment in evolution of the earth. In 1961, when she was going through this "dire scene" we who were students in the Ashram understood nothing of it. The only difference that we felt was her skipping the "balcony darshan". We had got used to her daily morning darshan, and all of a sudden we were told that she would not come for the balcony darshan for a couple of days! We were wondering why she did not come, what might have happened to her. Then we started getting notices of "No balcony darshan today" then for two days... ten days, fifteen days and then our most cherished balcony darshan got stopped for good. That was when she was undergoing this experience of death standing "sole with Death" "between Time and Timelessness". Had she left her body then, humanity could not have progressed to its next stage of evolution and life would have to "rebuild its base". Such was the "deciding hour in the world's fate".

In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Of a deciding hour in the world's fate,
In her soul's climbing beyond mortal time
When she stands sole with Death or sole with God
Apart upon a silent desperate brink,
Alone with her self and death and destiny
As on some verge between Time and Timelessness
When being must end or life rebuild its base,
Alone she must conquer or alone must fall. (*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

All these lines reverberate with the feeling of loneliness. She has to accomplish all this only by herself. Try to feel that desperate moment when the destiny of the world and of humanity hung on her shoulders alone! In Sri Aurobindo's yoga of transformation this was perhaps the moment of "destiny".

In 1956 the Mother and Sri Aurobindo brought down the Supermind and hooked it to the earth and fulfilled their promise. In this process, Sri Aurobindo had to first sacrifice his body and the Mother took the pioneering work of building up the new body of the Superman. They not only brought

down to the earth the Supramental Force and Consciousness but also took forward earth's evolution to its next step, that of Superman. Originally, they were committed only to bring down the Supramental Force but after 1956, the Mother took upon herself the transformation of the body. She volunteered to take up this hazardous work and in this the first big obstruction was death. Once death was conquered, the other aspects of immortality along with the physical transformation could be dealt with. That is why, perhaps, this passage from *Savitri* gains such immense importance.

Sri Aurobindo knew very well that he would not be there in the body to help her at that destiny's hour and the Mother would have to face the situation all alone:

Alone she must conquer or alone must fall.
No human aid can reach her in that hour,
No armoured gods stand shining at her side,... (*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

Neither men nor gods could help her in this battle. Her physical body had to face this challenge by Death. A similar prophecy was made in the life of Savitri by Narad:

Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
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. (*Savitri*, BVI.C²)

This is the scene when Savitri's mother is in deep pain and sorrow when she comes to know that Satyavan will die after twelve months of his marriage with her daughter. She does not give her consent to this marriage. This is when Narad had to reveal who Savitri truly is and how one day she will face the ultimate battle between life and death and win over that great challenge. Narad Muni tells the Queen Mother not to worry or invoke any God or Goddess for help because none can save Savitri. Narad could foresee the future and foretell that she alone will save herself and save the world:

O queen, stand back from that stupendous scene,
Come not between her and her hour of Fate.
Her hour must come and none can intervene:...(*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

After these comforting words of Narad, the Queen Mother finally agreed not to dissuade Savitri from marrying Satyavan. She came to know the purpose of Savitri's birth – her mission was akin to the Mother's: to transform death and earth's destiny:

Sometimes one life is charged with earth's destiny,
It cries not for succour from the time-bound powers.
Alone she is equal to her mighty task. (*Savitri*, BVI.C2)

Of her experience of April 1961, there are detailed descriptions in *Mother's Agenda*. A very senior sadhak who had witnessed that "hour" in her life told that the Mother's body was connected to life with one single "string", it was a thin ray of consciousness which was between her body and the Higher Powers. That is why she had instructed all those who were working in her room not to touch her body or disturb it in any way. If anyone would disturb her in such a condition, her body could lose that very subtle thin link with the world. These were moments of spiritual experiences we cannot possibly understand, but all these are documented in *Savitri* for future humanity to show that someone struggled, faced the battle with Death and returned to life and earth.

Earlier when Sri Aurobindo was in his body, ...not once did I have to make an effort of transformation, told the Mother. Whenever there was the slightest difficulty, I simply repeated *my Lord, my Lord, my Lord...* I just thought of him and it went away...Physical pain – he annulled it. As to troubles hampering the body, old recurrent habits, I only had to tell him – off they went. And through me, he did the same for others.¹⁵

How very wonderful for all those who can open themselves to their force! The Mother's body would be the first one to receive Sri Aurobindo's force and light and through this channel the world would get rid of its pain and suffering. The body of the Mother would amplify that force or vibration and spread it to humanity. So she says:

He always said that he and I were doing the Work (in fact, it was he who did it), and all that was asked of others were faith and surrender, nothing more. If they gave themselves in total trust, the Work was done automatically in them.¹⁶

This is the least that is asked of us in our spiritual growth. When we say we have to realise our psychic being or transform our nature, practically none of us can do it. By faith and surrender to the Mother, love for the Mother, trust in the Mother we can realise it because her consciousness envelopes all of us — whether we are aware of it or not — and therefore it is she who does the yoga for us and through us, if we can allow her "the space" to do so. Then we can have physical, vital, mental, psychological or any other kind of help we need. To be just connected to her is not sufficient; we have to act in faith and

with dynamic surrender and with a constant and conscious remembering with love. We are not asked to meditate for hours or go on pilgrimages, or temples, or churches, or follow complicated rituals. We are just required to say “Ma, this is for you, I am doing this work for you: I have a pain, take it away, I want to be healthy and happy to work for you Ma; this is my limitation, change me.” Just keep surrendering to her and nothing else at all!

We all understand what tapasya means and all spiritual seekers, yogis and Rishis have gone through such deep penances and tapasya. All that is almost unimaginable for us. And we are so tremendously privileged that here she seems to say, “I have come down all the way to you. I am touching you, connecting to you and then telling you to do nothing but just to call me and say, ‘Ma, take me’”. Such grace is inconceivable. Let us not forget what she had said: “even the gods whom you revere so much, perform tapasya in order to have a glimpse of me.”¹⁷ With her constant grace and abundant love for us, she makes things so much easier for us if only we had faith and could surrender to her. It was almost the same for herself:

As for my body, it felt one in consciousness with Sri Aurobindo’s presence, depending on it without the least worry. It felt that its life depended on it; its progress, its consciousness, its action, its power, all depended on it. And there were no questions.

The idea that Sri Aurobindo might leave his body, that that particular way of being might come to an end was simply unthinkable. They had to put him into a box and put the box into the Samadhi for my body to realise that it had really happened. I didn’t want to believe it when the doctor said, “It’s over.”

Nothing, no words can describe what a collapse it was for my body when Sri Aurobindo left. It’s only because his conscious will entered my body, left one body and entered the other... I was standing facing his body and I felt – materially felt – the friction of his will and knowledge enter into me. “You will continue and accomplish my work. One of us had to leave, but you will continue the work,” he said to this body. That’s what kept me alive.

But the entire physical consciousness had its certainty and security pulled from under. The base of absoluteness and certainty with which I carried out my work had collapsed.

Later on, I understood that this need for certainty is one of the means to spur human beings toward another condition. These needs are the seeds,

the germs of evolution, as it were. They compel us to progress.

The real truth is that it projected me directly toward the Supreme, without intermediary. As long as I lived with

Sri Aurobindo, I felt the Absolute through him. Essentially, from my experience of the Supreme through Sri Aurobindo's manifestation, I was thrust into a direct experience, without intermediary. ¹⁹

This is something we never knew. We could never imagine. What we learn here applies to Savitri too, for the same thing happened to her also.

She knew that visible Death was standing there
And Satyavan had passed from her embrace...

(*Savitri*, BVIII.C3)

A Presence was there that filled the listening world;

A central All assumed her boundless life...

That mightiness assumed a symbol form:...

It stood above her calm, immobile, mute. (*Savitri*, BIX.C1)

Now I would like to take you through some of the transformative works and her struggle. We spoke a little regarding her doubts, now the anti-divine forces came and whispered in her ears, "What are you going to do? He has left his body." Thus after sowing the seed of doubt they tried to bring in her sense of fear and failure:

I went down into a place in the human consciousness, hence necessarily in my body – I have never seen anything more shaky, fearful, weak, and small! It must be a part of the cellular consciousness, something that lives in apprehension, dread, anxiety. It was really, really terrifying.¹⁹

Please remember we are talking about the physical consciousness, the physical body and the physical cells. These are not psychological, emotional, vital or spiritual problems. It is purely about the physical body. So she is talking about the body consciousness which is so shaky, fearful with no confidence in itself and afraid that it is going to die with the least pain and suffering. It is so uncertain of itself because it is being constantly dominated by the vital and the mind. Left to itself the body is much stronger and healthier. It is our wrong education since childhood because of which we never trusted the capacity of the body, its intuition and its receptivity and always relied on a doctor's prescription for the smallest ailments! What happens to the poor people, the taxi drivers, the slum dwellers, the construction workers, the load carriers? They drink water from anywhere, eat food from anywhere, live in unhygienic

conditions, live with no proper shelter – they do not go to doctors for antibiotics at the drop of a hat! When you question them about all these things they say it is a small problem and that they will get over it next day! This is their faith in the body because of which they are more healthy. Our so-called civilised and educated class somehow teaches the children all wrong concepts, finally taking away all confidence from the body and any little pain, an ache is felt acutely as big suffering. So the Mother calls it so poor, “so terrifying” and “it is really terrible to be at the mercy of such things. To change that one has to go down at the level which is what I am in the process of doing.”²⁰ In another context she says,

The situation remains the same. Right in the subconscious – a subconscious, oh, hopelessly weak and dull and enslaved to everything. It unfolds before me night after night, night after night. Last night, it was indescribable! It seems to have no limits! Of course, the body is affected by all this, poor thing! It is its subconscious, yet it isn't personal. It is personal and not personal: it becomes personal when it affects the body. The accumulation of impressions recorded and stored on top of one another in the subconscious is unbelievable. Outwardly, it isn't even noticeable; the waking consciousness is unaware of them. But they keep on coming and coming, piling up on top of one another. Horrifying!

So I understand why people have never tried to change that. Stir up that quagmire? No thanks! It takes a lot, a lot of courage! Oh, it's so much easier to escape, to say, “This isn't my problem. I belong to higher spheres.” Anyway, so far it's obvious that no one, not a single person has succeeded. And I understand why! When you find yourself confronted to that, you wonder how anything could withstand it. My body was strong, solid, full of endurance and energy, and it's beginning to feel a bit uneasy.²¹

So, for transformation one must descend to that level and that is the terrible thing. Otherwise, the subconscious will continue to remain as it is unaltered. Some will say “why the hurry? Wait for Nature to do it.” The Mother replies:

Yes, Nature will do it in a few million years, wasting countless lives and things in the process. To her, a few million years are nothing, a passing breeze. Anyhow, I was sent here to do it, so I am trying to do it. That's all. If it hadn't been for this, I would have left with Sri Aurobindo. This is the only reason I stayed on – because it had to be done and he told me to do it. So I am doing it.²²

It is terrifying and horrifying, but it has to be done because the cure of all human problems is there in the subconscious. All ailments and suffering, everything is embedded in the subconscious. Therefore unless and until we go down and pull out the roots from the unconscious and tear it off, humanity will not be happy or without suffering for long. It will continue to be in pain and suffering. The only way was to pull out the roots of suffering — a work which was perhaps not attempted by previous avatars.

So for the very first time, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have entered that forbidden zone. Even the yogis of yore were scared of this region and left it for Nature to do it in its own time. They wanted to remain blissful in the Brahmaloaka. Sri Aurobindo hastened the process of the descent of the Supermind for this purpose. If it had been left to Nature to take this next step, it would have taken thousands of years more to bring down the Supermind. What would have happened to humanity in the meantime with all the nuclear threats we hear of every day? Therefore, Sri Aurobindo had to bring in this new force, this new consciousness to hasten the transformation of the earth. In 1961 the Mother had a very powerful experience of this Force:

In the middle of the night before last, I woke up with the feeling of having a much more voluminous and powerful being in my body than usual. It was as if it could scarcely be held inside me and tended to spill over. It felt so compactly powerful as to be almost uncomfortable.

It lasted the rest of the night, and the next day I had considerable trouble containing an overwhelming power that caused spontaneous reactions disproportionate to a human body and made me speak in such strong terms that it sounded like anger. I found it difficult to control myself. “That last attack must have weakened me terribly!” I said to myself, “I don’t have the strength to contain this Power.” So I insisted on calm.

Then, yesterday afternoon, after I went upstairs to walk, a Force suddenly began manifesting, which was the same as what I had felt within me, but even greater. It began whirling upon the earth and within circumstances like a cyclone of compact power moving in with the intent of changing everything! Things had to change at all costs!

I looked at that and thought, “Hmm, this is getting dangerous. If it continues like this, it’ll start a war or a revolution or some natural catastrophe.” More importantly, this consciousness has been missioned to transform the earth through the supramental Force by avoiding, as much as possible, all catastrophes. The work is to be done as luminously and

harmoniously as the earth will allow, even if it means going slower.

So I tried to counteract that whirlwind of power by applying the highest consciousness to it, that of perfect serenity. This Force wanted to attack all darkness: ideas, people, movements, events, whatever was stained or shadowy. And it kept on going, a power so formidable that I had to keep a strong concentration, with both hands clenched.²³

This is how the Mother contained the Force because for her the Supermind will work on earth as harmoniously as the world will allow it. So we can imagine, terrorism, bloodshed and violence that we see around us is relatively much tempered down as the Supermind's action is at work. Devastation could have been much worse and vaster otherwise. Earth and humankind can rest assured that whatever happens in the Mother's body gets transferred to them in due course bringing an effective transformation in them. This is what was assured by the Mother:

This body is capable of passing over to others all it realises. It has a capacity of putting certain people or things all around the earth in contact with the experience of focusing the vibration of the consciousness on to them. That is what Sri Aurobindo never stopped repeating.²⁴

III

Now we shall focus on the sadhana of the Mother's body. Here she is a sadhak and not the supreme Avatar: she is working exclusively on her body. As a sadhika she is constantly asking the Lord for his help and the Lord helps. Whatever happens in her body has an action in someone's body on earth, may be the body of the earth itself:

The purpose of this body is now simply to be at the Command and the Will of the Lord, so it can accomplish as much groundwork as possible. But it isn't the Goal at all. For we don't have the slightest idea of what the supramental life is. Therefore, we don't know if this body, this flesh, can change enough to adapt itself or not – and to tell the truth, I am not worried about it. It's not something that preoccupies me too much. The body's capacities will change before its appearance changes; the appearance always changes last.

What really matters is how the Consciousness can use this body. "The problem that concerns me is building that supramental consciousness so *it* becomes the being. That's what's important".²⁵

It is interesting to note that the Mother does not want to foresee and declare what will happen in the next ten years. She always tries to live in the present. Here, she doesn't speak about any other higher Knowledge or Power. This is purely the body consciousness which is totally surrendered to the Lord. The body does not think, like the mind it does not imagine things, it doesn't foresee. It just lives from moment to moment in full trust and faith in the Lord. She would say,

How far will we be able to go? I don't know. I feel that if I last until my hundredth birthday, that is, another six years, much will be accomplished. Something significant and decisive will be attained. I am not saying that the body will become transformed (I have no such signs), but the physical, material consciousness will become supramentalised.²⁶

I can perhaps narrate an interesting incident connected to this attitude of the Mother. In 1972 I had written an article titled "Towards Auroworld" on the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary. I was much inspired with the idea of human unity because at that time I was living in Auroville. In this article, I dared to give the Mother a "time-frame" to transform her body – it was fifty years – from 1972! So I imagined around 2025 she will be transformed into a golden body! Since it had to be published in an anthology I wanted to ask the Mother if my idea was correct or way out of track. So I took the relevant paragraph to her in April or so in 1972 and I requested her to listen to that particular paragraph where I wrote about it. After listening to it, she touched her left hand and said "this physical body transformed... by then? Well I don't know. I am not sure what will happen." Saying so she slightly pinched her left forearm.

I was so overwhelmed by her simplicity and utter surrender to the Lord. She had taken up that stupendous task of physical transformation, a work which none had ever dared to attempt, and yet she was so humble and surrendered. We, the ordinary human beings, learn a lesson of humility. We ought to learn the powerful effect of surrender. On our infinitesimal level, we too could tell, "Ma, I do not know anything about sadhana, about my psychic being, about mental silence or how to purify myself. Ma, I know nothing – you do it for me, you tell me what I should do, how I should do." Interestingly this is what she had emphasised on when she spoke to a sadhak of the Ashram:

One day I asked Mother. "I have been doing the yoga for many years but I am not absolutely certain how to do the yoga of

Sri Aurobindo. I read all the books and try to do the yoga but I am not certain how far I have progressed". I asked the Mother to help me.

"You are doing it all wrong", She said.

"But what shall I do"? I asked.

She replied, "I will do the yoga for you". I was thrilled! "What do I have to do"? I then asked.

"Give yourself over to me and I will do it for you," She said.

I asked "How do I surrender"? She asked me "Do you sincerely want to"? I answered "Yes, certainly Mother".

Then the Mother asked "When you get up in the morning what is the first thing you do"?

I said "I brush my teeth." She asked, "how do you brush your teeth?"

I wondered, "how? Like everybody else does."

She said, "then you're doing it unconsciously. Instead, think of me while you're doing it. This that I am doing it. Or when you're washing your face, think that I am doing it with you, or when you're eating that I'm eating with you, that I am enjoying your food with you." She added, "when you go to sleep that it is the time when you should be very conscious of me. Let me put you to sleep and then the whole night you will have a conscious sleep. When you awake and begin your day you will then begin it in a more conscious way."²⁷

The lesson we learn from this is that we have to allow her to do the sadhana within us. If we try to do it with all our struggle and effort, we shall not succeed. The secret is in absolute reliance and dependence on her so that we do not develop ego thinking that we are meditating, we are doing yoga, we are going to the temple daily. The ego prevents us from opening to the Divine. It likes to push us away from the Divine. Therefore, the Mother says that from the smallest to the biggest thing, from brushing our teeth or allowing her to have breakfast with us to bigger achievements in life, we must let her do everything in our life. For this we have to keep ourselves open. What does that mean? Does it mean meditating many hours a day, or daily reading spiritual scriptures for three hours? No, it is much simpler than that. In essence it is to let Her do the sadhana for us.

To return to our narration of the Mother's attempts at her own physical transformation, it is understood that she went as far as Nature and the old physical laws would allow her to go. As

Sri Aurobindo wrote, this is how the Avatars first do sadhana themselves within their own body to authenticate the experience and then they pass it on to humanity. Now, those who aspire for this physical transformation will have to do much less work as the process and the path have been already worked out for them.

Apart from these steps, there are many more steps in this process of physical transformation which are important but which cannot be covered in this session of our talks. However, to take an example: let us look at the manner in which the Mother worked on her physical cells. Here is what she says:

I take up one cell, it is a very small cell, like this, microscopic, which one cannot see with a naked eye but I possess that power and that vision. Like this, I take up one tiny little cell and I open it to the transforming light of the divine consciousness...this is how I work and I charge each cell with this divine consciousness and then I take up another cell, and then another, and then another. I continue to charge them in the same way.²⁸

This is what she has been doing – infusing each cell with the Divine consciousness or to put in a different way, drilling the Supramental consciousness in them. She called it “drilling” because perhaps the cell is something hard, not biologically but in an occult manner, owing to the layers of ignorance it is covered in. It is hard to pierce the cell just as it is hard to penetrate the human mind. So the Mother had to “drill” the Supramental consciousness into these cells and the drilling mechanism was to chant the mantra, *Om Namō Bhagavate*. From the core of each cell the vibration of this mantra radiated into the body. But this was not a work she was doing daily from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. It was her constant sadhana; she continued with her mantra-japa even when people went to her for their birthdays or discussed administrative issues or any other office work. In this state of receptivity, the body can make a perfect surrender and repeat only “What thou willest, only what thou willest.” This is what, I feel, is so magnificent about the Mother that she has herself shown us every step of sadhana – how to surrender totally to the will of the Lord. When this becomes a prayer “Lord, what thou willest” then surely it is His will which acts, works, transforms and guides the body; and the body just surrenders and obeys. Let us remember that it was her body that was directly surrendering and it was not done through her mind.

Secondly, along with all these practices, the Mother attempted “the work of transforming the organs, the organs which are inside one after the other. I

began this work so that the outer means of subsistence by something will no longer be indispensable... they will draw energy from the Universal Force.”²⁹

This is actually the process she would work upon to eliminate the function of organs. Just as the cells are being infused with the supramental consciousness, simultaneously, universal energy is being pumped into each of the chakras. The chakras have already got this energy but when do they release it? It is when they take over the function of the organs. The heart, lungs and stomach etc., are doing a particular function and giving energy to the body for its survival. Now if this same energy can be supplied by other means, what do we need our organs for? So when she said that she was changing the organs, it implied replacing them with higher energy. Biologically, it will be something like the dropping of the tail by Nature at the emergence of the human species. A tail was no longer needed for humans. Likewise, all that is no longer required for this body's sustenance will be done away with. She says that she is working on the organs and one by one they will be replaced by luminous centres of energy. The most difficult task was to replace the skeleton. It is the skeleton which gives the right posture to the whole body. It has to be replaced by a force which is at the same time both rigid and flexible. There are then the bones and the blood supply – how to replace them? She was trying to figure out all these issues.

Well, this is the essential experience, the work she has done. But whatever is incomplete for that too, she says, “He has arranged everything so that this work of transformation is accomplished upon earth.”³⁰

Questions and Answers:

1. The Supramental force is already in our cells, but in this camp I understand that our body is not able to receive this force. Could you please explain it for me?

Yes, this concept needs a clarification. I have been to Berlin many times and I understand exactly what you say. In fact, I know people who claim that the supramental force is working in their cells and they are in contact with the Supermind. Well, let them be blessed by the Supermind and I would not like to refuse them their blissful ignorance, but the truth is that the supramental force is there in the consciousness of the earth just like we have sunlight around us, we all enjoy the heat of the sun around us. Unless we go and stand under the direct rays of the sun can we say “the sun touches my body directly.” We are now inside this building, for example, covered with clothes and sweaters and shawls – our bodies are not exposed to the sun. Likewise, we are

also enjoying the heat of the Supermind on earth. But we are not yet exposed to the Supermind at all. We have too many “coverings” upon us, that is why we say that our body is not yet ready. It is still under the cover of ignorance. We are opening ourselves slowly towards that Supermind; we are trying to feel its warmth.

How do you think and assess the tremendous progress in science, technology, biotechnology, medical therapies, biological sciences and so many other fields? Did we see this kind of breakthrough in the past centuries? Everything is moving with rapidity only because of this supramental force. Under its influence more and more of such potential and new discoveries are coming up now in our times. Look at the concept of “cloning” itself, it is unthinkably new. Chromosomes with new characteristics and tendencies are being experimented upon. It is because of the Supermind we are able to discover all this new effect on the body itself. Science is becoming more and more efficient. Scientists are trying to create test-tube babies and discover new possibilities of procreation. We cannot imagine the potential hidden in the human body!

Until now this possibility itself was not there. There was the “heat” of the Overmind brought down by Sri Krishna, the “heat” of Christ who brought down the psychic being, the “heat” of Sri Rama who brought down the mind but that is not enough. These were the preparatory “materials”: to melt Matter you need the “heat” of the Supermind. What Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have done is to clear away the clouds from the supramental sun. What the Mother did on the 29th February 1956 was that she broke the massive golden door and now the supramental light is available for all. The world is bathing in the new consciousness of the Supermind. Now we can expect anything from science and technology, biology, the technology of computers, and even a great leap in human consciousness. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo calls it “The hour of God”. This is that magic hour when man can progress fast in his inner consciousness. The supramental has touched the earth with its magic wand to create wonders. Look at the mobile, the electronic chips. Everything is turning into “nano technology”. I wonder where Matter is heading to? It is making itself almost invisible to the naked eye. Who is pushing Matter? Who is bringing out its highest potential? So, Sri Aurobindo urges man to make a little more effort in this hour to leap in his consciousness just as science has done.

But for that a long preparation is needed. Actually there are two ways — the

triple transformation and the direct contact with the body. First, we have already been discussing that of psychicisation, spiritualisation and then supramentalisation of this body. From 1915 to 1917, Sri Aurobindo had already written about this process and the method of practice, when he was writing *The Life Divine*. But after 50/60 years, when the Mother began this yoga of transformation on her own body she worked out a different process to reach the same goal. She experienced the possibility by which the Supermind could come directly in the body. In a way it sounds like a huge shortcut, or a “bypass”, but it is extremely difficult to imagine. Now she makes it possible for Supermind to come directly into the body cells, provided our physical ego completely vanishes. I did not read here those parts of the conversation here where she said that on that particular “day” she had experienced the complete disappearance of her physical ego. Now can any one of us achieve that? It is neither our mind nor our emotions. Mentally can I think that I am not a body? It is the hardest and most difficult task to go beyond the body’s individuality. How can I lose it and still say that I am Ananda? So, the understanding of your friends in Berlin regarding Supermind is quite erroneous, I must conclude.

2. Can you please comment on this beautiful phrase, “measure of her soul”?

Yes, I think I can tell you a very personal incident in connection with this phrase. On every birthday of mine I used to make something to present to the Mother. On my birthday in 1968 I had decided to make a sketch of the four aspects of the Mother. I bought a few large white Ashram hand-made paper sheets. On the top sheet I drew a big symbol of the Mother and in the centre of the symbol I sketched in Chinese ink the Mother’s face. And on four other sheets I drew an imitation of the four aspects as drawn by Krishnalal, an Ashram artist. It was indeed pretty difficult for me to do that as I was not an artist, but I suppose the exactness did not matter as much as the devotion and dedication that was poured into the work. On my birthday I went to her and placed the whole roll of drawings on her lap and she looked at all the four aspects page by page with a great attention and then asked me “Which one is Maheshwari?” I turned the page again to show her the sketch of Maheshwari. Then, when she had gone through all of them with much patience, care and love, I took liberty and asked her for a favour. In those days very often we, as young ones, used to ask many things from her without much thinking. So I requested her to put her signature on the first sheet below my

sketch of her own portrait. At that time I did not know whether it was my ego prompting me to ask for that or a child's aspiration. But she did not sign saying that "you have not caught my soul".

I really felt sad and disappointed not because she did not give her signature but because she expected me to find her soul! I was young and did not understand much about spirituality then. All we did was to love her. It felt like a drop of water being asked to measure the ocean. How could I ever capture or catch her soul? From her room I came down and went straight to Nolinida room. I reported to him exactly what she had said to me and showed him the sketches. He explained to me that "catching her soul" did not mean exactly "to catch it, since no one on this earth can do that. What she meant was that I should remember her all the time so that I could be constantly in her consciousness which indeed is possible to do".

3. *Do these lines remind you of any more incidents from your childhood days?*

A friend and yet too great wholly to know,
She walked in their front towards a greater light,
Their leader and queen over their hearts and souls,
One close to their bosoms, yet divine and far. (*Savitri*, BIV.C⁵)

Let me tell you straightaway that whenever we are depressed we should read this passage. It's so powerful that it almost manifests the Mother in front of us. Reading these I can vouch and say that this was the Mother in flesh and blood whom we saw and loved. Indeed here was "a friend" but one whom we could not know much. Yet in those days whenever youngsters went to her, she would advise them like a friend and a loving mother. Her greatness was that she did all this without displaying any of her status as Avatar. We never needed to go to her supreme level, because she came down to contact us on our own levels.

Further Sri Aurobindo writes: "Pushing towards aims they hardly could conceive." (*Savitri*, BIV.C⁵) She always worked towards an end which we could neither conceive nor understand. In my young days, she told me a few things which I did not understand at all. But the love and concern she showed was very clear. This is how she gave each one of us a particular goal and a path to follow in life. Taking advantage of her physical presence I used to ask her many questions. One of them was about my own future work and responsibilities. She knew the past, present and future of humanity. But, to the individual she would reveal only so much as one could absorb. To me she said

that my future would be revealed to me as I go along. There was of course, the intervention of the Grace that I've felt almost constantly in my life, the marvel of her guidance. Truly, step by step, little by little, she revealed what was meant for me.

Let me continue to read the lines from the ones that you just quoted. They are as beautiful:

Yet forced to be the satellites of her sun
They moved unable to forego her light,
Desiring they clutched at her with outstretched hands
Or followed stumbling in the paths she made. (*Savitri*, BIV.C2)

Perhaps this is what we are supposed to do as says Sri Aurobindo in the next line:

Or longing with their self of life and flesh
They clung to her for hearts nourishment and support:...
(*Savitri*, BIV.C५)

Ultimately, this is the only thing we can do, which is to cling to her with all our heart as she is the only nourishment of our entire being and support of all our journey pushing us towards our greater destiny. Whether we can understand, recognise or acknowledge this is another question but we are fully convinced that she is our only support and nourishment.

Further the lines are:

The rest they could not see in visible light;
Vaguely they bore her inner mightiness.
Or bound by the senses and the longing heart,
Adoring with a turbid human love,
They could not grasp the mighty spirit she was
Or change by closeness to be even as she. (*Savitri*, BIV.C५)

Our adoration and love for the Divine springs from our turbid love that always carries demands and expectations from the divine. How many of us ask the Divine for the sake of the Divine alone? It is because of this narrowness and stupidity that we are not able to grasp the mighty spirit of the Divine. I have noticed how at times even if the Mother was close to us we were not able to change our nature. Something in us kept escaping. Look at the following lines:

Some felt her with their souls and thrilled with her,
A greatness felt near yet beyond mind's grasp;

To see her was a summons to adore,

To be near her drew a high communion's force. (*Savitri*, BIV.C^v)

This is our true Mother: the wonderful face of the Divine. Even we, in our infinitesimal way, felt that "being near her drew a high communion's force" and to see her was a "summons to adore". This has now increased manifold. As children we used to run everywhere to have a glimpse of her, now we try to feel her and her radiant presence within our hearts wherever we are. I can never forget how we used to be "hungry" for one glance from her. I remember how I ran sometimes from the Ashram balcony gate to the tennis ground gate. All for one glimpse of her! At that time we were not aware at all of her divinity. It was my soul that was captivated and now it is my mind which is trying to understand and interpret what I had experienced then.

So men worship a god too great to know,
Too high, too vast to wear a limiting shape;
They feel a Presence and obey a might,
Adore a love whose rapture invades their breasts;
To a divine ardour quickening the heart-beats,
A law they follow greatening heart and life.
Opened to the breath is a new diviner air,
Opened to man is a freer, happier world:
He sees high steps climbing to Self and Light.
Her divine parts the soul's allegiance called:
It saw, it felt, it knew the deity. (*Savitri*, BIV.C2)

This is why I am telling you that it was our soul which saw her because as children we had the advantage of having our psychic in front. That period was guided by the inner truth of our life. Now we wonder if those were real times or a dream state!

They feel a Presence and obey a might,
Adore a love whose rapture invades their breasts;

(*Savitri*, BIV.C^v)

I think this is so true! She really invaded our hearts with her love giving us such a rapture which pervaded our lives with a diviner air in a freer and happier world. Unfortunately, that diviner air is clouded now by violence and torture and turmoil of the world's happenings and instead of the psychic it is now our mind and emotions that govern us.

Again, what I can recall is that we never asked her for anything as we were

happy with her touch and were overwhelmed by her inexhaustible sweetness. We turned to her just like a sunflower that keeps turning towards the sun for the light. Such was the blessed period of Grace. Well, later, as we grew up, problems of life cropped up, then we began to pray, ask questions but the underlying motto of our life remained intact – to give and offer ourselves to her and ask for nothing more. I wonder if ever again those days will ever return when our dreams and aspirations would be fulfilled!

One greater than themselves, too wide for their ken,
Their minds could not understand nor wholly know,
Their lives replied to hers, moved at her words:...

(Savitri, BIV.Cʻ)

This is what we were taught. Each and every thing that we needed, from the smallest to the biggest, we asked her. Nothing was too trivial for her. I even asked her when I wanted to buy some goldfish for my aquarium. Only with her permission I could go to Madras to buy the aquarium fish. Her word was final for us. I wanted to go to the USA for further studies. She replied to me with alternatives and explained the consequences of going abroad and remaining here in the Ashram and asked me to decide. But she guided me to take the right decision according to her will. She never imposed her decision on us. In every way we always sought her word and her final decision and tried to follow it to our best capacity. But as we grew up, slowly the difficulties arose as our mind and vital tried to take over. Sadhana became necessary because the spontaneity of offering receded and the struggle appeared with a disharmony between all parts of our being. Look at these beautiful lines again:

Their lives, their natures moved compelled by hers ...
They lived in her, they saw the world with her eyes.

(Savitri, BIV.Cʻ)

In the earlier days there were great sadhaks in the Ashram who could have claimed that they saw the world through her eyes and lived in her. For people like us with all our weaknesses we are sure of one thing: she has held our hand and it is she who has chosen our path. The following two lines can summarise our inner aspiration.

They felt a godhead and obeyed a call,
Answered to her lead and did her work in the world;...

(Savitri, BIV.Cʻ)

This is what I am trying to do to the best of my ability and obey this beautiful

“godhead” and to bear “The splendid yoke of her beauty and her love”.
(*Savitri*, BIV.Cʻ)

You see, we have all these limitations and weaknesses of tired longing hearts, but then we were equally so very happy with “the splendid yoke of her beauty and love” that we never wanted to lose her. This is the reason, I may have told you once, why her leaving the was such a shock that it made me totally numb. It was most unimaginable for me that the splendid yoke of her beauty and her love will no more be available! When we were young students we did not understand the philosophy of transformation but we were told about the immortality of the Mother’s body for it was undergoing transformation. She loved us so much that we took it for granted that she would never leave her body and that she would transform and extend the life of her body. How could she leave her body? That was the question that troubled me for long many months.

Others pursued her with life’s blind desires
And claiming all of her as their lonely own,
Hastened to engross her sweetness meant for all.

(*Savitri*, BIV.Cʻ)

We have had these kinds of people in the Ashram who wanted to have more and more time with the Mother. Their attitude was as if the Mother was there only for them. Therefore, Champaklaji often had to ask people who were spending too much time sitting in front of her to leave the room telling them that there were others waiting for her. Such an attitude of “claiming her” was nothing but a vital longing. When the psychic contact gets established, then one does not like to have a claim on her like this.

As earth claims light for its lone separate need...
And to their smallness craved a like response.

(*Savitri*, BIV.Cʻ)

We always wanted to bring down the Divine to our level and pester her to fulfil our needs. People even started getting married in her presence! We never tried to raise ourselves to a higher level to meet her but we always pulled her down, therefore

Sri Aurobindo says:

Or they repined that she surpassed their grip ...
Her glory and grace that had enslaved their souls.

(*Savitri*, BIV.Cʻ)

Indeed those who are enchanted by her are the lucky ones. That's the essence of an incarnation. On the one hand she says that she has come down so that we can contact her. On the other she says that she has descended to take away all our sufferings. She had come down on earth veiling her power so that humanity can bear her radiance. This means that she, in her luminous transcendence, is too powerful for us to touch or even be able to see. Until she chose to take upon herself the physical sheath we could not bear her light and power nor could we connect with her transcendental Form:

You have no idea that the whole world, the whole world, the entire universe bows down to me imploring me in an act of adoration to serve me. You do not know who I am, who has descended into ignorance among you who has consented to be human, to take up a physical body amongst you all. You have no idea as to who is there before you. Well, even the Gods whom you revere so much perform Tapasya in order to have a glimpse of me. It is for me and through me that the whole universe exists and it vibrates in my consciousness. It is through me that all living beings and inanimate things and all that you see in manifestation acts and progresses. There is nothing that is not within me. I am the cause. It is in me that all things disappear. Everything, everything is expressed in me and takes refuge in me. Those who know me little, give their entire life to find me.

...I am above the whole manifestation.³¹

Let us now meditate on that form of the Mother:

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12. Ibid., 262
13. *The Supreme*: 44

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23. Ibid., 61-62
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