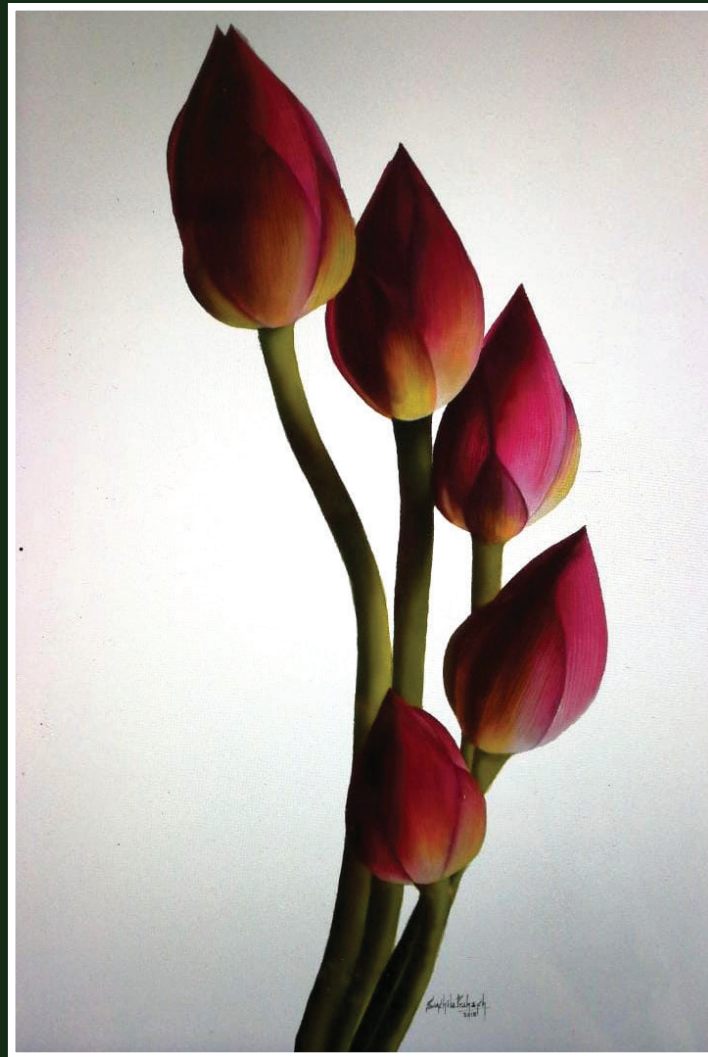


# *New Race*

***A Journal of Integral & Future Studies***



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*New Race*

*blessings*  


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Founder Editor : (Late) Prof. V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY

Editor-in-Chief: V. ANANDA REDDY

Assistant Editor: SHRUTI BIDWAIKAR

Pagination: VIPUL KISHORE

COVER PAINTING: SUSHILA PRAKASH

Email: [newracejournal@gmail.com](mailto:newracejournal@gmail.com); Phone: 040 27098414

On the web: [www.instituteofhumanstudy.org](http://www.instituteofhumanstudy.org)

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# NEW RACE

## A Journal of Integral & Future Studies

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## *From the Editors's desk*

Time seems to move with lightning speed since the beginning of this century, more with this decade. Earth saw the pandemic come and go. Human beings died and some survived, rewarded with a second life. Wars for oil and power have devastated nations and innocent lives of people, animals and the natural world. Disturbing forces seem to trouble the earth, causing jungle fires, floods, famines, extreme cold, extreme heat, typhoons and hurricanes, and cyclones. It is as if Nature and Humanity are competing, as to who will win the race, who will prevail, human beings with their nuclear weapons, or Nature with her disasters. What is this race for? Is Nature trying to send us a message?

While the forces of destruction are raising their head, a spiritual force seems to sooth the world. The Pandemic and the war have made a dent in people's hearts and minds. They are turning to meditation and yoga and are searching for answers in the inner dimensions of life.

Where groups of people are fighting among themselves, the cry for world peace is gaining ground.

We are indeed at such a juncture in the human evolution where the resistance is the highest and such would be the power and the strife to overcome it. One feels hopeful that the greater the darkness the nearer the light.

The Mother once quoted a poet, who gave a great hope to the despairing world. I believe that we have much to learn from it.

Despair not in your grief, for a joyous hour will come and take it all away;  
The burning simoon may blow, and yet change into a gentle breeze;  
A dark cloud may rise, but it passes away and brings no flood;  
A fire may kindle and yet be smothered, leaving chest and casket  
untouched;  
Pain comes but also goes.

Therefore be patient when troubles come, for Time is the father of wonders;

And from the peace of God hope for many blessings to come. It is indeed the Mother Sri Aurobindo who have brought this hope and positivity to the world with their tapasya.

We dedicate this issue to the Mother.

*Shruti*



# TRUTH



*Photography by Debaleena Bhattacharjee & Debashish Mukherjee*

We may not know him as God, we may know him as Nature,  
our Higher Self, Infinity, some ineffable goal.  
It was so that Buddha approached Him;  
so approaches him the rigid Adwaitin.  
He is accessible even to the Atheist.  
To the materialist He disguises Himself in matter.  
For the Nihilist he waits ambushed in the bosom of Annihilation.

Sri Aurobindo

# Introduction to *Gita Rahasya*

---

*Sri Aurobindo*

What is the message of the Gita and what its working value, its spiritual utility to the human mind of the present day, after the long ages that have elapsed since it was written and the great subsequent transformation's of thought and experience? The human mind moves always forward, alters its view-point and enlarges its thought-substance, and the effect of these changes is to render past systems of thinking obsolete or, when they are preserved, to extend, to modify and subtly or visibly to alter their value. The vitality of an ancient doctrine consists in the extent to which it naturally lends itself to such a treatment; for that means that whatever may have been the limitations or the obsolescences of the form of its thought, the truth of substance, the truth of living vision and experience on which its system was built, is still sound and retains a permanent validity and significance. The Gita is a book that has worn extraordinarily well, and it is almost as fresh and still in its real substance quite as new, because always renewable in experience, as when it first appeared in or was written into the frame of the 'Mahabharata'. It is still received in India as one of the great bodies of doctrine that most authoritatively govern religious thinking; and its teaching is acknowledged as of the highest value if not wholly accepted, by almost all shades of religious belief and opinion. Its influence is not merely philosophic or academic but immediate and living, an influence both for thought and action, and its ideas are actually at work as a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and a culture. It has even been said recently by a great voice that all we need of spiritual truth for the spiritual life is to be found in the Gita. It would be to encourage the superstition of the book to take too literally that utterance. The truth of the spirit is infinite and cannot be circumscribed in that manner. Still it may be said that most of the main clues are there and that after all the later developments of spiritual experience and discovery, we can still return to it for a large inspiration and guidance. Outside India too it is universally acknowledged as one of the world's great scriptures, although in Europe its thought is better understood than its secret of spiritual practice.

Neither Mr. Tilak nor his works really require any presentation of foreword.

His Orion and his Arctic Home have acquired at once a worldwide recognition and left as strong a mark as can at all be imprinted on the ever-shifting sands of oriental research. His work on the Gita, no mere commentary, but an original criticism and presentation of ethical truths, is a monumental work. The first prose writing of the front rank in weight and importance in the Marathi language, and likely to become a classic. This one book sufficiently proves that had he devoted his energies in this direction, he might easily have filled a large place in the history of Marathi literature and in the history of ethical thought, so subtle and comprehensive in its thinking, so great the perfection and satisfying force of its style. But it was psychologically impossible for Mr. Tilak to devote his energies in any great degree to another action than the one life-mission for which the Master of his works had chosen him. His powerful literary gift has been given up to a journalistic work, ephemeral as even the best journalistic work must be, but consistently brilliant, vigorous, politically educative through decades, to an extent seldom matched and certainly never surpassed. His scholastic labour has been done almost by way of recreation. Nor can anything be more significant than the fact that the works which have brought him a fame other than that of the politician and

patriot, were done in periods of compulsory cessation from his life work,—planned and partly, if not wholly, executed during the imprisonments which could alone enforce leisure upon this unresting worker for his country. Even these by-products of his genius have some reference to the one passion of his life, the renewal, if not the surpassing, of the past greatness of the nation by the greatness of its future. His Vedic researches seek to fix its pre-historic point of departure; the *Gita-Rahasya* takes the scripture which is perhaps the strongest and most comprehensive production of Indian spirituality and justifies to that spirituality by its own authoritative ancient message the sense of the importance of life, of action, of human existence, of man's labour for mankind which is indispensable to the idealism of the modern spirit.

Mr. Tilak himself, his career, his place in Indian politics are also a self-evident proposition, a hard fact baffling and dismaying in the last degree to those to whom his name has been anathema, and his increasing pre-eminence figured as a portent of evil. Yet is Mr. Tilak a man of various and no ordinary gifts, and in several lines of life he might have achieved present distinction or a pre-eminent and enduring fame. Though he has never practised, he has a close knowledge of law and an acute legal mind which, had he oared in the least degree for wealth and worldly position, would have brought him to the front at the bar. He is a great Sanskrit scholar, a powerful writer and a strong, subtle and lucid thinker. He might have filled a large place in the field of contemporary Asiatic scholarship. He is the very type and incarnation of the Maratha character, the Maratha qualities, the Maratha spirit, but with the unified solidity in the character, the touch of genius in the qualities, the vital force in the spirit which make a great personality readily the representative man of his people. The Maratha race, as their soil and their history have made them, are a rugged, strong and sturdy people; democratic in their every fibre; keenly intelligent and practical to the very marrow; following in ideas, even in poetry, philosophy and religion, the drive towards life and action; capable of great fervour, feeling and enthusiasm, like all Indian people, but not emotional idealists; having in their thought and speech, always a turn for strength, sense, accuracy, lucidity and vigour; in learning and scholarship, patient, industrious, careful, thorough and penetrating; in life, simple, hardy and frugal; in their temperament, courageous, pugnacious, full of spirit, yet with a tact in dealing with hard facts and circumventing obstacles; shrewd yet aggressive diplomatists, born politicians, born fighters. All this Mr. Tilak is with a singular and eminent completeness, and all on a large scale, adding to it all a lucid simplicity and genius, a secret intensity, and inner strength of will, a single-mindedness in aim of quite extraordinary force, which remind one of the brightness, sharpness and perfect temper of a fine sword hidden in a sober scabbard.

The indomitable will and the unwavering devotion have been the whole meaning of Mr. Tilak's life; they are the reason of his immense hold on the people. For he does not owe his preeminent position to wealth and great, social position, professional success, recognition by Government, a power of fervid oratory or of fluent and telling speech; for he had none of these things to help him. He owes it to himself alone and to the thing his life has meant and because he has meant it with his whole mind and his whole soul. He has kept back nothing for himself or for other aims, but has given all himself to his country. As he emerged on the political field, his people saw more and more clearly in him their representative man, themselves in large, the genius of their type. They felt him to be of one spirit and make, with the great men who had made their past history, almost believed him to be a reincarnation

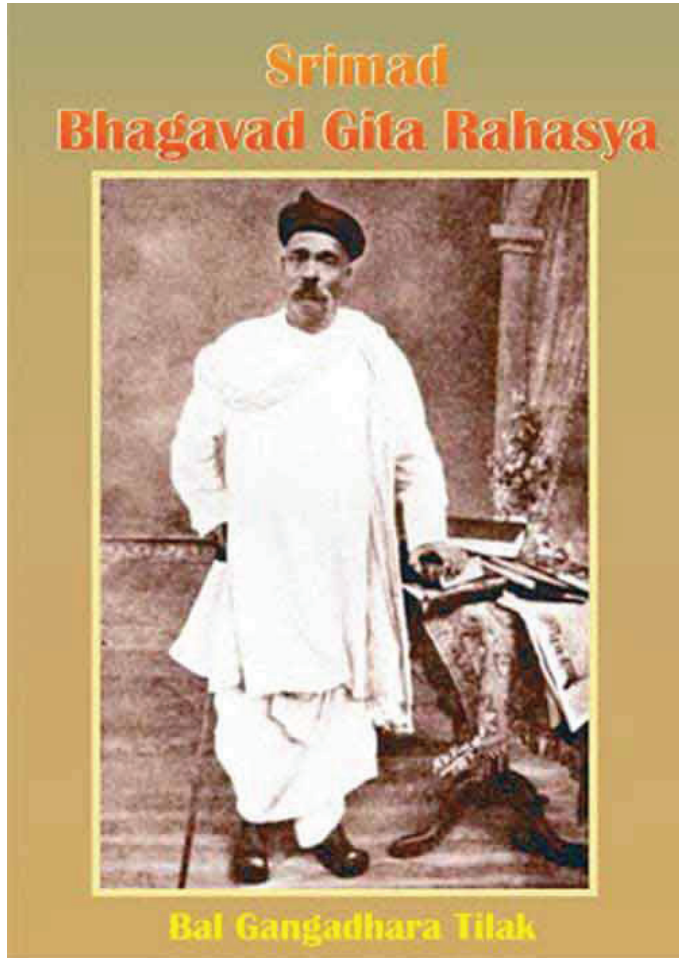
of one of them returned to carry out his old work in a new form and under new conditions. They beheld in him the spirit of Maharashtra once again embodied in a great individual. He occupies a position in his province which has no parallel in the rest of India.

The landmarks of Mr. Tilak's life are landmarks also in the history of his province and his country.

His first great step associated him in a pioneer work whose motive was to educate the people for a new life under the new conditions, on the one side, a purely educational movement of which the fruit was the Fergusson College, fitly founding the reawakening of the country by an effort of which co-operation in self-sacrifice was the moving spirit, on the other, the initiation of the *Kesari* newspaper, which figured increasingly as the characteristic and powerful expression of the political mind of

Maharashtra. Mr. Tilak's career has counted three periods each of which had an imprisonment for its culminating point. His first imprisonment in the Kolhapur case belongs to this first stage of self-development and development of the Maratha country for, new ideas and activities and for the national future.

The second period brought in a wider conception and a profounder effort. For now it was to reawaken not only the political mind but the soul of the people by linking its future to its past; it worked by a more strenuous and popular propaganda which reached its height in the organisation of the Shivaji and the Ganapati festivals. His separation from the Social reform leader, Agarkar, had opened the way for the peculiar role which he has played as a trusted and accredited leader of conservative and religious India in the paths of democratic politics. It was this position which enabled him to effect the union of the new political spirit with the tradition and sentiment of the historic past and of both with the ineradicable religious temperament of the people of which these festivals were the symbol. The congress movement was for a long time purely occidental in its mind, character and methods, confined to the English-educated few, founded on the political rights and interests of the people read in the light of English history and European ideals, but with no roots either in the past of the country or in the inner spirit of the nation. Mr. Tilak was the first political leader to break through the routine of its somewhat academical methods, to bridge the gulf between the present and the past, and to restore continuity to the political life of the nation. He developed a language and a spirit and he used methods which Indianised the movement and brought into it the masses. To his work of this period we owe that really living, strong and readily





organised movement in Maharashtra which has shown its energy and sincerity in more than one crisis and struggle. This divination of the mind and spirit of his people and its needs and this power to seize on the right way to call it forth prove strikingly the political genius of Mr. Tilak; they made him the one man predestined to lead them in this trying and difficult period when all has to be discovered and all has to be reconstructed. What was done then by Mr. Tilak in Maharashtra has been initiated for all India by the Swadeshi movement. To bring in the mass of the people, to found the greatness of the future on "the greatness of the past, to infuse Indian politics with Indian religious fervour and spirituality, are the indispensable conditions for a great and powerful political awakening in India. Others, writers, thinkers, spiritual leaders, had seen this truth. Mr. Tilak was the first to bring it into the actual field of practical politics. The second period of his labour for this country culminated in a longer and harsher imprisonment which was as it were the second seal of the divine hand upon his work; for there can be no diviner seal than suffering for a cause.

A third period, that the Swadeshi movement, brought Mr. Tilak forward prominently as an All-India leader; it gave him at last the wider field, the greater driving power, the larger leverage he needed to bring his life-work rapidly to head, and not only in Maharashtra but throughout the country. From the inception of the Boycott Movement to the Surat catastrophe and his last and longest imprisonment, which was its equal, the name and work of Mr. Tilak are a part of Indian history.

These three imprisonments, each showing more clearly the moral stuff and quality of the man under the test and glare of suffering, have been the three seals of his career. The first found him one of a small knot of pioneer workers; it marked him out to be the strong and inflexible leader of a strong and sturdy people. The second found him already the inspiring power of a great awakening of the Maratha spirit; it left him an uncrowned king in the Deccan and gave him that high reputation throughout India, which was the foundation-stone of his commanding influence. The last found him the leader of an All-India party, the foremost exponent and head of a thorough-going Nationalism; it sent him back to be one of the two or three foremost men of India adored and followed by the whole nation. No prominent man in India has suffered more for his country; none has taken his sacrifices and sufferings more quietly and as a matter of course.

All the Indian provinces and communities have spoken with one voice, Mr. Tilak's principles of work have been accepted; the ideas which he had so much troubled to enforce have become the commonplaces and truisms of our political thought. The only question that remains is the rapidity of a new inevitable evolution. That is the hope for which Mr. Tilak still stands, a leader of all India.

Mr. Tilak's name stands already for history as a Nation-builder, one of the half-dozen greatest political personalities, memorable figures, representative men of the nation in this most critical period of India's destinies, a name to be remembered gratefully so long as the country has pride in its past and hope for its future.

Courtesy: *Srimad Bhagavad Gita Rahasya or Karma Yoga Śāstra*, Bal Gangadhar Tilak  
Source: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/bhagavad-gita-rahasya/d/doc1129042.html>

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# Mahavakyas from the Mother

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V Ananda Reddy

I would like to recollect some of the Mahavakyas that the Mother gave to help seekers for a higher spiritual living. I have selected only a few among the numberless pieces of advice that the Mother gave to each living souls on the sunlit path. Her path is not arduous or strenuous. She, out of her own tapasya and grace, laid out the yellow brick path for her children seeking to lead a meaningful life of spirituality.

When I was writing this, I recollected a beautiful story that most of us know: the story of Ganesha. The story goes like this. Once Brahma gave a mango to Lord Shiva, but he could not decide to whom to give the mango to. Is it to be given to Kartikeyan or to Ganesha? He could not decide which son to choose. So, he decided to put them to a test. He gave each of them a bowl full of oil. And he asked them to make a *pradakshana* of the earth. And whoever came back first obviously would get the mango. And the moment Karthikeyan received this bowl he got on his peacock and flew away. And Ganesha being slow could not start like that. But what he did was, he went thrice around Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva. And then he said as he was the winner, Lord Shiva should give him the mango. Lord Shiva asked him how? Ganesha replied that his parents were his world. And Shiva was pleased with his interpretation and gave the mango to Lord Ganesha.

This catches in a nutshell what we speak about the sunlit path and the real yogic path as given in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. In fact, what we see in *The Synthesis* is the path that has been followed by Sri Aurobindo, not only during his days of tapasya from 1910 to 1914 but whatever he noted in the *Record of Yoga*, which was meant for him as he practiced and achieved at the stages of his transformation. It is his sadhana of which we read in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. It is quite overwhelming; none of us could even think of taking such an intense tapasya. We can understand it mentally but to put into practice is extremely difficult. Why is it so difficult? Here is what Sri Aurobindo says about his own yoga. The very beginning of yoga for Sri Aurobindo has been

1. ...to become one with God, to be Divine and live a Divine Life is the first object of Yoga. (CWSA 11: 1163)

We may give lectures and talks and hold webinars on his yoga, but we cannot do it sitting at one place. The second aim:

2. The second is to know God in Himself and in ourselves and in everything. (Ibid)

The second aim is to realise the divine in everything around, not only to realize the transcendental divine but the divine around and within. And then the third objective is –

3. ...to make ourselves one with the Divine Will and to do in our life a Divine Work by means of the Divine Power using us as an instrument. (Ibid)

On the third level, we become a means of executing the divine will and become his instrument. Such is the objective of his yoga. It is stupendous! All these experiences were first documented in *Record of Yoga*. It is next to hieroglyphs for us. But in order to make it understandable, Sri Aurobindo explained these experiences in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. But my question is why did he not complete it? He himself stated, "*The Synthesis of Yoga* was not meant to give a method for all to follow. Each side of the Yoga was dealt with separately with all its possibilities..." (CWSA 35: 96) It has three parts: bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, and karma marga. And then the fourth section is the perfection of his own yoga – "The yoga of Self-Perfection". But there also he says, "with all its

possibilities, and an indication as to how they meet so that one starting from knowledge could realise karma and bhakti also and so with each path. It was intended when the Self-Perfection was finished, to suggest a way in which all could be combined, but this was never written". (Ibid) So, there is definitely something that Sri Aurobindo wanted to say but it was left incomplete. He told the Mother, "You will complete it when I have completed my yoga." (*Mother's Agenda* 4: 434) Thus, he gave the finishing work to the Mother. In *Agenda*, we read about the Mother's efforts towards transformation. Indeed, after *The Synthesis*, Sri Aurobindo wrote *Savitri* but the part of physical transformation was taken up by the Mother. To my understanding she completed the yoga of self-perfection.

Let us trace the changes that have come over the years in *The Synthesis of Yoga* or Integral Yoga. First, Sri Aurobindo did his own yoga, which was recorded in *Record of Yoga*. Then in 1920 Mother came And then he himself says his yoga completely changed because the Mother herself became the center of yoga, and the proof of that was in 1926 the descent of Sri Krishna consciousness took place. There was a sudden change. In 1927, *The Mother* was written and the Mother became the centre of Ashram and sadhana for everyone. *The Mother* is the essence of *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Sri Aurobindo, as if, took pity on us and simplified the Integral Yoga. In this small booklet and its six chapters, he showed us that the Mother is the goal and path of our sadhana. She is the one to lead our life and sadhana. To recapitulate, 1904-1914 could be phase one, 1914-1926 is phase two, 1926-1950 is phase three and 1950-1973 is phase four.

After 1950, another remarkable change happened. After Sri Aurobindo left his body, the Mother wrote:

To follow Sri Aurobindo in the great adventure of his integral Yoga, one needed always to be a warrior; now that he has left us physically, one needs to be a hero. (CWM 15: 197)

We see the transition in yoga in her words. In 1973, after the Mother left her body, Nolini Kanta Gupta gave a message: "At present when the Mother too is no more there – apparently – we seem to be abandoned children, what are we to do or be? It is no longer sufficient to be a warrior, not sufficient even to be a hero. What should we be? Something greater than the hero. One must be a Yogi". (CWNKG 5: 96) Now, did the yoga become simpler and straightforward? Or did it become more difficult? Nolini-da further adds, "The yogi is one who has the Divine Consciousness or the Mother's consciousness". (Ibid) We know it is not an easy task. To have a divine consciousness or the Mother's consciousness is quite impossible. So, immediately he says, "If you find that it is not so easy for one to be a yogi, even if one tries sincerely, I suggest to you another alternative. It is to leap into another dimension: to be a child, a child of the Mother". (Ibid)

Now, what exactly is to be a child? It is easier said than done. Even before Nolini-da, Sri Aurobindo himself wrote in 1934: "You are the Mother's child and the Mother's love to her children is without limit and she bears patiently with the defects of their nature". (CWSA 32: 452-53) This is very significant coming from Sri Aurobindo. A master, a yogi, he does not forgive defects; he is a master of yoga. But what is the nature of a mother? She bears with her child's defects, problems, ignorance, whatever the child may do, good or bad. So what Sri Aurobindo said earlier was repeated and reinstated by Nolini-da after 1973. Usually, a child spontaneously surrenders to the mother. The relationship between the child and the mother is one of spontaneous surrender. That is why perhaps, Sri Aurobindo gave us the Mother with whom we can have a spontaneous relation, and we can surrender to her naturally. This makes our yoga simpler, more natural, more doable because now we have to be a child of the Mother.

And it is in this phase that I found the Mahavakyas coming handy for us. Mahavakya is a great

utterance, which has been primarily used vis a vis the Upanishads. We speak of the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads. Sri Aurobindo himself chose three or four of them. Mahavakyas are like capsules. They do not only capture the essence but possess a power and are transformative. They have a mantric power. I have chosen what appealed to me. I will explain them based on Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings.

Before we begin with the Mahavakyas, let me remind ourselves that to be a child is to be in the Mother's consciousness and to surrender entirely to her. However, this surrender can only come when we have found our psychic being or soul because only the psychic being knows the real Mother and can connect and surrender to Her.

Since my childhood, I have had many correspondences and a few interviews with the Mother. Each time, she told me to find my soul or psychic being. Once, she told me that Sri Aurobindo and She prepared this place for the realisation of the soul. On another occasion she said that the new consciousness is descending, be here and prepare yourself for it. In one of my longest interviews with the Mother, she sadly told me that life after life, the psychic being waits to be discovered. But man is too busy with his outer life to hear its faint voice. In one of his letters, Sri Aurobindo wrote that his yoga begins where all other yogas end. And other yogas usually end with the realisation of the psychic being and surrender. So, from my personal experiences with the Mother and from their writings, we know that realisation of the psychic being is of paramount importance on this sunlit path.

Let us now move to the first Mahavakya:

Do not think whether people agree with you or do not agree with you or whether you are good or bad, but think only that "the Mother loves me and I am the Mother's." If you base your life on that thought, everything will soon become easy. (CWSA 32: 480)

"The Mother loves me and I am the Mother's is like a mantra that one can chant in every circumstance. Whether we meditate, or walk or work we can remember this and let it ring in us like a japa. "It is because of the thoughts about others and your "badness" that you feel far from the Mother". (Ibid) Sri Aurobindo had to add this line perhaps because we think that the Mother is not listening to our prayers, that she has turned away from us. But Sri Aurobindo says that she never leaves us, but we go away from her and therefore cannot hear her responses. So, he says, "All the time she is very near to you and you to her. If you take the position I told you and make it the basis of your life, "the Mother loves me and I am hers", the curtain would soon disappear, for it is made of these thoughts and nothing else". (Ibid)

A letter from the Mother explains how she is our Mother:

Yes, my dear child,

I am your true mother who will give birth in you to the true being, the being who is free, peaceful, strong and happy always, independently of all circumstances.

Love from your mother. (CWM 16:124)

Next,

My dear child,

I carry you always in my arms, pressed close to my heart, and I have no doubt that you will become aware of it if you forget the world and concentrate on me. By turning your thoughts towards me you will feel closer and closer to me and peace will come to dwell in your heart.

Love. (Ibid: 122)

All the world's meditation cannot bring this peace. This is a mantra. Let us try to feel her presence, feel her close so that She will bring us peace, joy, and Ananda. Another question is

*My sweet mother,*

*Human contact has done me much harm, but I cannot give up this habit. I have made many efforts to stop all human contacts, but I cannot. I don't know what to do. Mother, let me open to you and to no one else, always, always. Give me patience.*

I don't think it would be good for you to live completely retired and turned in on yourself. The whole thing is to choose your relationships well. You must choose to enter into relation with those whose contact does not veil my presence. (Ibid: 119-120)

An extraordinary guideline indeed! We go to parties, weddings, functions. We come across people but we have to be very sensitive and selective and choose those, who do not veil her presence. That is the only criterion. There is another message from her, that nothing is moral, immoral, good, or bad But anything or anybody who veils us from Her is wrong. That person or action is wrong from the spiritual point of view. Otherwise, we have no rule book here. It is only our own conscience that can feel this person or this act taking us away from the Mother. So, we should not do that. The Mother gave us another prayer: "Give me peace. Give me joy in work. Make me your instrument". (CWM 16:128) Many of us want to be her instrument. We aspire so that the Mother may work through us, let us be thy instrument. And Mother says such a simple thing:

My dear child,

I am very happy to know that you want to be my instrument. To be able to be my instrument, you must be regular, energetic, courageous, enduring and always good-tempered. (Ibid)

It is a pragmatic guidance. The moment we think of being the Mother's instrument, we think to meditate or to read *Savitri*. But the Mother gives us simple things to do, such as being regular in work. Regular means to do our duty. We have to be energetic. We can not be tamasic by lying down in bed and thinking the Mother will do that for us. Then we have to be courageous and enduring.

And then the next one is "What does the Divine want of me?" (Ibid: 154) We all have asked this question. The Mother answers:

He wants that you first find yourself; that with your true being, your psychic being, you master and govern the lower being, and then you will quite naturally take your proper place in the great Divine Work. (Ibid: 154-55)

The Divine wants us to find ourselves first. That means to find the psychic being. "That with your true being, your psychic being, you master and govern the lower being, and then you will quite naturally take your proper place in the great Divine Work." This clarifies it is not the nature of work that will make us the Mother's instrument, but when we work with a psychic consciousness, then it becomes the Mother's work. There has to be no ego involved in the work.

Another beautiful guidance is:

*We all want Mother's love, but I wonder how many of us truly love the Mother. Where indeed do we see one-pointed, ever-sacrificing, never-failing love? Who has love only for the Divine?*

It does not mean that there is no love, but that the love is mixed up and covered with egoism, demand and vital movements. (CWM 16: 126)

Most of us have uttered many times 'I have the Mother' but it is not pure. It is "mixed up and covered with egoism, demand and vital movements".

At least that is the case with many. There are some of course who have no love at all, or "love"—if it can be called so—only for what they get, one or two who love truly—but in a great many there is a psychic spark hidden in much smoke. The smoke has to be got rid of so that the spark may have a chance of growing into a blaze. (Ibid)

This is essential. The fact that we turn towards the Mother does not make us devotees or sadhaks. But we are turned towards the sun. That is enough to show that our psychic being has decided to see the Mother. Even if we are charmed by a beautiful center or ashram, it may not be a mental decision or attraction until the psychic decides to turn our mind, vital, emotions to the Mother. It is only the psychic being, which first recognises the Divine and then slowly influences the mind and the vital. Slowly, the mind and the vital get convinced to go to the Samadhi every day, and then outer means come and help our inner decision. But Sri Aurobindo also writes that the inner decision must come. It is only that decision that can sustain us. Otherwise, for years we can routinely go to the ashram, and do our work, but it may not change much in us unless there is a central psychic decision. The psychic being alone can sustain our journey through life.

Second mahavakya is "I am with you."

*"I am with you." What does it mean exactly?*

I am with you because I am you or you are me. (CWM 13: 75)

I am not aware of any other guru or person, who said this. Of course, The Bhagavad Gita said this in the avatar of Lord Krishna!

I am with you, that signifies a world of things, because I am with you on all levels, on all planes, from the supreme consciousness down to my most physical consciousness. (CWM 13: 75)

This is amazing! She is not just there as a deity, as ae divinity, as the supreme Mahashakti and supramental Shakti. We know all this philosophy from *The Mother*. But it is amazing when she says that She is with us on all levels, from the supreme level to the mental, the vital and the physical. If I go to the garden and see a beautiful flower, I instantly feel a presence. Why is it so? It is because suddenly the presence of the Mother seizes us on the physical-emotional level. We may feel Mahalakshmi manifesting as beauty and harmony in the garden. The Mother further says:

In a general way my Force is there constantly at work, constantly shifting the psychological elements of your being to put them in new relations and defining to yourself the different facets of your nature so that you may see what should be changed, developed, rejected. (Ibid: 76)

We can apply this in the context of problems and difficulties. We think they come to us, but problems and difficulties don't come to us because they have been given to us by the Mother. Why? It is to show our defects so that we become aware of what should be changed, what should be developed. I will narrate a personal experience here. During one of my birthdays, I went to the Mother. I knelt before her and she looked deep into my eyes. But for me, I saw a dark cloud. I could not see her. Later, I wrote a letter to the Mother telling her about this experience and asking for its meaning. She sent me a reply: 'now that you are aware of what is to be removed in your nature, work on it.' She brings to us defects, problems so that we can

work on our nature and change what needs to be changed. And then of course she says She is with us on different levels.

...there is a special personal tie between you and me, between all who have turned to the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and myself, — and, it is well understood, distance does not count here, you may be in France, you may be at the other end of the world or in Pondicherry, this tie is always true and living. (Ibid: 76)

Those of us who have turned to the Mother and Master has a tie of a special kind. It is a physical tie. She says it does not matter where we are; she is always with us. Further,

With those whom I have accepted as disciples, to whom I have said Yes, there is more than a tie, there is an emanation of me. (Ibid)

Extraordinary! The Mother says the next level of her contact includes leaving her emanation with us. An emanation is like an aspect, a ray of her consciousness that remains forever connected with us. This emanation immediately gives the Mother a sense or a message that this person living in London or here or there is in trouble. And the moment this message goes through (it is like a hotline), the Mother take cognizance for she says:

This emanation warns me whenever it is necessary and tells me what is happening. Indeed I receive intimations constantly, but not all are recorded in my active memory, I would be flooded; the physical consciousness acts like a filter. (Ibid)

These intimations from the emanations that are in the form of prayers help the Mother to remember us. Otherwise, we are not a part of her active memory. When a message is sent to her, the dormant link between the disciple and the Divine comes alive and she works on it.

And if for some reason you write to me asking for my help and I answer "I am with you", it means that the communication with you becomes active, you come into my active consciousness for a time, for the time necessary. (Ibid: 77)

Now, there is a third one.

"To be near Me"

In order to be always near me really and effectively you must become more and more sincere, open and frank towards me. Cast away all dissimulation and decide to do nothing that you could not tell me immediately.

Do only what you could do before me without feeling embarrassed, say only what you could repeat to me without difficulty. (Ibid: 78-79)

This is one of my most active useful messages from the Mother. It is indeed very powerful. I have experienced this so many times. It is like a compass, or a reference point. I ask myself can I tell this to the Mother? Can I do this in front of the Mother? It has been my active guideline.

And the last thing, which all of us know, is to surrender. But there's a lot to say about surrender. However, I have discovered there are three stages of surrender.

- (a) Passive
- (b) Active surrender → offering → conscious self-offering
- (c) Consecration

Most of us are into passive surrender, thinking that the Mother will do everything for us. But even the Mother said we have to make an active or dynamic surrender. And this dynamic surrender is known as an offering. It means we give our thought and action and emotion to

her. In fact, this was the meaning she explained to me in a personal message. I was very young, and my teachers used to always asked us to surrender. So, I wrote to the Mother asking her the meaning of surrender. She wrote back to me in French, it is translated in English thus:

With your thought, give your thoughts  
With your heart, give your feelings  
With your body, give your work. (CWM 14: 103)

I was extremely happy. There could not be a greater and more lucid definition than this! This has been my prayer always because more than that, I don't know what to do.

During our physical activities in the evening, we have concentration before and after the games. A captain asked the Mother what was to be done during concentration. She said while concentrating, we just have to remember her, saying we are going to play football or hockey or some other game now. And all that we are going to do in the game is for Her. And after the game, we told the Mother that we played for a certain game for 45 minutes. And whatever we have done during the game, be it good or bad, we offer it to Her. The Mother gave us simple and practicable answers or solutions. These are the simple steps of surrender and consecration to the Mother.

We all can have our own mahavakyas. But I shared today what has been my guiding lights. However, one message from Nolini-da summarises for us all the messages of the Mother. It is something similar to the summary of the Gita that we get in the lines "*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yāji mām namaskuru mām evaiṣhyasi yuktvaivam ātmānaṁ mat-parāyaṇaḥ.*"

The Mother says:

Just see. Look at me. I am here come back in my new body, – divine, transformed and glorious. And I am the same mother, still human. Do not worry. Do not be concerned about your own self, your progress and realisation, nor about others. (CWNKG 6: 259)

So, She tells us not to be concerned about others but our own self, our progress and realization.

I am here, look at me, gaze into me, enter into me wholly, merge into my being, lose yourself into my love, with your love. You will see all problems solved, everything done. Forget all else, forget the world. Remember me alone, be one with me, with my love... (Ibid)

These lines resonate with the Gita: "Become my minded, my lover and adorer, a sacrificer to me, bow thyself to me, thus united with me in the Self thou shalt come to me, having me as thy supreme goal." (*Message of the Gita*: 148)

"Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve". (Ibid: 278)

Sometimes, I wonder if I have attained my soul or not, how to bring peace in the mind, how to calm the vital, and so on, but this message, this dependency on the Mother makes us entirely free. We just have to look at her, Her alone, and all problems will be solved. It is indeed Her infinite grace and love that We require. And once She looks at us, we need not ever worry.

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## Savitri – An Ecstasy

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Charan Singh

In one of Sri Aurobindo's poems – "Silence is All" – the Mahayogi writes,

Thought is the wine of the soul and the word is the beaker;  
Life is the banquet-table as the soul of the sage is the drinker. (CWSA 2: 644)

The real drinker of life is the sage, or the soul of the sage. *Sabda-amrit* comes from the interior of the soul. Thought is the wine of soul. The word is the beaker.

In another poem, "Bride of the Fire", Sri Aurobindo says,

Image of ecstasy, thrill and enlace, —  
Image of bliss!  
I would see only thy marvellous face,  
Feel only thy kiss. (Ibid.: 532)

We see that seeking Ananda is one of the most fundamental aspects of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana. It is also mentioned in the first lines of *The Life Divine* where Sri Aurobindo says,

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation, — for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment, — is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss. (CWSA 21: 3)

Bliss is one of the fundamental adventures of humanity, of the aspiring heart, and one of the best things that we can have in our lives. Ananda is a word for us. But it can be a living reality, a day-to-day experience, a joy to be, a will to persist. For me, *Savitri* is the *mahakavya* of poetic delight. It is full of spiritual delight. It is a long, wonderful and eventful journey of veritable Ananda. In canto after canto, Book after Book, we see how *Savitri* is the *mahakavya* of Ananda and how it is Sri Aurobindo's own journey of Ananda. Aswapati, Savitri, Satyavan, and Dyumatsena are our wonderful participants in this *Anandyagya*.

In the very first book, the "Book of Beginnings", we see the *swarup* of Savitri. She has been described as "Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven" (*Savitri*: 14). She is closely associated with the wideness of the earth but equally intimate with heaven. There is a related line later in the poem in which Sri Aurobindo says, "She made earth her home, for whom heaven was too small" (Ibid: 275). The grace of the Mother, the grace of Savitri is such that she chose earth as her home, not heaven. It is due to her love, her compassion, her *matrihridaya* that she had chosen earth as her home. He says,

As in a mystic and dynamic dance  
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies  
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault  
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods, (CWSA 33: 15)

Why does he say "immaculate ecstasies"? Normally, earthly bliss is mixed or mired with pain, sorrow, limitation, but Savitri is a priestess of immaculate ecstasies, those which are without blemish, fault, guilt. In the famous poem "To a skylark", the great romantic poet P.B. Shelly says,

"We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not:  
Our sincerest laughter

With some pain is fraught;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell  
Of saddest thought."

Whenever we laugh freely, joyfully, full-heartedly, there is some pain mixed in that laughter. No joy, no bliss on earth is unmixed or immaculate. But Savitri is not only bliss incarnate, she is a priestess of immaculate ecstasies. Sri Aurobindo goes on

A heart of silence in the hands of joy  
Inhabited with rich creative beats  
A body like a parable of dawn  
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity  
Or golden temple-door to things beyond. (CWSA 33: 15)  
She is a goddess, bliss incarnate.

When we follow Aswapati's wonderful journey through the different worlds, the traveler experiences many visions and realizations. At one point he sees how bliss is the reality of creation, how God pervades everything as the *Anand-rupa*, in the tree, in the flower, in the very core of existence. This has been beautifully summed up in these lines,

A touch of God's rapture in creation's acts,  
A lost remembrance of felicity  
Lurks still in the dumb roots of death and birth,  
The world's senseless beauty mirrors God's delight. (Ibid: 139)

God's delight is there in the senseless beauty of the world, the meaningless beauty of the world, the purposeless hankering after small pursuits of life. Even those puerile hankerings have still the stamp of divine delight.

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

Even the sap dripping from the tree, or the sound of the winds, are expressions of the Divine's glory and delight. The joy is there in the whole of Nature. Earlier, Sri Aurobindo had described Aswapati's realisation using this line, "God found in Nature, Nature fulfilled in God" (Ibid: 37). See how Nature and God are closely connected, interlinked, interdependent, as if mirror images of each other.

"The Book of the Divine Mother" in *Savitri* is very special for seekers. In that book, Aswapati implores the Divine Mother with these words:

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, (Ibid: 345)

Oh! Divine Mother, you are the bliss of inner Ananda. You are the bliss that is always there in our hearts. This is why there is so much focus on the heart and the psychic being in Sri Aurobindo's sadhana. The Mother also focuses on heart because she is there, because Savitri is there, because the Ananda of the Divine is there. But the stupidity of the world is that we search Ananda in things, in events, in good days and bad days, in remarkable episodes of political history or in some other events. It is in things and in possessions, but they can never be the real source of Ananda because Ananda is hidden deep inside us.

There is another unforgettable line describing the Divine Mother:

Suffering was lost in her immortal smile. (Ibid: 314)

By having a single glance on the Mother, all moroseness, all dullness, all langour and lethargy, all pain, all privation vanish.

Incarnating inexpressibly in her limbs

The boundless joy the blind world-forces seek,

Her body of beauty mooned the seas of bliss. (Ibid.)

The very seas of bliss are there in the body of the Divine Mother. "Her body of beauty mooned the seas of bliss" implies that those who have been fortunate enough to have close physical contact with the Mother are the living testimony among us that she was really the veritable joy, Ananda or bliss of the Divine. She could enter into the very core of our heart's and mind's existence. It was impossible to hide anything before her cosmic eyes.

Then, there is a remarkable promise. Recently we witnessed the world undergoing some churning from an invisible virus that has turned it into a hostage of the moroseness of time. Feeling helpless, humanity has witnessed a tremendous shift in how it looks at the world and thinks or acts. But look at the promise in *Savitri*: "All here shall be one day her sweetness' home".

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. (Ibid)

One day, everything here will be "her sweetness' home". Whatever contraries are there – contrary feelings, opinions, ideas, rules – whatever differences are apparently there on the surface will merge and create a dynamic harmony. Whatever suffering, whatever pain, whatever grumblings we have in our lives, will be washed away by the remarkable clasp of the Divine Mother. The only safe anchor in these testing times is the proximity of the Divine Mother. And one of the ways to come near to her is given next:

This Light comes not by struggle or by thought;

In the mind's silence the Transcendent acts

And the hushed heart hears the unuttered Word.

A vast surrender was his only strength. (Ibid: 315)

A vast surrender was Aswapati's only strength. A vast surrender is our only strength. It is only with a seeking and surrendered heart, and a calm and quiet mind that we can have some faint glimmering, a remote glimpse of the Divine Mother. In no other condition is that possible.

In the "Book of Birth and Quest", Savitri is described as an answer from heaven to earth's seeking for delight. Setting the scene, Sri Aurobindo says, "All Nature was at beauty's festival" (Ibid: 352). It is springtime, the "love-maddened coil" is singing, there are many fragrances and beautiful sounds and sights. Delight is incarnate there. Then, announcing her birth, Sri Aurobindo says,

In this high signal moment of the gods

Answering earth's yearning and her cry for bliss,

A greatness from our other countries came. ...

A lamp was lit, a sacred image made.

A mediating ray had touched the earth

Bridging the gulf between man's mind and God's (Ibid: 353)

Savitri is “the mediating ray” of existence. She is a bridge between earth and heaven. She is a goddess of heaven. Earlier she was described as “Near to earth’s wideness, intimate with heaven” (Ibid: 14). She is here to bring down heaven on earth. By coming down, touching and treading this earth, she has bridged the gulf between humanity’s pygmy mind and God’s mind.

Now comes the remarkable discussion between Savitri and Satyavan in that *sundarkand* of *Savitri*. M.P. Pandit used to call the “Book of Love” as the *sundarkand* [literally, “beautiful episode” and is applied to a chapter of the Ramayana pertaining to Hanuman] of *Savitri*. Look, how Satyavan, her paramour, is inviting Savitri to come down as a goddess of bliss, and touch, taste and transform the life around him! She is in her chariot, and he is requesting her to descend from it:

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. (Ibid: 408)

He invites her to radiate that bliss that she inherently possesses. Satyavan is a foster child of solitude. He lives in that forest where he meditates with the forest sages, and enjoys the proximity of mountains, and trees and animals and birds. He enjoys the lakes, the greenery, the silence and solitude. He is also delight incarnate, and their confluence is a beautiful invitation to a greater joy for humanity.

In “The Book of Fate”, the last book that Sri Aurobindo worked on, Aswapati describes his daughter to Narad, the heavenly sage:

Behold this image cast by light and love, (Ibid: 422)

Narad had just given a preliminary hint of doom awaiting Savitri. Aswapati, a *trikaladarshi*, deciphered Narad’s hint, and urged Narad to make things clearer. As the Queen later says, “To know is best, however hard to bear” (Ibid: 429). With this background, let us consider these lines.

Behold this image cast by light and love,  
A stanza of the ardour of the gods  
Perfectly rhymed, a pillared ripple of gold!  
Her body like a brimmed pitcher of delight (Ibid: 422)

How beautiful: “brimmed pitcher of delight”! *Anandaka chalchalki ishigagar, haisi gagar jho bulbulekitak ajaye, anandaki barihuie gagar*. Savitri is like “a brimmed pitcher of delight”, a flame of radiant happiness. Look at the confidence of Aswapati! How confident, how decidedly sure he is about the future course of Savitri’s life, and the real purpose of her existence; surely she will set earth alight. He says,

Doom surely will see her pass and say no word! (Ibid: 423)

Even death will not dare to touch her. This is the prediction that the sage-father gives about Savitri and this is later proven correct. Savitri counters all the arguments, all the shenanigans that Death presents to her. How prophetic is Aswapati in his judgment of his daughter! Even Death, has not the power to overcome Savitri.

In Part Three of the epic, we find that this world has been created for joy, for Ananda. This vast world is a place, which should be filled with God’s joy. Sri Aurobindo says that a hidden bliss is at the root of things; behind everything, there is an urge towards Ananda. God has created this beautiful world in moments of his absolute Ananda. Everything we see, and everybody we meet is a joy, an occasion or a rendezvous of bliss.

A hidden Bliss is at the root of things.

A mute Delight regards Time's countless works:

To house God's joy in things Space gave wide room, (Ibid: 630)

Space is giving huge room to house God's joy in things. We need a large room in order to accommodate more and more things. Similarly, the whole *Anthariksha*, the whole *Brahmand* is empty because God is planning to fill it with joy. And what is the purpose of our being here?

To house God's joy in self our souls were born. (Ibid)

This relates to the lines I quoted at the beginning of the talk from the poem "Silence is All":

Thought is the wine of the soul and the word is the beaker;

Life is the banquet-table as the soul of the sage is the drinker. (CWSA 2: 644)

The soul here represents every seeking heart, every aspirant. But it is the sage's soul who drinks the divine elixir; others lose the opportunity to fully enjoy the delight that is here. Here, Sri Aurobindo says,

The All-Wonderful has packed heaven with his dreams, (CWSA 34: 630)

The marvelous God of creation has filled heaven with his dreams.

His fires of grandeur burn in the great sun,

He glides through heaven shimmering in the moon; (Ibid)

God's fire is there in the sun. And when the moon glides through heaven, it reflects the joy of the Divine in its shimmering.

He is beauty carolling in the fields of sound;

He chants the stanzas of the odes of Wind;

He is silence watching in the stars at night;

He wakes at dawn and calls from every bough

Lies stunned in the stone and dreams in flower and tree. (Ibid)

We see around us so many beautiful, sweet sounds, of birds, the heavenly winds for these are all expressions of God's delight. On a beautiful starlit night, when there is absolute silence in the atmosphere, it is He who is the silence watching the stars. In the morning, the birds sing from the boughs. They, too are God's delight as they express the inherent Ananda in existence. It is the divine spirit of Ananda that lies stunned in the stone and dreams in flower and tree.

His laughter of beauty breaks out in green trees,

His moments of beauty triumph in a flower;

The blue sea's chant, the rivulet's wandering voice

Are murmurs falling from the Eternal's harp. (Ibid: 624)

The beautiful rivers with their diverse sounds, the chant of the seas are but murmurs from God's harp. He is not visible, but his voice, his murmurs are very enjoyable. Nature is beautiful because God is beautiful. By looking at flowers, we can see how beautiful God is!

But the tragedy of human beings is that

This world is in love with its own ignorance. (Ibid: 448)

The tragedy is that we know our imperfections, our ignorance, but we still live like we know everything. Who can help this ailing humanity which is deeply in love with its own imperfections? If one admits one's imperfection and becomes a sincere seeker of light, a disciple of truth, then there is hope. There is only one remedy: to admit our ignorance and to become a disciple of Truth. Therein lies the radiant journey, therein lies the possibility of love, light and life. Remember the saying of Sri Ramakrishna: 'God is in every man, but every man is not in God'. This is the basic reason of our suffering. Sri Aurobindo says,

Even in this labour and dolour of Ignorance,  
On the hard perilous ground of difficult earth,  
In spite of death and evil circumstance  
A will to live persists, a joy to be. (Ibid: 630)

Every day, we are faced with so many challenges; we fight the battle of life every moment. On one side there are armies of light and life, on the other side are the dark and dolorous faces of death. Yet God's will and God's army will prevail. Despite everything that is going badly around us, a will to live persists, a joy to be. That is the beauty of human life!

In his remarkable book, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway, says, "But man is not made for defeat, ... A man can be destroyed but not defeated". We can be sure that humanity will win, that we will get over our present dilemma, our present disaster. But what happens after that? That should be our point of reflection. Despite so much sorrow, suffering, and threats to our life and existence, the will for life and Ananda is always there. Due to that, life never becomes absolutely meaningless. We never feel absolutely dejected. We never lose that ultimate hope of delight. Better times will come; eventually, we will win, we will master our existence. But Savitri gives a clue about how to navigate these storms:

Only were safe who kept God in their hearts: (Ibid: 211)

During the present world crises, we must remember this line. Another thing that can help us is to raise our consciousness beyond the dualities. We can learn to see beauty in the hideous faces that Nature presents to us: to see our best friend in our worst enemy, to see opportunity in the visage of disaster. Near the end of the poem, the Divine addresses Savitri thus,

Even my disasters' clutch shall be to thee  
The ordeal of my rapture's contrary shape:  
In pain's self shall smile on thee my secret face: (Ibid: 701)

There is a philosophy of pain in *Savitri*. Pain is necessary until we have raised our consciousness from ignorance to knowledge. Afterwards, we will see the secret face of the Divine in pain itself.

Thou shalt bear my ruthless beauty unabridged  
Amid the world's intolerable wrongs,  
Trampled by the violent misdeeds of Time  
Cry out to the ecstasy of my rapture's touch. (Ibid)

The world will throw intolerable wrongs at our door: torture, test, and try to destroy us. Time will create violent misdeeds against us, but in it all there will be a ruthless delight for us to enjoy.

Men seeing thee shall feel my hands of joy, (Ibid)  
Oh! Savitri, when they will see you, they will see how joyful God is.  
My creatures shall demand me from thy heart.  
Thou shalt not shrink from any brother soul.  
Thou shalt be attracted helplessly to all.  
Men seeing thee shall feel my hands of joy, (Ibid)

No seeker of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana can have a repugnant look on any fellow seeker or human being because the whole world is the field of their manifestation. The whole world is Sri Aurobindo's and the Divine Mother's divine laboratory. Thou shalt:

Know the thrilled bliss with which I made the worlds. (Ibid)

God has made this world out of a thrilled bliss. If we dismiss our narrowness and the divisions, the fault lines between us, we will experience so much joy, love, Ananda and beauty

around us. But alas, we are surrounded and diseased by smallness and pettiness, the disease of narrow nationalism, the disease of religious bigotry, the disease of caste and color and clan. These things have created an ugly field of human stupidity. God tells Savitri that by looking at her, human beings will see how beautiful and joyful this world can be. They will feel the thrilled bliss with which He birthed millions of worlds, not only just this human world. But this world He has created out of his love, with a great and deep affinity to this humanity. At one place Sri Aurobindo describes this world as a “revolving chamber without walls / In which God sits impassive everywhere” (Ibid: 154). Elsewhere he calls it “Transient and frail this little whirling globe” (Ibid: 330). It is very small to the Divine. There are better and brighter heavens than this world. God addresses Savitri on behalf of the whole macrocosm. She is the goddess of not only of the single earth, but of the whole macrocosm.

In the last Book, “Epilogue”, in the single canto called “The Return to Earth”, there is a remarkable change in the aura, the very personality of Savitri. Satyavan is amazed when looking at her. It is difficult for him to believe that she is the same woman who accompanied him in the morning. What remarkable changes have happened in those four or five hours during the Savitri’s encounter, debate and spiritual fight with the God of Death! She has become a radiant goddess of the dawn. Addressing her husband Satyavan, she defines the purpose for which they came on earth. Satyavan’s life has returned, he has stood up, and with the linked hands they have started their journey home. Then she says,

Lo, all these beings in this wonderful world!  
Let us give joy to all, for joy is ours. (Ibid: 720)

Look at these people, the scenery, and the existence at play around them. The bliss that is theirs, let them give this joy to all. They are the messengers, the communicants, the heralds of Ananda. Now that truth-consciousness has descended on earth, there is the possibility that the world will dance in a delirium of love and light, of unending life.

For not for ourselves alone our spirits came (Ibid)

They did not come here just for their sake. Their spirits have come here to embrace humanity. As Sri Aurobindo says, “The whole world could take refuge in her single heart” (Ibid: 15). This is the aura and charisma of the Divine Mother. She is here to foster, to sustain, to nourish humanity. And this too is the work of Satyavan, “eternity’s delegate”, the soul in men.

To lead man’s soul towards truth and God we are born (Ibid)

In this one line, we find the meaning of Satyavan’s and Savitri’s existence: “To lead man’s soul towards truth and God, we are born”. Sri Aurobindo has written this Mahakavya to bring humanity nearer to Truth and God, to create love, light, peace, Ananda, perfection, beauty, harmony, delight here on earth, not in remote heavens.

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# Savitri: Human and Divine

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Shruti Bidwaikar

"A world's desire compelled her mortal birth". Book I Canto 3 of *Savitri* opens with this line. This single line conveys volumes to us. What we seek here from this line for our purpose is "mortal birth". We shall study in this paper what are the characteristics of a mortal and of the immortal and how they apply to Savitri. However, an important aspect of study through these human-divine dimensions is to understand if we human beings can at all benefit from *Savitri*. What is the central message of *Savitri* for humanity? How does Savitri transcend the human limitation and grows into the Divine where she could even battle with Death. Is it possible for the ignorant human being to rise to that level? We shall try to decipher this answer in the present analysis.

We are aware that it was Aswapati's tapasya that brought down the Divine Mother in the form of Savitri. The Divine Mother out of Her infinite compassion came down to deliver men and earth from the grip of misery, suffering and death. In canto one itself we get a glimpse of how Savitri had to take the mortal birth and share the burden of this mortal race:

To live with grief, to confront death on her road –  
The mortal's lot became the Immortal's share. (7)

If we take a look at a few words used here, we shall come to understand that human beings who are mortal have certain characteristics: desire, grief and death. Similar synonyms used by Sri Aurobindo in the same canto are "All came back to her: Earth and Love and Doom". What then defines the life on earth? How does it impact or affect Savitri? Savitri being an incarnation of the Divine Mother do the rules and laws of the mortal world apply to Her?

## Death, Desire and Incapacity

In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo has dedicated an entire chapter explaining these three terms: "Death, Desire and Incapacity". Essentially life on earth as it is today is characterized by these three. All the three represent a phenomenon on physical, vital and mental levels respectively, though they are not compartmentalized as there is physical incapacity and mental desire too. "...the individual life in the individual form must be always subject to the three badges of its limitation, Death, Desire and Incapacity." (CWSA 21: 204) He calls it badges of limitation. It means that human beings are limited in many aspects and therefore are subject to pain and suffering.

The question then arises, was Savitri subject to these human emotions and feelings? The answer is obviously in the affirmative. She has taken a mortal birth and that, Sri Aurobindo says, is itself a pain. In what respect is Savitri human? It is interesting, that when we read *Savitri* we get a simultaneous glimpse of Savitri the human and Savitri the divine. As Nolini Kanta Gupta says, "Savitri, the Divine Grace in human form, is upon earth. The Divine Consciousness has abandoned its own supreme transcendental status to enter into the human consciousness and partake of the earthly life: it has taken up a mortal frame, to love and dwell here below" (CWNKG 3: 165). We need to study then how do these laws of earth apply to her and how she transcends them. How is she human and divine?

## Savitri: Death and Doom

In his analysis in *The Life Divine* he observes that "Death, Desire and Strife are the trinity of divided living..." Sri Aurobindo justifies the office of death in mortal life: "death



is necessary because eternal change of form is the sole immortality to which the finite living substance can aspire and eternal change of experience the sole infinity to which the finite mind involved in living body can attain." (CWSA 21: 206) and "Death is our road to immortality" (*Savitri*: 425). Philosophically, these definitions bring a clearer understanding and are convincing enough. But when we face death it is a horrifying experience. To lose one's loved ones is extremely painful, it makes one suffer. Savitri has to face this truth of human life. In the Mahabharata too when Yudhishtira asks Maharshi Markandeya, he replies that not Draupadi, but Savitri is the one who has been through extreme pain and suffering.

In the legend, we are aware that Savitri has the foreknowledge of Satyavan's death. Sri Aurobindo declares three times in *Savitri*, "This was the day when Satyavan must die". One is as much scared to lose one's life to lose the partner. Savitri, the mortal, knows that her husband is going to die right on their first anniversary.

The shadow of her lover's doom arose  
And fear laid hands upon her mortal heart.  
The moments swift and ruthless raced; alarmed  
Her thoughts, her mind remembered Narad's date.  
A trembling moved accountant of her riches,  
She reckoned the insufficient days between:  
A dire expectancy knocked at her breast;  
Dreadful to her were the footsteps of the hours:  
Grief came, a passionate stranger to her gate:  
Banished when in his arms, out of her sleep  
It rose at morn to look into her face. (469)

In these lines it is evident that when Savitri is with Satyavan and is happy in her married life, she is fearful. The memories of the prophecy surround her often and she grows thoughtful of the hour that is approaching. She knew that Narad's foreknowledge cannot be wrong, it cannot be over-ruled. What Narad spoke is a truth. He has declared what he foresaw. The Mother tells us that it requires a great courage to face the future and therefore foreknowledge is not given to us. She says, no-one has the strength to bear with patience and face if any calamity awaits us. But Savitri has been shown or told her future. The doom of death that Savitri has to witness is given to Earth. Beautiful lines from Savitri tell us about this doom:

A silence sealed the irrevocable decree,  
The word of Fate that fell from heavenly lips  
Fixing a doom no power could ever reverse...  
Unless heaven's will itself could change its course. (437)

Satyavan's death was an "irrevocable decree". Savitri had to go through this as every human being goes through. It is evident that any human being who becomes aware of his/her or the partner's death, is never at peace, she would be restless and fearful. She would want to hold on to every moment and make it memorable and eternal. Every day, every moment for her would be precious. Such were the days of Savitri. She felt like watching Satyavan's face forever.

It was not that Savitri did not know about Satyavan's death. Rishi Narad told her about Satyavan's fate immediately after she declared her choice to her parents and the sage. The wife Savitri is lonely devoted woman. She is human and fears the death of her husband till her inner voice again calls her and directs her to find her soul. We see the most superhuman

strength in Savitri when she responds to her parents' wish to choose another life-partner as Satyavan was destined to bring her grief and sorrow.

"Once my heart chose and chooses not again.  
The word I have spoken can never be erased,  
It is written in the record book of God.  
The truth once uttered, from the earth's air effaced,  
By mind forgotten, sounds immortally  
For ever in the memory of Time.  
Once the dice fall thrown by the hand of Fate  
In an eternal moment of the gods.  
My heart has sealed its troth to Satyavan:  
Its signature adverse Fate cannot efface,  
Its seal not Fate nor Death nor Time dissolve.  
Those who shall part who have grown one being within?  
Death's grip can break our bodies, not our souls;  
If death take him, I too know how to die.  
Let Fate do with me what she will or can;  
I am stronger than death and greater than my fate;  
My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me  
Helpless against my immortality.  
Fate's law may change, but not my spirit's will." (432)

This is the strength and courage of Savitri that shows her Divine aspect. They are not empty words for she knows the reason of her birth and her work with Satyavan. This the moment when Savitri; the avatar emerges before our eyes. An avatar knows the direction and result of his/her work. He/She is also ready to face all the challenges to accomplish the mission for which he/she has taken birth. No matter how difficult the path, the avatar persists and achieves it. Savitri further says,

Only now for my soul in Satyavan  
I treasure the rich occasion of my birth:  
In sunlight and a dream of emerald ways  
I shall walk with him like gods in Paradise.  
If for a year, that year is all my life.  
And yet I know this is not all my fate  
Only to live and love awhile and die.  
For I know now why my spirit came on earth  
And who I am and who he is I love.  
I have looked at him from my immortal Self,  
I have seen God smile at me in Satyavan;  
I have seen the Eternal in a human face." (435-436)

We have to remember that these lines are spoken by her before she got married to Satyavan. She had the strength to take up the challenge for she knew that if she can face this ordeal she can conquer death and save not only Satyavan but the entire humanity from the clutches of death. She can uplift this mortal race to immortality.

As a human being she has all the tender feelings of a wife. She does not act like an all-knowing goddess, ready to slay death at its advent. She has to prepare herself to face Death. During the year of preparation she is required to find her soul she again goes through a moment of despair and helplessness. She says,

"My strength is taken from me and given to Death.  
Why should I lift my hands to the shut heavens  
Or struggle with mute inevitable Fate  
Or hope in vain to uplift an ignorant race  
Who hug their lot and mock the saviour Light  
And see in Mind wisdom's sole tabernacle,  
In its harsh peak and its inconscient base  
A rock of safety and an anchor of sleep? (474-475)

But again, when she is guided by the inner voice she rises and asks the Voice to command her. After receiving the command, she moves on to the journey of finding her soul and accomplishes it.

### **Savitri: Desire and Aspiration**

Can we apply the term "desire" for Savitri? Was she too like all human beings a victim of her desires? Did anger, attachment and aggression come to her as a result of desire? What was the nature of her desire, whom or what did she desire? As we said that Savitri had taken a mortal birth that means desire too is born in her. When she sets out to the forest to carry out her father's command to find a match for herself, obviously, there was desire in her. One, to fulfill her father's wish and second to find a partner for herself. Of course, we have to be vigilant to compare our desires with hers, as her divine qualities make her desires also sublime.

In the following lines we see Savitri's human feeling, thoughts and anxiety perhaps.

At night she woke through the slow silent hours  
Brooding on the treasure of his bosom and face,  
Hung o'er the sleep-bound beauty of his brow  
Or laid her burning cheek upon his feet.  
Waking at morn her lips endlessly clung to his,  
Unwilling ever to separate again  
Or lose that honeyed drain of lingering joy,  
Unwilling to loose his body from her breast,  
The warm inadequate signs that love must use....  
After all was given she demanded still;  
Even by his strong embrace unsatisfied,  
She longed to cry, "O tender Satyavan,  
O lover of my soul, give more, give more  
Of love while yet thou canst, to her thou lov'st.  
Imprint thyself for every nerve to keep  
That thrills to thee the message of my heart... (471)  
Always the stature of her passion grew;  
Grief, fear became the food of mighty love.  
Increased by its torment it filled the whole world;  
It was all her life, became her whole earth and heaven. (473)

Here in these lines from Book VII Canto 1, we see the human longings in Savitri. As she knows the impending doom on her married life, she wants to capture as much as possible in the given time. The lines above show the desire, anxiety and fear of a wife who is going to lose her husband very soon. Any human being in such a situation would be extremely sad and all her life would become a monument of sorrow. But Savitri was divinely human. She would not allow her loved ones to know of her grief.

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. (470-471)

But does not showing the grief mean that she was beyond desire and attachment? Sri Aurobindo says in the chapter "Death, Desire and Incapacity" that "Desire too can only cease rightly by becoming the desire of the infinite and satisfying itself with a supernal fulfilment and an infinite satisfaction in the all-possessing bliss of the Infinite." (CWSA 21: 207) Savitri's desire did not remain the desire for her husband any longer. While she searched for her soul earth she grew and became cosmic in consciousness. Her desire too assumed the cosmic form and she identified with the entire creation.

Out of subconscious life she climbed to mind,  
She was thought and the passion of the world's heart,  
She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,  
She was the climbing of his soul to God.  
The cosmos flowered in her, she was its bed.  
She was Time and the dreams of God in Time;  
She was Space and the wideness of his days.  
From this she rose where Time and Space were not;  
The superconscient was her native air,  
Infinity was her movement's natural space;  
Eternity looked out from her on Time. (557)

This is how we see that Savitri transcends her limited desire for Satyavan and aspires for the humanity. She is aware from the beginning that she has a big task to accomplish along with Satyavan. So although in some places we do get the personal description of Savitri's longing for Satyavan, her desire to save him is not only for herself, but for the evolution of the earth. Savitri, in her response to the Supreme, says

In vain thou temptst with solitary bliss  
Two spirits saved out of a suffering world;  
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. (692)

However, we do get to see the human and divine aspects of Savitri with regard to her desire and fear quite distinctly.

### **Savitri: Incapacity and Limitation**

In the same chapter of *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo tells us the meaning and function of self-limitation.

The original source of the perversion was, we have seen, the self-limitation of the individual soul bound to self-ignorance because it regards itself by an exclusive concentration as a separate self-existent individuality and regards all cosmic action only as it presents itself to its own individual consciousness, knowledge, will, force, enjoyment and limited being instead of seeing itself as a conscious form of the One

and embracing all consciousness, all knowledge, all will, all force, all enjoyment and all being as one with its own. (CWSA 21: 203)

Savitri is seen helpless only once. Otherwise, she is always quiet and strong. But when she says that her strength has been given to death she feels helpless and hopeless for this stubborn humanity and calm and content gods:

Is there a God whom any cry can move?  
He sits in peace and leaves the mortal's strength  
Impotent against his calm omnipotent Law  
And Inconscience and the almighty hands of Death...  
Why should I strive with earth's unyielding laws  
Or stave off death's inevitable hour? (475)

Like the Queen mother's cry, Savitri too is crying to cold, irresponsive heavens. Queen mother too poses a lot of questions to heavens to save her child from the doom. But Narad, the all-knowing sage tells her, "Cry not to heaven for she alone can save". (461) He knows the strength of Savitri. He knows that though she has taken a mortal birth she is not limited by it. She is all strength and she alone can deliver humanity from death and incapacity.

We see how her momentary incapacity too is taken away from her and she is reminded of a mighty task. Her task is to end the reign of death on earth. After her dialogue with Death Savitri comes forth as her true Self:

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.  
A curve of the calm hauteur of far heaven  
Descending into earth's humility,  
Her forehead's span vaulted the Omniscient's gaze,  
Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe. (664-665)

We see the effulgent form of Savitri here. She is no more the human Savitri. She is that great Shakti who unveils the reality of death and shows him his own real self. She grew in consciousness as the manifestation itself.

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These were a few facets where we could perhaps distinguish the human and the divine Savitri. There are descriptions in the epic when Sri Aurobindo describes her divinely human movements and acts. In canto one itself he says,

Even her humanity was half divine:  
Her spirit opened to the Spirit in all,  
Her nature felt all Nature as its own.  
Apart, living within, all lives she bore;  
Aloof, she carried in herself the world:  
Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,  
Her strength was founded on the cosmic might;  
The universal Mother's love was hers. (8)

These lines form the description of the part when the doom's day has arrived. It was

the morning of Satyavan's death when Savitri gathers all that happened since the time of evolution of this earth and since the whole year of her marriage. She was strong and quiet.

No cry broke from her lips, no call for aid;  
She told the secret of her woe to none:  
Calm was her face and courage kept her mute. (Ibid)

We see the strength of a godlike woman here. She knows her fate yet has the strength to bear it all alone. And that is why at another place in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo writes: "Great are strongest when they stand alone". Such was the strength of Savitri. She could bear not only her grief alone, but she bore the grief of the entire earth.

When Savitri comes to Satyavan's hermitage, "She in her dreadful knowledge was alone"

She made herself the diligent serf of all,  
Nor spared the labour of broom and jar and well,  
Or close gentle tending or to heap the fire  
Of altar and kitchen, no slight task allowed  
To others that her woman's strength might do.  
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. (470-471)

Savitri, who was a princess takes to a simple life of a hermit and one who was always served by many becomes a "diligent serf". She is human in performing her duties, but her attitude and aura is divine.

When Savitri and Satyavan come back to earth, Satyavan enquires Savitri in all awe about the long journey they undertook. But Savitri takes no credit of her doing and draws his attention to the same woods where they lived and loved previously. She is extremely humble and does not boast that she has retrieved him after a long tapasya.

All now is changed, yet all is still the same.  
Lo, we have looked upon the face of God,..  
Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not our earth:  
Our bodies need each other in the same last;  
Still in our breasts repeat heavenly secret rhythm  
Our human heart-beats passionately close.  
Still am I she who came to thee mid the murmur  
Of sunlit leaves upon this forest verge;  
I am the Madran, I am Savitri.  
All that I was before, I am to thee still,  
Close comrade of thy thoughts and hopes and toils,  
All happy contraries I would join for thee.  
All sweet relations marry in our life;  
I am thy kingdom even as thou art mine,  
The sovereign and the slave of thy desire,  
Thy prone possessor, sister of thy soul  
And mother of thy wants; thou art my world,  
The earth I need, the heaven my thoughts desire,  
The world I inhabit and the god I adore.

Thy body is my body's counterpart  
Whose every limb my answering limb desires,  
Whose heart is key to all my heart-beats,—this  
I am and thou to me, O Satyavan. (719-720)

This description though looks like that of a humble and loving wife, yet it is spoken by the divine Savitri; for she does not talk to Satyavan, her husband but to the soul of the earth. She speaks of herself as the same Savitri, but her consciousness has enlarged and changed in her and it is marked by Satyavan. Thus to conclude the human-divine transition of Savitri we can quote from *The Life Divine*:

...the law of Hunger must give place progressively to the law of Love, the law of Division to the law of Unity, the law of Death to the law of Immortality. Such is the necessity, such the justification, such the culmination and self-fulfilment of the Desire that is at work in the universe. (CWSA 21: 207)

Thus Savitri transcends the human laws and moves into the law of Love, Unity and Immortality in the course of this cosmic epic. But how is it that Savitri is able to transcend the human limitation and become immortal? Sri Aurobindo gives an answer in Savitri itself. Despite her strength of bearing the truth and despite showing the initial courage to be able to face her fate and ultimately change it, Savitri is in despair like any human being. But then she hears a Voice:

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,  
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,  
Then mortal nature change to the divine.  
Open God's door, enter into his trance. (476)

Listening to this command Savitri goes forth in search of her soul and ultimately finds it. It is there that she gets the real strength of the immortal. Once she finds the soul she comes out of the mortal law and gains that knowledge by which she can transform life and conquer death. Therefore, it is not impossible for the human being to dream of what Savitri has done and exceed oneself. Sri Aurobindo says in the same canto "One man's perfection still can save the world" depends if we want to be that perfection. This life, under the control of "death, desire and incapacity" has all the possibilities of becoming a "camp of God" "pitched in human time."

Through all this analysis we see the human emotions, feelings, difficulties and challenges that Savitri faces. She has been given the most difficult ordeal – that is to fight death. She has also been given the foreknowledge of his death. Sri Aurobindo has described in great detail how she prepares herself to face the fateful day. All these are sure indicators for all human beings, of what we can do when we are in difficulty. In fact, even though we do not have the foreknowledge, we know for sure that one day we and our loved ones are going to die. We can leave from Savitri and prepare ourselves for the ordeals of life.

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# BEAUTY AND DELIGHT



*Painting by: Sushila Prakash*

Krishna is the Eternal's Personality of Ananda;  
because [of] him all creation is possible,  
because of his play,  
because of his delight,  
because of his sweetness.  
...Krishna is the Supreme's eternal,  
infinite, immortal self- possession,  
self-issuing, self-manifestation, self-finding.

Sri Aurobindo



# Mahakavi Kalidasa

## His contribution to Indian Literature

Subhra Nath Maiti

Nothing is known about Kalidasa's life and age with certainty except the seven literary works left for posterity. Like Shakespeare, the Indian bard is also silent about himself. Ancient Indians did not take great interest in writing history; perhaps, they loved life more than authoring history. Therefore, we lack accurate historical and biographical data about the lives of great personalities of that time.

Although we do not have any biographical details, still we can portray Kalidasa's personality from his literature. His writings show a noble and meaningful mode of life for the people to pursue. His works are an intellectual food for thinkers and common readers alike. His descriptions stretch from mountains and rivers to cities and villages, from Ramagiri in Central India to Alakanagari in the Himalayas. In the epic poem *Raghuvamsha*, while portraying the conquests of Emperor Raghu, Kalidasa describes the places and peoples, their modes of living, food-habits and trades and professions, rivers and mountains in almost the whole country — Assam, Bengal and Utkal in the East; Pandya and Kerala in the South and Sind, Gandhara and other places in the North-west. He must have travelled widely across the length and breadth of the land, seen those places, talked to the people and studied their modes of living. Also they are marked by a belief of what is good in life and people's noble goals of life. He keenly observes the life in the court, also village life and that in the company of nature. He could describe the rich and wealthy life in a royal palace and the serene, simple and peaceful life at a hermitage with equal understanding. In his work is found an excellent combination of art-consciousness, unmatched word power and an unparalleled capacity for vivid portrayals. Portrayal of Bharatvarsa is one of the salient features of Kalidasa's work. No other poet has ever successfully painted the entire country with so much ease and musical words.

He was a poet of love, beauty and pleasures of life. Sensuality is the main characteristic of his art. But sensuality never crosses the limit of vulgarity. It is always under the surveillance of psychic influence. That's why his art still continues to live even after thousands of years. There are references of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Gita*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, six Darshans, also fine arts like music, dance, painting, etc. that we come across in his writing. He seems to be acquainted with Astronomy. With him we are in the company of a highly civilized, cultured personality and a mature, ripened mind; mind under the psychic influence. One cannot but appreciate the versatility of his genius. In *Kumarasambhava*, he is a devotee of Shiva and he worships Vishnu in *Raghuvamsha*. So, his religious views are not insular. We enter his world of populace pure in mind and body and graceful in nature. His work can elevate human consciousness from mundane level to spiritual level. He was a scholar but was never dry and his works display his poetic genius as well as his unique scholarship.

Kalidasa thought of drama to be चाक्षुषःयज्ञः, a ritual of sacrifice for eyes. The words suggest that he took his business seriously. Once, he also said –

नाट्यंभिन्नरुचेर्जनस्यबहुधोप्येकंसमाराधनम् ।

Drama is a means of pleasing people of different tastes; so his aim was to please and satisfy all the people with a high respect for their tastes.

If we compare Kalidasa with other Sanskrit poets, a few observations can be made. Kalidasa's poetry is like a creeper in the garden, well cared for and properly trimmed compared

to Bhasa's which is like a creeper in the forest, growing naturally. In the case of Bhavabhooti, we can consider one example, that of the grief of Rama as described by Bhavabhooti and Kalidasa in *Uttararamacharit* and *Raghuvamsha*, respectively. Rama, in the former, faints from grief but in the latter, Rama's eyes are full of tears. The description makes Rama sentimental in the former but Kalidasa's Ram is more controlled and noble. Kalidasa is always balanced in sketching his characters. Bhavabhooti's *Uttararamacharit* is moving with remarkable pathos in it. Dandi's *Dashakumaracharit* is a prose narrative and is like a modern novel as it describes many strata of the society with adventures and deceits in it. The use of romance and irony in it is quite attractive.

It is generally accepted that Kalidasa was a Kashmiri. Scholars have speculated that he might have lived either near the Himalayas or in the vicinity of Ujjayini. The speculations are based on Kalidasa's detailed description of the Himalayas in *Kumarasambhava* and his deep affection for the city of Ujjayini as displayed in *Meghadoota*. He must have belonged to Ujjayini as there are loving references to it in his writing. His seat might have been beside all the glories of Vikramaditya's or a great King's throne.

However, from his works, it is clear that Kālidāsa had extensive knowledge of dance, music and painting. His knowledge of dance can be estimated from his play *Mālavikāgnimitram*. At the very beginning, he makes his famous remark about the stage.

नाट्यंभिन्नरुचेर्जनस्य बहुधोप्येकं समाराधनम् ।।

The stage is a one-stop entertainment solution for people of varied tastes and orientations.

Elsewhere in the same play, we get to know his intimate knowledge of dance and his astute observations about it. Similarly, his knowledge of music and painting is found scattered across his works. We also see a close correlation between his works and some of the surviving sculptures from the Gupta Golden Age. For example, the Deogarh *Daśavatāra* temple has a relief sculpture depicting Lord Viṣṇu sleeping on his serpent *Ādiśeṣa*. It is identical to the description of Lord Viṣṇu in the tenth chapter of *Raghuvamśam*. Also, depictions of the marriage of Lord Śiva with Goddess Pārvatī can be found in the caves of Ellora and Elephanta. They are based on the mythology created by Kālidāsa in *Kumārasambhavam*. The ornate details of the sculptures correlate with the ornate nature of Kālidāsa's poetry.

### Quantitative Contributions of Kālidāsa

The contributions of Kālidāsa to literature are massive. Apart from the inestimable qualitative value of his seven works, there are many quantitative things in which he excelled. He was the first poet to write a complete work devoted to describing the seasons, *Rtusamhāram*. His lyrical poem *Meghadūtam* became so popular that innumerable imitations of it have appeared. Only the messengers change. He has probably invented or perfected at least three poetic meters, namely Mandākrānta (in *Meghadūtam*), Drutavilambita (in *Raghuvamśam*) and Rathoddata (in *Kumārasambhavam* and *Raghuvamśam*). He was probably the first poet to write a suprabhātam of any kind. We see it in the fifth chapter of *Raghuvamśam* where it is dedicated to King Aja. It became so popular that most of the subsequent *suprabhātam* poems were composed in the same meter in which Kālidāsa had composed his – Vasantatilaka. Further, he is the first one to describe a svayaṃvara in detail. We see it during Indumati's svayaṃvara in the sixth canto of *Raghuvamśam*. He is also the first great proponent of ornate poetry.

Kalidasa's use of words is unique as he brings out the entire intended meaning in a few words. Brevity is wit is the principal charm of his work. The universally approved criteria of sublime are noble diction, the power to grasp great ideas, the right use of figures of speech,

the presentation of great souls in the protagonists etc. Longinus, an ancient Greek critic also explained these in his well-known essay On the Sublime. The work of Kalidasa encompasses all these characteristics.

Kalidasa shows the astonishing skill of portrayal of human emotions and thoughts. His portrayals of the Himalayas and of the mode in which the season of spring blossomed are some of the most lyrical expressions in the language. Kalidasa also exhibits his powers of perception while recognising 'beauty in action and behaviour'. His descriptions are vivid and heartwarming. They are always so picturesque—as if the events are happening before us. They are as if painting in words. In the second Sarga or canto of *Raghuvamsha*, King Dileep returning home with the holy cow, Nandini in darkness in the forest of the Himalayas is an instance of this. Kalidasa portrays the movements of the resting animals like flocks of wild pigs, deer, peacocks, etc. Another instance is the simile of the design on the back of an elephant used to describe the view of the river, Narmada from the top of Vindhya in *Meghadoota*.

Kalidasa's poetry is celebrated for its beautiful imagery and dazzling use of similes. It is rightly said उपमाकालिदासस्य— One can look upon Kalidasa for the most remarkable similes. They are remarkable in variety. At the beginning of *Raghuvamsha*, Shiva and Parvati are united like speech and meaning. In *Kumarasambhava*, the voice of Parvati is like the sound of Veena. His style is 'Vaidarbhi'. Kalidasa's works display three great qualities — a sense of beauty, capacity for appreciation of the aesthetic values, and our traditional culture. Moreover, he shows a scientific attitude in his poetry. For example, the route suggested to the cloud for his journey is accurate not only from geographical but also from meteorological point of view. The details of natural scenery in *Rutusamhara* display his keen and loving observation. His characterization shows his profound psychological insights.

Here, I would like to mention some unique similes from his works. Despite being a short lyrical poem, the quality of similes in *Meghadūtam* is of a very high order. For example,

येनश्यामंवपुर्अतितरांकान्तिम्आपत्स्यते ।  
तेबर्हेणैवस्फुरितरुचिनागोपवेषस्यविष्णोः ॥

These lines imply a cloud with a rainbow across its dark grey body appears like Lord Krishna with a peacock feather on his head.

Similarly, the lines

रेवांद्रक्ष्यस्युपलविषमेविन्ध्यपादेविशीर्णा  
भक्तिच्छेदैरिविरचितांभूतिमङ्गोगजस्य ॥

Suggest that the Amrakantak hill with river Narmada flowing down in multiple streams appears like a big elephant with its body painted in white stripes.

In *Raghuvamśam*, Kālidāsa reaches his zenith in terms of similes. In this work, he provides strikingly apt similes drawn from such diverse areas, such as mythology, agriculture, grammar, nature, scriptures, astrology, statecraft, and of course, day-to-day life. His similes aptly represent his mastery over each one of these. Beyond giving strict similes, he has given us some wonderful examples of *dr̥ṣṭānta*, *utprekṣā*, and *atiśayokti*. They are all basically rooted in comparison like the simile. Hence, we shall include them in our examples.

मन्दःकवियशःप्रार्थी गमिष्याम्युपहास्यताम् ।  
प्रांशुलभ्येफलोलोभाद्—उद्बाहुरिववामनः ॥

Me, the dullard, who is yearning for poetic fame will be made fun of just like a short man jumping to reach for a fruit hanging high up.

तंसन्तःश्रोतुमर्हन्ति सदसद्व्यक्तिहेतवः ।  
हेम्नःसंलक्ष्यतेह्यग्नौ विशुद्धिःश्यामिकापिवा ॥

These lines indicate that *Raghuvamśam* will be read by those, who can differentiate between right and wrong. The purity or the lack of it in gold is determined only when it is subjected to fire.

ससेनामहतींकर्षन् पूर्वसागरगामिनीम् ।  
बभौहरजटाभ्रष्टां गङ्गामिवभगीरथः ॥

King Raghu, leading his great army, appeared like King Bhagīratha leading the river Gaṅga towards the Eastern sea.

This simile is most appropriate because King Raghu headed towards the East on his conquest.

आपादपद्मप्रणताः कलमाइवतेरघुम् ।  
फलैःसंवर्धयामासुर्- उत्खातप्रतिर्पिताः ॥

They (Vaṅgas, having submitted to Raghu and being reinstated in their domains, bore rich fruits for Raghu. It was like displacing the tender rice sapling from one side of a paddy field into the other and reaping benefits.

This is an actual agricultural process that is apt for the situation.

सञ्चारिणीदीपशिखेवरात्रौ ययंब्यतीयायपतिंवरासा ।  
नरेन्द्रमार्गाद्दृष्टवप्रपेदे विवर्णभावंससभूमिपालः ॥

In the svayaṃvara, as Indumati approached each king, his face glowed with expectation and excitement. But as she moved on without choosing them, their faces became pale and dejected. Kālidāsa compares this to the flame of a lamp passing through the main street of a city, illuminating each home as it approaches it and leaving behind it in darkness as it moves forward. For this brilliant simile, the Indian literary tradition fondly assigned him the honorific title of 'DīpaśikhāKālidāsa.'

दृष्ट्याप्रसादामलयाकुमारं प्रत्यग्रहीत्संवरणस्रजेव ॥

Indumati accepted prince Aja with a pleasant twinkle in her eyes. It was as if her look itself had become the garland of marriage.

अनुभूयवसिष्ठसंभृतैः सलिलैस्तेनसहाभिषेचनम् ।  
विशदोच्छवसितेनमेदिनी कथयामासकृतार्थतामिव ॥

The sacred waters by which sage Vasiṣṭha performed the coronation of King Aja fell on to the ground. The aroma that arose from the ground was like the earth heaving its sigh of relief on welcoming Aja as the king.

Many eminent poets praised and practiced the kalidasian tradition of using similes.

### **Synthesis of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva**

Kālidāsa was the first great poet to advocate the basic oneness governing the three forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. He has composed elaborate eulogies to all three of them *Raghuvamśam*,—hails Lord Viṣṇu, imploring him to assail Rāvaṇa. In *Kumārasambhavam*, the gods praise Brahmā and beseech him to protect them from the demon Tārakāsura. In the same epic, the *saptaṛṣis* praise Lord Śiva. Kālidāsa has written memorable invocatory verses eulogizing Lord Śiva in all his major works. *Kumārasambhavam* explicitly states the essential oneness of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. In his sloka he propounds:

The same ideal manifests itself in three ways – Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. It is common

for them to move up and down the hierarchy among them. Sometimes Viṣṇu takes precedence over Śiva; at other times, Śiva takes precedence over Viṣṇu; similarly, at times Brahmā takes precedence over the other two and they indeed take precedence over Brahmā at other times.

The consciousness Kalidasa has introduced in the field of literature has influenced all the major poets of India and abroad, especially Romantic poets like Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Byron etc. Even mighty Shakesperean dramas also show some thematic affinity of kalidasa's work. Among Indian poets, Jayadeva, Banbhata, Rajasekhara, Rabindranath, Madhusudan Dutta, Bankimchandra are also influenced by him. Many epic traditions are also influenced and shaped by Kalidasa's work for example, Tamilian and Kanarian epics are influenced by Kalidasa and Bhasa. Now we will look into details how the consciousness of Kalidasa's work sparked later all over the world in detail.

India's spiritual values and high moral quality expressed through her immortal Sanskrit literature and it made a great impact on the minds of creative writers in the West. The famous Abhijnana Shakuntalam of poet Kalidasa was in demand in the West for India's eternal values as they are reflected in her immortal literature touched the very core of the Western mind. Prof. Sylvan Levi wrote:

The name of Kalidasa dominates Indian poetry and epitomizes it brilliantly. The drama, a grand and scholarly epic, a truly classical masterpiece, which India admires and humanity recognizes. The praise which is saluting the birth of Shakuntala at Ujjayini, has existed over long centuries, bringing illumination from one world to the other since William Jones revealed it to the West. (Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta 1946, 175).

This particular quotation shows the impact of kalidasian ethos on western mind.

Arthur W. Ryder, one of Kalidasa's translators to the West, also paid his homage in the following words:

The best proof of a poet's greatness is the inability of men to live without him; in other words, his power to win and hold through centuries the love and admiration of his own people, especially when that people has shown itself capable of high intellectual and spiritual achievement. (Arthur W. Ryder, *Kalidasa: Translations of Shakuntala and other Works*, Everyman's Library Series, Poetry and The Drama, Ernst Rhys ed., London and New York, 1912, xvii).

While enumerating Indian genius, Swami Vivekananda described some of India's gifts to the world:

In literature, our epics and poems and drama rank as high as those of any language; our Shaguntala (Shakuntala) was summarized by Germany's greatest poet as heaven and earth united Complete Works, II, 511-12).

In *The Discovery of India*, Nehru pointed out that Indian philosophy was felt by Europeans- characteristically ambivalent about the tremendous stimulus of Indian thought on western civilization- to fulfill a need that their own culture has failed to meet (174-5). Obviously Nehru was pointing to the evolutionary crisis of the West satiated by the eastern philosophy and literature.

The German naturalist, traveler and statesman Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) wrote about Indian poetry and observed that Kalidasa, the celebrated author of the Sakoontala, is a masterly story-teller of the influence which Nature exercises upon the minds of lovers. This great poet flourished at the splendid court of Vikramaditya, and was, therefore, contemporary

with Virgil and Horace. Tenderness in the expression of feeling, and richness of creative fancy, have assigned to him his lofty place among the poets of all nations. (quoted in the Introduction, Monier Williams, *Sakoontala: or the Lost Ring*, Hertford, 1855, x). This quotation shows that Western critics have already started comparing Kalidasa with other poetic genius of the world.

Will Durant highlighted the impact of Sakuntala when he addressed the need for a deeper study of India's culture in *The Story of Civilization: Our Oriental Heritage*:

1789 Sir William Jones initiated his career as one of the greatest indologists by translating Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*; this translation, re-rendered into German from English in 1791, profoundly affected Herder and Goethe, and through the Schlegels – the entire Romantic movement. (*The Story of Civilization*, 391-2). In fact many Romantic poets were influenced by the Indian bard.

*(Kalidasa's influence on various poets across the world will be dealt with in the next section.)*

*To be continued...*

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# The Philosophical and Historical Dimensions in Kalidasa's Works

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*Oeendrilla Guha*

Of Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa Sri Aurobindo sings in high praise: "Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa are the essence of the history of ancient India; if all else were lost, they would still be its sole and sufficient cultural history." (SABCL 3: 217) Each of their poetic bodies is a type and exponent "of three periods in the development of the human soul" including the "three great powers which dispute and clash in the imperfect and half-formed temperament and harmonise in the formed and perfect." (SABCL 3: 217) Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa represent the three moods of the Aryan civilisation, moral, intellectual and material, respectively.

Kalidasa, whom Sri Aurobindo hails as "the third great embodiment of the national consciousness", came at a time when the Indian psyche and intellect had come under the rigorous influence of a moral and intellectual formalism in the religious movement of Buddhism. (SABCL 3: 221) At such a time, when all life was being tabulated into a moral testament of human behaviour, Kalidasa awoke his nation with a "creative and aesthetic enthusiasm", inserting his works with characters, who were steeped into the enjoyment of senses, of flora and fauna. Setting aside the "dry intellectualism of metaphysical logic" (SABCL 3: 222) often synonymous with morality and religiosity, Kalidasa gilded his works with,

An imaginative pleasure in all shades of thought and of sentiment, a rich delight of the mind in its emotions, a luxuriousness of ecstasy and grief, a free abandonment to amorous impulse and rapture, a continual joy of life and seeking for beauty mark the period when India, having for the time exhausted the possibilities of soul-experience attainable through the spirit and the imaginative reason, was now attempting to find out the utmost each sense could feel, probing and sounding the soul-possibilities in matter and even seeking God through the senses. (SABCL 3: 226)

A magician in his own right, Kalidasa offered his audience an unadulterated view of human foibles, more often than not with a gentle reminder that he was no advocate of "moral fervour or moral strictness". (SABCL 3: 223) As a champion of humanism, he was no social activist or a supporter of vigilantism to have prescribed a coded behaviour of right and wrong. His literary creations breathe of "an intense hedonistic impulse thrilling through speech and informing action." (SABCL 3: 226)

Infusing his works with "a keen appreciation of high ideal and lofty thought", he kept it balanced with a highly vital seasoning of "the senses, of aesthetic beauty, of sensuous emotion." (SABCL 3: 223) His inherent capacity to seize an object and present its beauty of form and colour has no parallel. His works offer a visual treat to his readers, who are captivated by the sheer force of his descriptive puissance to appreciate all things transient and imperfect. He chose to pay homage to the God of material beauty and delight. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The scenery of his work is a universal paradise of beautiful things." (SABCL 3: 226)

It is imperative to remark here that even though Kalidasa dismissed the rigorous influence of a moral and intellectual formalism in the religious movement of Buddhism, he espoused the Buddhist tenets of love, compassion, and interconnectedness with Nature.

He was not devout but had faith in the supreme Power and practiced the Vedanta tenet of Brahman in the material world, and all his works stand testimony to the Vedantin in him. In fact, in "The Message of the Forest" Rabindranath Tagore applauds *Shakuntala* and *Raghuvamsha*, which are set in the bosom of the forest. Shakuntala marries Dushyanta and leaves her verdurous home for Hastinapur, where rebuffed, comes back to the forest. In due course, Dushyanta unites with Shakuntala in the forest. Shakuntala, as the spirit of the forest, forgives her husband whose pleasure in hunting makes him the spirit of enjoyment through greed since he forgets her after acquiring her. Similarly, *Raghuvamsha* portrays King Dilip and Queen Sudakshina as preferring life in a forest to a city. Thus, Kalidasa depicts the forest as the scene of reconciliation between the spirit and the flesh.

"The Message of the Forest" is a discourse on Kalidasa's ideal representation of the forest in his seminal works, which Tagore considers as a reservoir and representation of the past, which contains "the unrealised future". (385) This essay carries forward the spiritual lineage of *Shakuntala* and *Raghuvamsha* by spearheading the Indians towards "a new direction", that of passing on India's supreme message of the material world inholding a consciousness. Hence, Sri Aurobindo is seconded by Tagore because the former opined that Kalidasa is an essence of India's ethos of "the supreme Soul and dynamic Nature by which the world is created". And "if all else were lost", Kalidasa would continue to remain one of her integral voices because his works epitomise one of the six philosophical systems (Darshanas) of India, namely Vedanta, which imparts the message of the union of the spirit and the material world. In the current age of materialism, commercialism and ecological exploitation, Kalidasa's works typify the material world's search for and attainment of a supreme Consciousness. Thus, lies the relevance of his works as a cultural reservoir and representation of ancient India that can shape her "unrealised future". (385)

Avanti, currently corresponding to the Malva region in Madhya Pradesh, was a prosperous seat of culture and thus played an important part in weaving the history of ancient India. Its capital was Ujjayini, known for its material, cultural and intellectual wealth. According to Sri Aurobindo, the Malavas had

...an aesthetic catholicity, a many-sided curiosity and receptiveness which enabled them to appreciate learning, high moral ideals and intellectual daring and ardour and assimilate them as far as was consistent with their own root-temperament. Nevertheless that root-temperament remained material and sensuous. (SABCL 3: 215)

Under Vikramaditya, its most capable trustee, the ancient realm witnessed Kalidasa's genius at work. As mentioned by Sri Aurobindo, the Malavas grouped under Vikramaditya in 56 B.C., which marks the beginning of the Samvat era. In the wake of 56 B.C., Kalidasa came to Ujjayini "to sum up in his poetry the beauty of human life, the splendours of art and the glory of the senses." (SABCL 3: 216)

Of Kalidasa's *Seasons* Sri Aurobindo writes that it "is perhaps the first poem in any literature written with the express object of describing Nature." (SABCL 3: 252) In *Vikramōrvaśīyam*, King Pururavas wanders through a forest addressing flowers and trees as if they were his love, Urvashie. Sri Aurobindo praises *Meghadutam*, which details the Himalayas and the flora and fauna of northern India, as "the most marvellously perfect descriptive and elegiac poem in the world's literature." (SABCL 3: 245) Kalidasa's conscious effort to describe a living Nature may be ascribed to the supreme significance he gave



to life. Nature formed an intrinsic part of his life and the Kalidasian similes pay tribute to Nature. So, Sri Aurobindo opines,

A vivid and virile interpretation of sense-life in Nature, a similar interpretation of all elements of human life capable of greatness of beauty, seen under the light of the senses and expressed in terms of an aesthetic appreciation, - this is the spirit of Kalidasa's work as it is of his last. (SABLC 3: 260)

Kalidasa did not demonstrate a "spiritual discernment" vis a vis the living world probably because he was much too preoccupied with its "outward body... the physical aspects of things..." (SABCL 3: 260) It can be presumed that the reason he did not venture "too far inside" the spiritual implications of Nature is because he never imagined human life without a thriving natural world, a shift from his contented present to a disconsolate future sans an abundant natural world. Unfortunately, Nature that Kalidasa described in *Seasons, Shakuntala, Raghuvamsha, Meghadutam, Vikramōrvaśīyam* and others no longer exists because barbarians and later-day colonisers defiled and destroyed it. Nature that Kalidasa was a part of and lived in relation to, that he chronicled in his works is defunct and utopic. It was destroyed in the name of wilderness and bold unpredictability, and in its place a 'second' nature, which is tame, mundane and predictable, is brought into being. 'Second' nature is manufactured of human labour, mainly colonised labour, when the West identified an extinction of forms in Nature. Thus, in time, Kalidasian imagery turned to "an artificial conceit" devoid of native flora and fauna and "original sublimity" as India was subjugated to centuries of tyranny, her national life shredded.

Despite his focused pursuit to encapsulate "the delight of the eye, the delight of the ear, smell, palate, touch, the satisfaction of the imagination and taste" (SABCL 3: 225), thereby rounding off the third period in the development of the human soul, the fourth and final round of India's experience of an ideal age in which moral, intellectual and material developments could be harmonised and spiritualised remained incomplete. As hordes of barbarians broke in through the northern passes and put a stop to "her endless solitary *tapasya* of effort" (SABCL 3: 227), India was coerced into opening her doors to "the callow civilization of the West with its dogmatic and intolerant knowledge, its still more dogmatic and intolerant ignorance, its deification of selfishness and force, its violence and its ungoverned Titanism". (SABCL 3: 228) And centuries later, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore remind us that Kalidasa, with his soulful rendering of an India nestled in the verdurous Himalayan plateau, was a representative of a 'first' Nature that was in union with the spirit.

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# *LIFE*



*Photography by Debaleena Bhattacharjee & Debashish Mukherjee*

...in and behind all finite life in the universe  
there is an infinite reality seeking to arrive at itself  
which must in its self-unfolding create finite forms of life  
which are yet able in their consciousness and movement  
to manifest and realise the infinite.

Sri Aurobindo

## Binding oneself in *Lakshmanrekha*

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Poorva Sharma

If the title of this article causes a slight discomfort in your mind, maybe even a little cringing, I can assure you that it did the same for me. In our post-modern age, when individuality, freedom, boundless potential and spontaneous expression of what one feels are the values by which people want to live their lives, such words as *lakshmanrekha*, even if one can keep aside for a moment its unpopular association with women, seem forced and unnecessary. Undoubtedly, today when the spirit of the times is to break down old structures based on hierarchical caste differentiation, gender differences in terms of social freedom, career ambitions etc., religion-sanctioned hegemony of certain persons or institutions, to suggest a return to this old phrase, which is also quite a mouthful for non-Hindi speaking people, seems absurd and misleading.

In fact, now a few scholars are even suggesting that this episode of Lakshman drawing a boundary outside the *kutti* (small hut) within which Sita was supposed to remain so as to ensure her safety, an act which today's feminists would criticize as demeaning of a woman's agency and intellect, never appears in Valmiki's Ramayana. This was something added later on, and even then this *lakshmanrekha* was a boundary with occult powers which nobody could cross and harm Sita, rather than it being a boundary mandating the woman to stay within its confines. Anyhow, be that as it may, I shall develop in this article what I mean by *lakshmanrekha* and my reasons for siding with its necessity.

People often feel a spiritual call when life feels mundane, repetitive and meaningless. Though we know and see every day that we are different from other animals (it is often very hard to remember that we too are animals, biologically speaking), that we can do thousands of things and feel and think million others which they cant, but yet every now and then a few of us feel a strange uneasiness, as if we are not as free as we think we are. We may be doing quite well in our studies, the teachers happy and impressed with our intellect, but still something within feels that *this is not it*. We may have read the most important scholars and the most brilliant theories, but those are not about me, *they are not from inside of me*. Or, perhaps we are finally in a career which we always wanted to be in, earning well and getting appreciation from our colleagues and superiors. Being on the path to achieving all that one wanted, one may yet not be able to dismiss the nagging feeling if this is all there is to life. Of course someone like a Gautama Siddhartha is not born every other day, or even every other century, or even every other millennium! who could see his imprisonment in his life of opulence and every material comfort and freedom possible to a young man, and who walked away from life and world in order to find a true freedom. Still a few people every now and then realize that though difficult to articulate and point out with a crystal clear clarity, they are parts of a well-oiled machine. They are living the well-trodden path of working-earning-spending-working, more-earning much more-spending-marrying- travelling-working more and now preferably in a long-term job-raising children-saving money-ensuring enough bank balance to last them and their child's life preferably- retiring with enough time and health to enjoy the dusk of life. I apologise for this stereotyped account of life but this has been pretty much a summary of what most people want. I myself wish I could have this as my dream and believe in it with all my heart, but this was not to be unfortunately (or maybe fortunately, I don't know!)

But yet, even after having and being all one wanted, a feeling of lack remains, and it is so hard to point out the reason for it. I once heard in one of my favorite podcasts called *Speaking of Jung* an exchange of ideas around this feeling of lack. The interviewer, a US national who conducts

well-researched conversations with Jungian analysts and scholars (Carl Jung was a 20<sup>th</sup> century psychoanalyst who founded his school of psychology called *analytical psychology* and whose ideas come close to the spiritual experiences of human beings) shared this about herself:

I have often wondered, what am I looking for? My life is so full. I am so busy and fulfilled, and I have so much to do and so much to read and yet I keep kind of poking at them (at her Buddhist friends) and wanting to ask them questions, read things and go to their lectures, and so I often wonder what am I searching for. What is it that I don't have? What am I trying to fill?

To this, her Jungian psychologist guest answered:

I feel that it is the ego that is not satisfied, and that's the beginning and end of it.. It needs more. The difficulty with the ego is that it wants to appropriate to itself everything that one does. So if in fact one meditates, it becomes a 'meditator.' I think the longing is to become what one can be, which is exactly how Jung put it. He gave it different names, as I mentioned before. He called it "God's will" or a "religious instinct" or the idea that there is something within us which wants more than we can see. The only problem is that we try and obtain it much like how one person called it spiritual materialism. We gather up these things, these books we have read, having been to the *kumbh mela*, these meditation retreats that we have been to, and thus we begin to hang on to them. The ego takes hold of these things. It is therefore very fascinating how the ego works.. The purification of this is necessary.

I found this to be a very eye-opening exchange, especially the host's sharing of this strange feeling of lack. Listening to these two immensely experienced people – one a 52-year-old well-read and well-travelled woman, another a 65-year old well-read, well-travelled, researcher and therapist as well as a spiritual practitioner- filled me with a certain humility and grounding, and also a very justified dread of the sheer hold that the ego has on us.

It is exactly what this gentleman mentioned which connects to the theme of this article. It is for the purification of our make-up for which a *lakshmanrekha* is necessary.

### **An indispensable requirement in all spiritual traditions**

Being in my early 20s, as I began to read Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on the Yoga*, as well as the words of the Mother, I often skipped those parts where they mentioned the need for the sadhaka to purify her nature. Partly because my self-serving psychological defences were still quite in place making me unconscious about my dark parts, and partly because I value freedom and spontaneity more than rules and observances necessary to maintain harmony and order in a community life, I found these passages not necessary for everyone because some already have quite a prepared nature. After all, are not we all 20-year-olds exceptional for having turned to this "deeper call" in the first place? The fact this call came and we heeded, that is proof in itself of how purified we already are! Needless to say, this arrogant attitude betrayed ignorance about what lies within us, the layers and layers of conditioning, self-aggrandising survival instincts, and the deep fear of surrender to something much vaster and unknown.

Now in my mid 30s and forced to acknowledge the darkness more than the light within, I am now forced to relook at this aspect of any spiritual discipline with a different attitude. Not only has purification been a vital aspect of all spiritual traditions, it is one of the preliminary things and stances one needs to mature in, before hoping for any real growth. Patanjali, the father of yoga, laid out his path of realizing the Truth and based it on eight limbs, and although

all eight develop and mature simultaneously, in that no *sadhana* is a linear process, but for him *niyama* and *yama* had to be the starting points.

Similarly, the Buddha laid out three aspects of the path to enlightenment – *sila* (purification discipline/moral observances), *samadhi* (concentration) and *prajna* (insight and wisdom). All three are equally important, and all three help strengthen each other. The five restrains, *sila*, are: to abstain from taking life, to abstain from taking what is not given, to abstain from sensuous misconduct, false speech and from intoxicants as tending to cloud the mind.

Whether one lives in a spiritual community or not, such self-restrains are necessary to be observed, not out of reasons of politeness or to maintain a positive likeable social image of oneself, but for much deeper and profounder reasons than one appreciates, especially at the beginning.

### Lighting the fire of purification

As one takes the first steps on the path with the wish to live a deeper life, or to find one's soul, or to live more freely, or to become enlightened, one of the first discoveries is that there are many sides of oneself which one is not conscious of. In the *Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo writes "The practice of Yoga brings us face to face with the extraordinary complexity of our own being, the stimulating but also embarrassing multiplicity of our personality, the rich endless confusion of Nature... as soon as we go deep within ourselves,- and Yoga means a plunge into all the multiple profundities of the soul,- we find ourselves subjectively surrounded by a whole complex world which we have to know and to conquer" (74-75). It is the unpleasant aspects of oneself, the many habits, fixations, biases, emotional eruptions that appear. The various "dos and donts" prescribed by the spiritual traditions also serve the purpose of bringing to the surface all these hidden aspects. These behavioural prescriptions put us out of our comfort zones, and an inner friction gets created, an inner fire where *what ought to be done* throws a challenge to *how things have always been like*. If not for these, the ego is quite a master at ensuring that its old ways remain more or less intact, while also being satisfied that "it is on the path." For the main concern of the ego is its own survival, and its nature is to deeply believe that it is the centre of the universe. Till an inner pressure is created to test that, no real opposition to its rule can be there.

Let us try to see this through an example.

In the CWM Vol-13, Page 167 one comes across this very clearly stated letter, which perhaps was meant as a notice for all ashram inmates:

The Mother wants that the people responsible for receiving the visitors should always be very polite and gentle in their behaviour towards them. High and low, young and old, whether they are well-dressed or ill-clad, all should always be received properly with benevolence and good behaviour. It is not necessary that the better dressed people may be more fit for being received well in this Ashram. It should not be that we give more care to the people with a motor car than to an ordinary man looking like a beggar. We must never forget that they are as much human as we are and we have no right to think that we are at the top of the scale.

And our politeness should not be merely an outer form, stiff politeness, so to say. It must be something coming from within. Whatever may be the difficulties and whatever may be the circumstances – Mother fully knows even to the minutest detail the circumstances, when we lose our temper and get irritated in our work, and knowing that fully well she says – whatever may be the circumstances, rudeness or curt behaviour is never permissible.

There are difficulties in our way, but Mother says that as a rule our difficulties and our

troubles are always such that we do have the capacity of overcoming them. If we can remain at our best we shall always be able to tackle the situation without losing control. Remember, each time we lose control of ourselves, each time we get angry or we have to use the outer means of keeping discipline, it means that at that moment we have fallen low and we could not rise up to the situation. In everything, in every way, it boils down to one rule – always endeavour to make progress, try to be your true self. Even if you have not been able to do it today you must be able to do it tomorrow. But the full effect must be there. Never forget in your action that you are representing the Ashram. People will judge the Ashram from your behaviour. Even if you have to say No, even if you have to reject somebody's request, you can do it with all politeness and courtesy. Try to help each one. Even if others are rude to you, it is not a reason for you to do likewise. If you behave in the same way as the outsiders do, then what is the fun of your being here. (CWM 13: 167-168)

Of course, this is one of the many examples cited throughout their works of how one should aim to be, but I found this quite detailed and typical of how the ego reacts when "I am the center of the universe" is in question, which is being done in this notice in many places. In fact, the very first paragraph does this job pretty well. These lines of seeing everyone with respect and equality underline the truth that every human being, nay every sentient being, is equal and all judgments and hierarchical valuations to life are entirely human productions and have no real basis.

The last of the second paragraph is especially categorical: no matter the circumstance, rude or curt behaviour is never permissible. Woah! Never permissible? Even if the other person screams at one or hits one? Surely then one has to get into a *dharmic* fight or "fight the forces of falsehood" in whose grip this other person clearly is! (This is not to demean what Krishna said to Arjuna, but the sarcasm is merely to underline that we all too often believe to stand by the side of dharma as opposed to someone else who merely disagrees with our viewpoint). Well, if one is to go by what the Mother says here, then nothing justifies anger and rudeness. But how can we understand the logic of these restraints then in order to better implement them?

### **All sadhana is, ultimately, for oneself and only oneself**

Whether hidden or obvious, the reasons why people turn to any spiritual path is to sort themselves out. When everything in the world has been tried out and found wanting, we turn within to find the root of the malaise troubling us. Each one's path is unique and so are their difficulties and potential, and that is the adventure of it. However, much too often we find ourselves worried and concerned about what the other person is doing, or how she is "messing up her life." There is a sort of religious hangover to bring as many people on 'our path' as possible, a form of control which is always draped in the best of intentions of course, the packing so beautiful that oftentimes we are the last ones to see through our trickery. As Mother said once:

If you arrive at the conception of the world as the expression of the Divine in all His complexity, then the necessity for complexity and diversity has to be recognised, and it becomes impossible for you to want to make others think and feel as you do.

Each one should have his own way of thinking, feeling and reaction; why do you want others to do as you do and be like you? And even granting that your truth is greater than theirs—though this word means nothing at all, for, from a certain point of view all truths are true; they are all partial, but they are true because they are truths but the minute you want your truth to be greater than your neighbour's, you begin to wander away from the truth.

This habit of wanting to compel others to think as you do, has always seemed very

strange to me; this is what I call “the propagandist spirit”, and it goes very far. You can go one step further and want people to do what you do, feel as you feel, and then it becomes a frightful uniformity.

In Japan I met Tolstoy’s son who was going round the world for “the good of mankind’s great unity”. And his solution was very simple: everybody ought to speak the same language, lead the same life, dress in the same way, eat the same things.... And I am not joking, those were his very words. I met him in Tokyo; he said: “But everybody would be happy, all would understand one another, nobody would quarrel if everyone did the same thing.” There was no way of making him understand that it was not very reasonable! He had set out to travel all over the world for that, and when people asked him his name he would say “Tolstoy”—now, Tolstoy, you know... People said, “Oh!”—some people didn’t know that Tolstoy was dead—and they thought: “Oh! what luck, we are going to hear something remarkable”—and then he came out with that!

Well, this is only an exaggeration of the same attitude.

Anyway, I can assure you that there comes a time when one no longer feels any necessity at all, at all, of convincing others of the truth of what one thinks. (CWM 8: 105-106)

Since we are social animals and have to interact with people on a day-to-day basis, and because we tend to undermine our faults and exaggerate those of others, this *lakshmanrekha* of tending to one’s own business, of noting one’s own drawbacks and insincerities is a task of more than a lifetime. As her statements above make amply clear, any wish to convince others of their mistakes or errors is the propagandist mentality, and hence, no matter how “advanced” one may think one is, one’s only business is in one’s own liberation and not anybody else’s.

### **Bringing to consciousness the latent violent and rageful instincts**

The *sila* of not taking any being’s life, or the Mother’s saying that rude or curt behavior is never permissible, both check the inner wells of anger, rage, hate, greed and paranoia. It is quite amazing that the man who after enlightenment let the world know that all forms are impermanent and not the self, that everything which arises also ceases and is not the self, the same man bound his *bhikkus* in the *sila* of not causing any harm intentionally even to an ant. It is another matter that he was wrongly accused of being a nihilist and of saying that emptiness is as good as nothing being true, an accusation he never pleaded guilty to. For it is difficult to imagine how a nihilist could have this universal empathy of each sentient being’s suffering. In addition to being a remarkably compassionate *sila*, this tenet of not harming any life also does something very interesting. It brings up the bubbling rage and tendencies of violence to the surface because now the person is consciously being asked to not harm any being, or to be rude to any fellow human (both differing in the scope of violence but both hitting at the same root from where all adverse emotions arise from). All antagonistic impulses are an unconscious belief of the ego that its life matters more than any other, its rights and hurts are more urgent than anybody else’s.

It is only when one puts a conscious break on the irritations, anger outbursts, judgements on others etc. and tries to be mindful of these reactions, does the depth of the inner work necessary becomes visible. Otherwise, as long as the person allows the senses to remain focused on what is “wrong with the world” there can be no real work done. The only person one can change is oneself.

If one does not bind oneself to this commitment of not being hurtful to others, this primacy and specialness of the ego over other people remains unchallenged, and one remains completely unaware of one’s own shadow.

## The shadow: Our companion and adversary

To quote the scholar and therapist Edward Whitmont:

The term *shadow* refers to that part of the personality which has been repressed for the sake of the ego ideal. Since everything unconscious is projected, we encounter the shadow in projection- in our view of "the other fellow." (*The Symbolic Quest*, pg. 160)

The shadow is everything within us which we are not conscious about, and since it is the nature of mind to project everything it contains onto the objects of the outer world, whether they be things or people, to become aware of the habits or behaviours of others which really irk us is an opportunity to become aware of these shadow contents. Once again, when Mother says that curtness and rudeness is never permissible, it is a reminder to look within as to why one wants to set the other person "right." It is quite likely that what we find unbearable in him/her is also hiding within us. As Jesus once remarked, perhaps in a tongue-in-cheek moment, as recorded in Luke 6: 42:

How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye," when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

It is a rule of the mind's working, a rule that has no exceptions, that what we find horrid in others definitely hides within us, and the more unconscious we are of its presence, the more intolerable it seems in the other. As the Mother has also said,

There is a lesson to be drawn from this. When something in a person seems to you completely unacceptable or ridiculous—"What! He is like that, he behaves like that, he says things like that, he does things like that"—you should say to yourself, "Well, well, but perhaps I do the same thing without being aware of it. I would do better to look into myself first before criticizing him, so as to make sure that I am not doing the very same thing in a slightly different way." If you have the good sense and intelligence to do this each time you are shocked by another person's behaviour, you will realise that in life your relations with others are like a mirror which is presented to you so that you can see more easily and clearly the weaknesses you carry within you. (*On thoughts and aphorisms*, pg. 21-22)

I'd like to give a personal example here of how I projected my inner anger and violent streaks in the mask of "fear." Last year I attended a 10-days long vipasana *shivir*. The very first day I moved into the room allotted to me and when I entered the bathroom to use it, I saw a small toad on the floor of the bathroom. The first thought and an emotional reaction to it was something like this "Oh it could be a poisonous thing." Now this can be passed off as a very logical reasonable question, especially for someone who isn't an expert on toads, but the accompanying *felt* reaction to its sight was quite telling. I felt my stomach tighten a bit, and a fear that it will cause harm. From that first day on, till my stay in the place, I ensured that toad stayed away from me and we always had a healthy distance of a few feet. Of course, the poor thing probably had as much fear of me as I of it, and it stayed away. But I also realized that my "fear" of the toad being somehow capable of harming me was me projecting my own violent tendency upon it. I am sure it was not scheming night and day as to how to poison me, the "me" that meant a big zero in its universe, perhaps only a potential harming agent against whom it had to protect itself. I am also sure that unlike me, who was constantly "watching it" lest it comes too near, I had zero space in its mind! Perhaps this was also an insight into how paranoia works in general- we find a scapegoat to project upon him/her our own violent tendencies and then believe that entity is all out to get us, whereas it is us who are the containers of the rage



and violence. It is to first see one's own (unconscious) violent tendencies in the other, wrongly believe that the violence and anger in them, and then to avoid them to attack us, we hit out first. This is not to say that we will never have anyone who wishes for us misery or ill-will, but a better way to respond to that is to establish firm boundaries against them, till one feels those boundaries are needed, rather than to react with equivalent rage.

Infact, this phenomenon also made me realize how difficult it is to meditate when one's mind is occupied by such emotions of fear, distrust, too much anger or even excitement. The very practical usefulness of having such *silas* also dawned upon me then.

There is another revealing conversation the Mother had about another way we align with these shadow entities, and here it goes:

One finds in oneself lots of small hidden folds, little things one had not seen at the beginning; one undertakes a sort of inner chase, goes hunting into small dark corners and tells oneself: "What, I was like that! This was there in me, I am harbouring this little thing"—sometimes so sordid, so mean, so nasty. And once it has been discovered, how wonderful! One puts the light upon it and it disappears and you no longer have those reactions which made you so sad before, when you used to say, "Oh! I shall never get there." For instance, you take a very simple resolution (apparently very simple): "I shall never tell a lie again." And suddenly, without your knowing why or how, the lie springs up all by itself and you notice it after you have uttered it: "But this is not correct—what I have just said; it was something else I meant to say." So you search, search.... "How did it happen? How did I think like that and speak like that? Who spoke in me, who pushed me?..." " You may give yourself quite a satisfactory explanation and say, "It came from outside" or "It was a moment of unconsciousness", and not think any longer about it. And the next time, it begins again. Instead of that, you search: "What can be the motive of one who tells lies?..." and you push—you push and all of a sudden you discover in a little corner something which wants to justify itself, thrust itself forward or assert its own way of seeing (no matter what, there are a number of reasons), show itself a little different from what it is so that people may have a good opinion of you and think you someone very remarkable.... It was that which spoke in you—not your active consciousness, but what was there and pushed the consciousness from behind. When you were not quite on your guard, it made use of your mouth, your tongue, and then there you were! The lie came out. I am giving you this example—there are a million others. And it is extremely interesting. And to the extent one discovers this within oneself and says sincerely, "It must change", one finds that one acquires a sort of inner clear-sightedness, one gradually becomes aware of what goes on in others, and instead of flying into a temper when they are not quite what one would like them to be, one begins to understand how things happen, how it is that one is "like this", how reactions are produced.... Then, with the indulgence of knowledge, one smiles. One no longer judges severely, one offers the difficulty in oneself or in others, whatever may be its centre of manifestation, to the divine Consciousness, asking for its transformation. (CWM 4: 336-337)

As she gives here an example of a very ordinary occurrence, the *lakshmanrekha* of never speaking a lie can be quite a revolutionary transformative change, bringing in its wake the awareness of how deeply we want people to like us and appreciate us which makes us speak "harmless little lies" every now and then, or make flattering exaggerations etc. These shadow parts can come out as either projections as stated previously or as resistances to implement the resolutions that we ourselves make or agree with. In the case of the latter,

the issue is not the projection but the justification of indulging in those actions which we agreed to not to indulge in.

## Conclusion

### The two wolves: We become what we feed

There is an old tale whose variations are present in most tribal societies, that of two wolves residing within. One is good, gentle, strong but not harmful while the other is ferocious, greedy, hateful and violent. The choice is our own as to which one of these to feed with our attention.

If left to itself, the ego would prefer complete destruction as opposed to its own dissolution, and these moral prescriptions are the safeguard one has on the path against one's own baser tendencies. The *lakshmanrekha*, then, is not a limiting of the spontaneity or freedom of the soul, but a way to ensure that the aspirant remains grounded and humble, and not lose herself in the many inner labyrinths.

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## Various Dimensions of Guru-Shishya Relationship in Mahabharata

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Debaleena Bhattacharjee

The novel, "The Mahabharat, a modern rendering," by Ramesh Menon, deals with the story of the division in the *kuru* family, which results in the terrible battle of *Kurukshetra* wherein all the *Kshatriyas* from all over *Bharatavarsha* took part. It is a retelling of the Indian epic, *Mahabharata*, which enumerates various Indian customs and values, showing one how to lead an ideal life. In my thesis, I would like to observe the various *Guru-shishya* relationships mentioned, which contain all other human relationships.

The *guru-shishya parampara* is said to observe an old tradition; during the period of tutelage, the *shishya* follows a strict disciplinary life set by his *guru*, and besides learning his lessons, the former helps his master with his house chores. This practice passes between Drona and the young *kuru* princes: "It was customary for the princes to rise before the sun and set out together for the river to fill their water pots. They had to walk between the river and their acharya's house five times before each one could fill the large urn kept for him in Drona's yard." Drona would begin his lesson as soon as his first pupil arrived after filling up the water urn. However, the *guru* would also reward his *shishya* for showing courage in the face of difficulty and saving the situation by using his knowledge. As a result, Drona presented Arjuna with the weapon, *brahmasirsha*, for saving his life from a river alligator. The end of the tutelage period is marked by *guru-dakshina*; it is when the *shishya* presents the *guru* a gift of the latter's choice as a sign of gratitude. Likewise, the *Pandavas* and the *Kauravas* had to attack the kingdom of *Panchala* and make king Drupada their captive in order to avenge Drona's humiliation as their *guru-dakshina*.

However, the *guru-dakshina* of Eklavya, the *nishada* prince, to his *guru* Drona is a great one for he had offered his right thumb to his *guru*, knowing that he could never be a good archer without it. *Guru's* wish was his command; even though Drona didn't teach the *nishada* prince in person, the fact that the "dark youth" considered Drona his *guru* was enough for him to give away his right thumb in *guru-dakshina*.

The *guru*, like *Rishi* Bharadvaj, is said to be impartial between his pupils even if his son was one of them; "all his students must have perfectly equal opportunity." Such impartiality can be seen when the *rishi* taught his son Drona and the *Panchala* princes, Drupada, the *devastras* and the *mantras* that summon them, which he had learned from his *guru* Agnivesha. It was customary that a *guru* passed on the knowledge to his pupils that he had acquired from his own *guru*. This ritual was carried on by Drona when he imparted his knowledge to the *Kauravas*, the *Pandavas* and to his son, Aswatthama. However, unlike his father, Drona failed to be neutral to all his students, and he gave his son Aswatthama a bigger pot than the rest so that he could fill up his urn in four times rather than journeying five times to the river so that he reached his father before everybody; this way, Drona could impart a little extra knowledge to his son. After all, "even the master was only human", and his paternal love made him partial towards his son.

Yet, this partiality didn't last for long as Arjuna had found a way of reaching his master

even before Aswatthama, by filling up his urn with the use of *varunastra* without even going once to the river. Drona remained true to his words and began his lessons as soon as Arjuna arrived. Soon Arjuna became Drona's favourite *shishya*, who won his *guru's* heart by his "single-minded obsession for archery", unfailing concentration and unequal capacity to learn. Arjuna was Drona's "most dedicated" student and "his guru tried him harder than he did any other students." For example, he had ordered the palace cook not to serve food to Arjuna in the dark knowing that his student had the exceptional ability to become an ambidextrous archer. Yet he waited for Arjuna in the practice ground for one year on every *amavasya* night till one day Arjuna discovered that he could eat in the dark and thus concluded that he could also practice archery on a new moon night. "From that night on, Dronacharya held nothing back from Arjuna."

The love of a *guru* for his favourite student can also make him speak in a *sabha* in favour of his *shishya* knowing that the latter is on the wrong path. Likewise, Balarama spoke in favour of his favourite student Duryodhana in *Pandava sabha* in Upaplavya asking Yudhisthira to send Duryodhana a humble message to give back the *Pandava's* kingdom. Moreover, he also held Yudhisthira responsible for the exile of the *Pandavas* ignoring the fact that Duryodhana had humiliated the *Pandavas* and had cheated on them. The *guru* pitied Duryodhana knowing that he was going to die fighting on the side of *adharma*, and preferred him over Bheema who fought for *dharma*.

On the other hand, Bhargava Parshuram cursed his favourite student, Karna, for the latter had lied to his guru saying that he was a *Brahmin* when he was brought up as a *sutaputra* by a charioteer Atiratha and his wife Radha. As a result, when the *guru* discovered that Karna had sat patiently without a single movement while an insect gnawed at his flesh in the thigh lest he disturbed his sleeping guru whose head was on Karna's lap; knowing that a *brahmin* was incapable of such patience, Bhargava cursed Karna to forget all his knowledge when he would need it most. However, he blessed his stricken *shishya* with unequal fame.

It is said that no matter what happens, a *guru* never refused a *Kshatriya* who came to him asking for tutelage. Similarly, Drona didn't refuse Dhrishtadyumna, the son of Drupada, who was born to avenge his father's humiliation by killing Drona. Knowing that one day Dhrishtadyumna would kill him with the very knowledge that he would teach the young warrior, Drona accepted the prince as his *shishya*, who eventually does kill his master in the battle of Kurukshetra. In fact, Drona had once taken a promise from Arjuna that the latter should not hold back anything if he were one day to fight him for he had a vague vision of the terrible battle that would take place in the future. Drona also revealed the secret of how he could die to his *shishya* Yudhisthira in a lowered voice before the beginning of the battle of Kurukshetra. This shows the nobility of Drona, for even though his *dharma* bade him fight on the side of the *Kauravas* in his heart he was with the *Pandavas*, who were fighting for *dharma* and Drona was even ready to die in their hands.

At times a *guru* can also become a close friend and a protector like Chittrasena and his *shishya* Arjuna. The latter, his master of dance and music, was the closest friend of Arjuna when he lived in his father Indra's kingdom in *Amravathy*. As a result, distressed by

Urvashi's curse, Arjuna ran to meet his *guru* Chittrasena and found solace by sharing his problem. Nevertheless, Chittrasena was also a protector of Arjuna and his brothers for he had come down on earth to save the *Pandavas* in their exile from Duryodhana's wicked plan of humiliating them.

At other times a *guru-shishya* relationship turns out to be that of a father and a child, like Arjuna and his student, princess Uttara. Consequently, Arjuna refuses to marry her when Virata wanted to give her to Arjuna in marriage. He said that he couldn't marry her for he had considered her as his daughter; instead he got his son Abhimanyu married to the young princess. Here again the *guru-shishya parampara* of passing on the knowledge got from one's *guru* to one's student can be seen for Arjuna imparted his knowledge of music and dancing to Uttara which he had acquired from Chittrasena. However, a *guru* can also impart his knowledge at his death bed for Bheeshma had taught Yudhishtira how to rule a country as an ideal ruler when he was lying on the bed of arrows waiting for his death.

It is said that all human association culminates in the relationship of the human beings with the Divine. Similarly, the *guru-shishya* relationship reaches its climax between Arjuna and Krishna, in which the *avatar* befriends a human being. Krishna cares for Arjuna as his cousin and goes to meet him after the *swyamvara* of Draupadi, he helps the *Pandava* as a friend to win his sister Subhadra, guides him as a mentor during his stay in Indraprastha, protects him in the war and drives his chariot safely throughout the war, saves Arjuna's grandson, Parikshita at the cost of his youth, power and strength for after reviving Parikshita, Krishna had seemed to grow a hundred years older in a few moments, and he also teaches Arjuna the lessons of *Bhagavad Gita* when his spirit was in peril of being conquered by the dark forces before the battle of *Kurukshetra*. Ultimately, the Lord grants his *shishya*, Arjuna the vision of His *Vishwaroopam* which no mortal eye can ever behold.

On a concluding note, we can safely say that the *guru-shishya* rapport embraces all types of human relationships. A *guru* may be a kinsman, a stranger or the Lord Himself; his love for the *shishya* at times takes the form of a paternal love and other times that of a friend. The *guru*, on one hand, tests his pupil, rewards him as well as curses him for his misdeeds. The *shishya*, on the other hand, respects the *guru* and serves him during the period of tutelage and is even ready to give up his life as *guru-dakshina* to express his gratitude. Thus, it shows that education was given immense importance and was greatly valued in ancient India while the nobility and the deep love that binds a student to his teacher was greatly respected.

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## Celebrating a Moment in History

*Srikrishna Dikshit*

On 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> January 1908, Pune witnessed a historic moment. Sri Aurobindo visited Pune at the behest of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and addressed many gatherings across Pune. By 1908, Sri Aurobindo had ignited Bengal with the aspiration to fight for the freedom of India. *Bande Mataram* inspired the young and the old equally, and at one call, people were ready to sacrifice their lives for the country. Sri Aurobindo then known as Babu Aurobindo Ghosh along with the revolutionaries commonly known as Lal-Bal-Pal was not satisfied with the policies adopted by Moderates. They wanted *poorna swaraj*. To make freedom of the country into a forceful movement, the collaboration of the four men – Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra and of course, Bipin Chandra Pal (who was already collaborating with Sri Aurobindo in this movement) in Bengal, was imperative. They did come together at some or the other point in their lives. The foundation of one of such collaborations was laid in the Surat congress in 1907 when Sri Aurobindo and his associates broke the Congress.

Very few people know that it was Sri Aurobindo (without consulting Tilak) who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate Convention, which were the two decisive happenings at Surat... (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA 35: 26)

Sri Aurobindo, although much younger to Lokmanya Tilak had emerged as a powerful leader in Bengal. Perhaps the senior leader recognised the power in Sri Aurobindo's speech and invited him to Pune to ignite the same fire in the people of Maharashtra, the race which already had the legacy of Shivaji Maharaj. Tilak knew that if Bengal can burn with the fire to fight for the country, so can Maharashtra. Sri Aurobindo and Tilak had great respect for each other. This is evident from the praises lauded by Sri Aurobindo on Tilak in his introduction to *Gita Rahasya* and the reason for which the latter invited Sri Aurobindo to Pune. After coming to Pune, Sri Aurobindo stayed at Tilak's place at Kesari Wada (earlier known as Gaekwar Wada), and from there went to all the meetings he was invited for.

Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo visited many of those places in Pune which were promoting the idea of Swadeshi through their work of business. We will present here an itinerary of his visits and meetings in Pune, which was found after much research.

### 12/01/1908

- Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pune and stayed at Lokmanya Tilak's house – Gaekwar Wada (now Kesari Wada). It is significant that Lokmanya Tilak bought this Wada from Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwar of Baroda in 1905. We are well aware that Sri Aurobindo was in the service of the Maharaja for about thirteen years. So the link between the three men of honour is not just an accident.



Source: <https://twitter.com/tilakarchives/status/1170236814008836096>

- It is also significant that Lokmanya Tilak hosted Swamiji in 1892 for about eight

to ten days, when the latter was on his India tour. However, Swamiji did not meet many people then as he focused much on his sadhana in those years.

- Sri Aurobindo went to one of the suburbs of Pune called Kharki along with Lokmanya Tilak to meet Prof. Ramamurthy to see his work and experiments with shakti. He gave a speech there. It is also a significant meeting because Sri Aurobindo invoked the power of Shakti not only for India's freedom but for his yoga of transformation.
- Sri Aurobindo was invited to "Kaal", a daily newspaper office by Shri Gopal Pandurang Bapat, where he was shown the practical use of explosives in making bombs. He went there perhaps with the idea of gathering ways and means to utilise these if need arose in future for the freedom movement. We know that the bombs were used by Sri Aurobindo's brother, Barin later in Calcutta. However, Sri Aurobindo had no role in that bombing incident.
- "Bharat Ratna", Shri Dhondo Keshav Karve, popularly known as Annasaheb Karve, invited Sri Aurobindo to his educational institution, Hingne Stri Shikshan Sansthan, now known as SNTD women's college in Pune. It was also an institution advocating swaraj.
- On 12<sup>th</sup> itself Sri Aurobindo visited others on their invitation to have tea with them. He took this occasion to interact with the locals and encourage their work towards the freedom movement. Some of the notable places he visited were:
  - Godse's Swadeshi stationery store
  - Swadeshi warehouse
  - Narayandas Chabildas' swadeshi cap shop

### 13/01/1908

- Sri Aurobindo ascended 'Parvati Hill' and had the realisation of the goddess there. He later noted his experience as "Hill Top Temple". It was the auspicious day of Amlaki Ekadashi, a day when summer solstice is supposed to begin, according to Hindu Panchang.
- Sri Aurobindo addressed a gathering at Kesari wada where Lokmanya Tilak and his mentor Maharshi Annasaheb Patwardhan were present.
- Sri Aurobindo later had discussions with Maharshi Patwardhan on various topics.

Thus were these two historical days spent at Pune. The holy land, "Punya Vishaya" as Pune was known in ancient times, was again made sacred by the footprints of God.

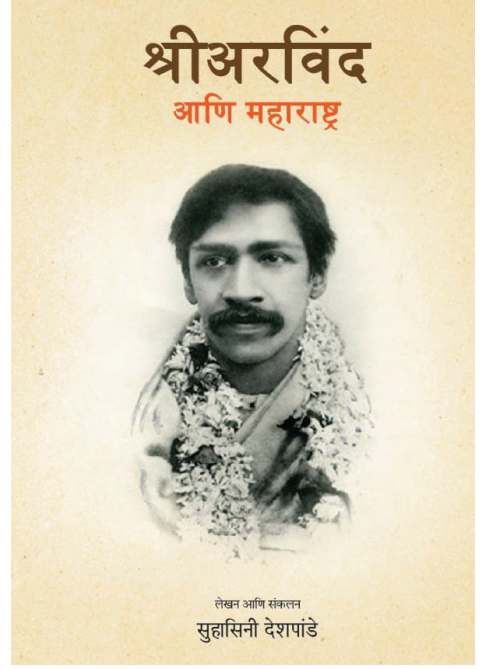
12-13 January 2023 marked 115 years of Sri Aurobindo's visit. To celebrate these two days, the members of Sri Aurobindo Society, headed by their Maharashtra Chairman, Mr. Srikrishna Dikshit and other aspirants made elaborate plans and did enough research to ensure that Pune resonated once again with Sri Aurobindo's name and presence. To make it into a reality, Suhasini Deshpande conducted almost a yearlong research and the above findings have been verified by her. Some of



Source: <https://map.sahapedia.org/article/Parvati-Hill%20Temple%20Complex3383>

the coincidences and highlights of this celebration this year are worth noticing:

1. We are aware that the Peshwas have patronised the Parvati Temples since many centuries. As destiny would have it, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is translated in Marathi by a close relative of the present Peshwa who looks after the temple.
2. On the top of the Parvati hill is a flat land on which many small temples have been carved. However, which temple did Sri Aurobindo refer to in his poem was unclear. So the members observed each of the temples closely and noticed that there is only one temple dedicated to Goddess Parvati, all other temples are dedicated to the gods. The time they visited was around 10.30 am. It was experientially found that at around 10.30 am, the sun rays fall directly on the small stone temple of the goddess only and on no other spot. That is perhaps when Sri Aurobindo had the inner darshan of the effulgent goddess. It was like reliving those times. The trek to Parvati itself was like tracing the footprints of God. Following his footsteps the team ascended the hill on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023.
3. The team organised a heritage walk to all the places visited by Sri Aurobindo in Pune mentioned above.
4. To commemorate the occasion of Sri Aurobindo addressing people in Tilak's house, the team organised a book launch – *Sri Aurobindo and Maharashtra* well researched and written by Suhasini Deshpande, at Keasari Wada itself. Significantly, the book was released by the grandson of Lokmanya Tilak – Dr. Deepak Tilak who is the Chancellor of Tilak Vidyapeeth.



Once again Pune resonated with the name of Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo on these two days. Many people participated in this celebration and learned how Sri Aurobindo has enriched their land.

### The Hill-top Temple

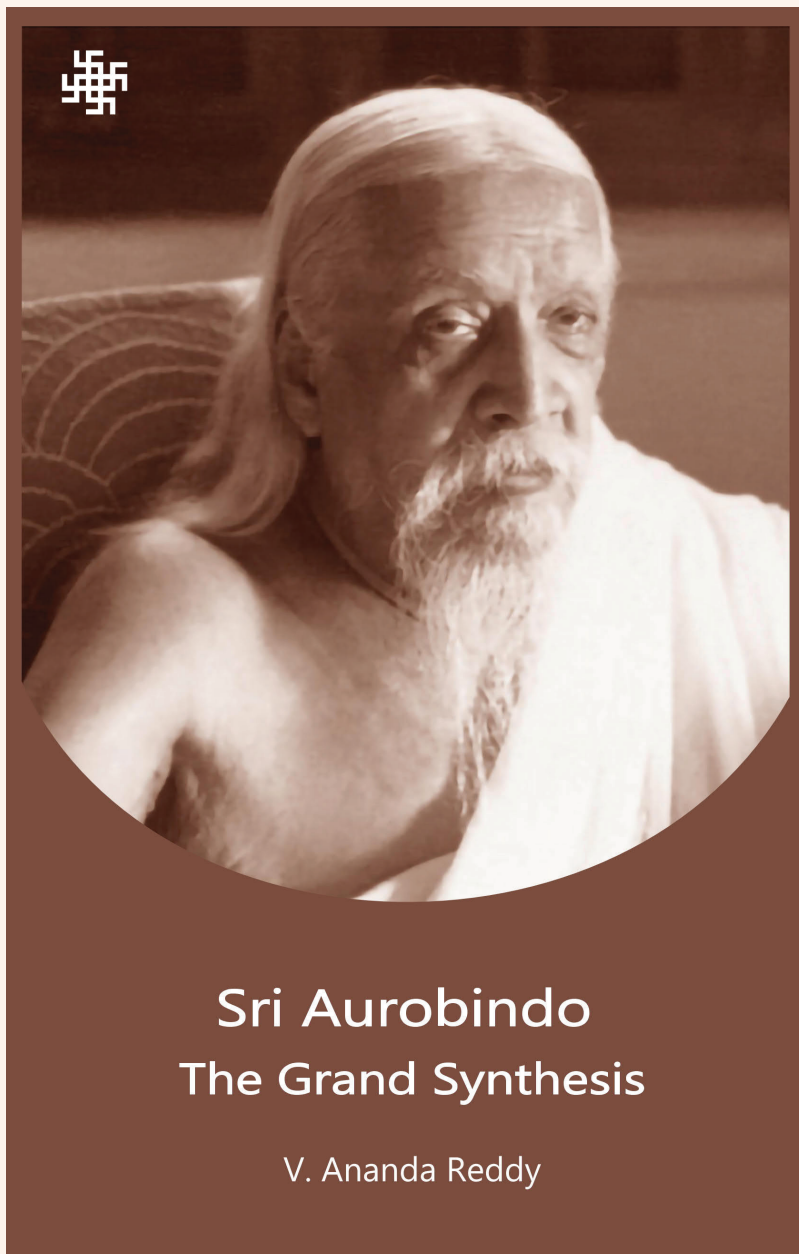
After unnumbered steps of a hill-stair  
I saw upon earth's head brilliant with sun  
The immobile Goddess in her house of stone  
In a loneliness of meditating air.  
Wise were the human hands that set her there  
Above the world and Time's dominion;  
The Soul of all that lives, calm, pure, alone,  
Revealed its boundless self mystic and bare.

Our body is an epitome of some Vast  
That masks its presence by our humanness.  
In us the secret Spirit can indite  
A page and summary of the Infinite,  
A nodus of Eternity expressed  
Live in an image and a sculptured face.

Sri Aurobindo



# BOOK REVIEWS



## Sri Aurobindo The Grand Synthesis

V. Ananda Reddy

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## Book Review

### *Sri Aurobindo: The Grand Synthesis*

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*Beloo Mehra*

It is my honour and privilege to share a few thoughts about this highly readable and insightful book titled 'Sri Aurobindo: The Grand Synthesis' by Dr. V. Ananda Reddy, one of the foremost scholars in Sri Aurobindo Studies. I was blessed to have received an advance copy of this delightful book, lovingly signed and hand delivered by the author.

The title of the book is highly inviting as it makes the mind curious enough to know how the author explores the theme of 'synthesis' in Sri Aurobindo's major works. But what struck me the most in that first browsing itself was the organisation of the book.

The book is divided in two parts, actually three, if we count the Epilogue which in itself is a masterful and comprehensive contemplation justifying the very title of the book. But let me begin with the organisation of the book itself.

Part one is titled Sri Aurobindo – the Future – a title which by itself tells the reader that this book is not focused around the history of the evolutionary march of spirit in humanity. It is primarily concerned with the future march, and how Sri Aurobindo's advent has opened this new future for humanity.

Reading through the three chapters in this first part, one feels a calming sense of assurance and hope that despite all the turmoil and the chaos in the world today, there is a Divine Will and Plan at work which is leading us all to a glorious supramental future.

Those of us who have had the blessing of spending some concentrated time with the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother know about this very special force in their Words and the promise they hold for the future.

But what is unique about these chapters in this book is the masterful synthesis given to the readers by a masterful author who has, through his patient, dedicated and reverential study over several decades, integrated within him the *saar*, the essence of all the major and minor works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The outcome is that these chapters not only summarise brilliantly the essential message, not only elaborate upon the key message through pertinent analysis of the contemporary situations and realities, but also light up the necessary flame of curiosity in an interested reader to pick up the original works (or pick them up again if he or she has read them earlier) and experience the wideness, and the height and depth of intellectual clarity which only a grand synthesis such as Sri Aurobindo's can give us.

Perhaps to enable such clarity, Dr. Reddy quotes in the chapter on Five Dreams of Sri Aurobindo, those marvellous lines from Savitri –

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.

Selected passages from writings of early disciples such as Nolini Kanta Gupta and selections from talks and conversations recorded by sadhaks such as A. B. Purani, Nirodbaran and others – bring additional delight to the reader. This is true not only of part one but the entire book, which gives it an especially living quality to it because at so many places a reader feels that he or she can practically 'hear' Sri Aurobindo's own explanations of some of his core points on the subject.

Part two of the book — Sri Aurobindo's Contribution to Humanity — opens with an equally delightful chapter titled 'Stages of Sri Aurobindo's Literary Output.' The very inclusion and organisation of this chapter can serve as a great aid to any new reader of Sri Aurobindo's works. It gives the right key to open the rich treasure that is Sri Aurobindo.

In fact, the whole book is written with this object in mind – at least that is how it felt to me – to be that first entry point for those who have this aspiration to start reading Sri Aurobindo's massive works carefully and patiently but even before they can begin the journey they may get intimidated by the sheer volume and size of some of these books.

Well, to them the answer this book gives is — Fear no more. Start with me, and the light will be lit and you will slowly begin walking the path.

But I wish to come back to this particular chapter titled – "Stages of Sri Aurobindo's Literary Output." In fact, what I wish to do is quote a couple of paragraphs from this so that the audience here can themselves experience a taste of what I just said here about the significance of this book. The author writes and I quote —

Sri Aurobindo can be understood on three different levels of consciousness, which are visible in his outer world action. Although he has always said that we should not judge him from his outer, surface activities, we see that there were different stages in his life, and as he moved from one stage to another, he displayed a different consciousness. Aurobindo Ghosh of Baroda was not the same as Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry. There was a remarkable growth in his consciousness all along. This is what I will trace for our benefit and see in each stage what has been his outer contribution, especially in literature, as we are here to focus on his writings, not on his inner realisations.

I have categorised his life's journey into three stages to demarcate his literary output, which shows different levels of inspiration and consciousness. Although we do not know the level of consciousness behind each stage of his writings, I venture into such a classification only to facilitate the different stages of his written works. (*Sri Aurobindo: The Grand Synthesis*: 38-39)

And the three stages that Dr. Reddy goes on to speak of are – the Mental stage, the Overmental stage and the Supramental stage.

In this Supramental stage, the two-paragraph description of the super-epic mantric poem *Savitri* and its spiritual significance is a wonderful read. Phrases such as "future scripture of humanity" and "spiritual panacea" reawaken the flame of aspiration and at the same time assure the reader's intellect that if the mind doesn't understand *Savitri* fully, it is alright. "To read *Savitri*, in the true manner, is to practice Integral Yoga."

Another important note of assurance for the reader comes in the very next paragraph when the author reminds of a deep truth about all spiritual works. Poised in his inner heart of a *bhakta*, the author writes – "That is the greatness of all spiritual works: we cannot understand them by ourselves, however brilliant we may be intellectually. We need the *ashirwad*, the Grace of the Divine Master, who is ever with us." (Ibid: 48)

This is another important key Dr. Reddy gives to all the aspirants who want to read Sri Aurobindo's works.

Next ten chapters of the book give the reader an eloquent description of the major works of Sri Aurobindo, starting with *The Life Divine* and ending with *Savitri – A legend and a symbol*.

I would leave it upon the reader to experience the beauty of each of these chapters. But one thing which I wish to emphasise here is the extremely helpful integrative approach the author has

used when introducing the reader to the specific work of Sri Aurobindo. It is not a mere summary of the book, or a quick peek at the wonders that await the reader when he or she picks it up.

Rather, reading each of these chapters gives a sense that the reader has now understood the essential core of a particular work and has the necessary preparation to approach it on his or her own.

For example, in the chapter on *The Life Divine*, the last seven pages are a masterful explanation of the very title of the book itself – *The Life Divine*. Dr. Reddy does this as he addresses three questions – what is the more profound implication of life? What is the Divine? Can the life of a human being be transformed into a life divine?

I highly encourage everyone to read this to know the answers to these questions.

Similarly, in the chapter on *Essays on the Gita*, we are drawn in by the most articulate and precise description of four essential truths of the Bhagavad Gita selected in the light of Sri Aurobindo. The first two are concerned with spiritual philosophy, specifically the soul and the Avatar; the other two are of a more practical nature and concern the yogic sadhana or the practice of offering one's actions and absolute surrender.

As helpful as this discussion is, the author gives further help to the reader through his concluding section where he summarises how Integral Yoga is different from the Yoga of the Gita.

The section of this Part Two that focuses on Sri Aurobindo's major works on the Spirit and Significance of Indian Culture is equally masterful. I wish to make a special mention of the chapter on *Isha Upanishad*, where the author brilliantly highlights the essential synthesis or reconciliation of seemingly contradictory truths of existence which is the core of this Upanishad, and which is why Sri Aurobindo spoke of it as the foundation of the Life Divine.

But before the author zooms in on three verses from the Upanishad to bring out this essential integral truth of the Isha Upanishad through Sri Aurobindo's commentaries on it, he gives the reader a significant understanding of what Upanishads mean in the whole spiritual march of India, particularly its evolutionary aspect as reflected through the spiritual literature of India.

Much more can be said about the book. But what is important is that we each experience on our own its special beauty and joy as we go from one chapter to the next. And even more important is that we share what this book is about with those who are truly seeking the light that is Sri Aurobindo.

Before I conclude, I wish to make one final point about the Epilogue of the book. In a way, this section synthesises brilliantly all that has gone before in each of the chapters. Again, it is not a meta summary by any means, but brings new light to understand the significance and value of each of the chapters in this book. In fact, I found that after reading the Epilogue revisiting the earlier chapters brings a newer and deeper clarity for the reader. This is an important way in which the very title and theme of the book fulfill their purpose and truth.

I heartily congratulate and profusely thank Dr. Ananda Reddy to make this very important book available for all the present and future readers of Sri Aurobindo's works. While the young minds of college and university students will definitely find great value here, those having spent years with the works of Sri Aurobindo will also discover a new light to deepen their understanding and experience a rekindling of the aspiration.

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## Book Review

### *Sri Aurobindo: The Grand Synthesis*

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*Madhumita Dutta*

*Sri Aurobindo: the Grand Synthesis* by Dr. Ananda Reddy is a brilliant in-depth analysis of the ten major works of Sri Aurobindo, where we get not only a fair idea of Aurobindonian philosophy, but also illuminating glimpses of Sri Aurobindo's life and literature and politics and yoga. The author presents the multi-dimensional aspects of Sri Aurobindo's works as a poet, politician, thinker, revolutionary, futurist and philosopher in and through the analysis of each major work. The discussion of the 'inimicable' aspects of Sri Aurobindo's life and works brings into focus the contemporary value of Sri Aurobindo's eternal philosophies of which there is a detailed analytical exposition, and which ably serves and justifies the author's aim of presenting Sri Aurobindo as a grand synthesis of the ancient and the modern, the East and the West.

We get a fair idea of the contents of the book even by glancing at the titles of the chapters which are arranged in a precise manner exposing a significant pattern, which serves as a key to the subject of the book. The author begins by a discussion of significantly important events in the life of Sri Aurobindo, which he terms the 'turning points', and draws the reader's curious attention by focussing on those stages of Sri Aurobindo's life where these turning points led to an 'upward swing'. This is absolutely novel, and Dr. Reddy has followed a different course other than the traditionally typical manner of presenting chronologically only the facts of life. Thus many half-known or misjudged facts, the 'striking and the extraordinary', about Sri Aurobindo and his life are revealed and put in proper perspective. For instance, we read about the 'deliberate decisions' taken by Sri Aurobindo, beginning with his choice to return to India from England to that of leaving his mortal body. Another turning point, as the author points out, was the year 1926, when Sri Aurobindo took the decision of taking the 'final step from humanity to divinity'. There is also a detailed discussion on the different phases of Sri Aurobindo's Pondicherry years.

In the first chapter there is stuff enough to propel and compel the reader to explore more of the book for newer revelations, and which only a well-versed scholar of the Aurobindonian school can deliver. The next chapter of the book takes up for discussion the 'five dreams' of Sri Aurobindo. Here a remarkable achievement of Dr. Reddy is his success in establishing Sri Aurobindo in the line of the Upanishadic Rishis by an analysis of these dreams, which he explains as 'prophecies'. He also reminds us that we dwell in a different time frame of consciousness from Sri Aurobindo, while discussing in detail the dreams one by one. The first dream of united India is shown to have echoes in the economic developments in today's India. Dr. Reddy convincingly explains how Sri Aurobindo's idea of India's 'soul rejuvenescence' can be a reassuring aid for the eroding values of modern life. He points out, with relevant quotes, both from Sri Aurobindo and other authors, how the cultural dynamism and economic boom are themselves indications of a re-awakening of India's soul.

The rise of Asia and liberation of her people, which was Sri Aurobindo's second dream, has greater relevance today. As the author rightly points out in this connection the case of China, which, with its 'irresistible organisation' and 'patient thoroughness' has become the super power confronting Western countries in the power struggle. Sri Aurobindo's third dream was of a World union, which is studied against the background of his view on history. Dr. Reddy throws light on the unique concept of the evolution of the Divine consciousness, and points out the necessity of the historical World wars to break the resistance of nation-egos. Quoting from authors and critics like Kireet Joshi on the modern perspective of nations and their unity

actually helps to re-establish the great role of Sri Aurobindo a synthesis of past and present and East and West. The next dream dwells on the issue of what Sri Aurobindo called the spiritual gift of India to the world, which underlines the mission and evolutionary responsibility of India. The pertinent question whether, or how much India is fulfilling this role, again helps to define Sri Aurobindo as a futurist philosopher. The author explains the last dream of Sri Aurobindo, of the 'higher' and 'larger' consciousness as the basis of all other dreams. In a very interesting way the author links the past to the present and the future, to contemporary crisis like economic issues, political ones and the analysis goes deeper in revealing the spiritual causes for these. Dr. Reddy has given here substance which is truly thought-provoking and powerfully effective. In fact, this chapter is done with keen insight and passion and displays the author's own vast fund of knowledge of history and philosophy and contemporary awareness. Interesting also is the way the author has discussed the role of Sri Aurobindo as the guiding spirit of humanity. He comments that the optimistic view of Sri Aurobindo must itself serve as a great solace and hope for suffering humanity. The concepts of unity, harmony, mutuality, spiritual evolution are studied in the light of Sri Aurobindo's thought, as found in *The Human Cycle* mainly. With firm belief and deep observation he makes this comment on Sri Aurobindo: "As time advances, his relevance will increase, intensify and become humanity's inevitable guiding spirit." This may further lure the curious reader to explore more of Sri Aurobindo's works.

One of the best and most interesting chapters in Dr. Reddy's book is the one dealing with Sri Aurobindo's contribution to humanity. Here he takes into consideration the literary works of Sri Aurobindo, presenting these in various stages of their creation. This manner of presentation is inspired by the author's belief that to know the work and contribution of Sri Aurobindo one must first know the 'person behind the writings'. He make another interesting observation that each person can approach Sri Aurobindo in his own way — one may study Sri Aurobindo as psychologist, as an educationist, a social reformer, as a revolutionary, a journalist, patriot, or whatever approach suits his intellect. Among the methods suggested of approaching Sri Aurobindo, one is the Involutionary approach by which one may trace the growth of consciousness as reflected in the works.

The author also points out the three stages of Sri Aurobindo's literary work, according to the evolution of consciousness. Thus, at the mental stage, Sri Aurobindo, the freedom fighter, wrote mainly as a revolutionary, setting a new ideal and vision for India. The Overmental stage was the period between 1910 and 1926, when eight major books were written, in Pondicherry, which turned the tide of Indian philosophy in a new direction. The most important fact that the author draws our attention to is that all these were done by Sri Aurobindo in the complete 'silence of the mind'. The point that Dr. Reddy wants to make that Sri Aurobindo was very much anchored in his times, goes home to us. The great work of Sri Aurobindo—the transformative and captivating epic *Savitri*, belongs to the 'supramental stage. This 'super-epic', the author tells us, contains the inner autobiographies of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. One inclined towards Integral yoga shall surely be lured into the captivating poetry of *Savitri*, following comments like, '...to read *Savitri* in the true manner is to practise Integral Yoga.'

The author views Sri Aurobindo's journey to England not only as part of Brahmacharya, but a time for preparation of a 'mighty intellect', which later helped him in the translating of higher experiences into human language. Comments and observations like these are the result of deep understanding, thorough comprehension and intensive research. We get a measure of the depth of knowledge and understanding all through the book, especially in the chapters discussing the major works of Sri Aurobindo. For instance, the comment that the title of *The Life Divine* itself announces the central theme of the book, is a sure invitation to the reader to

go to the text itself and delve deep into it. The author focuses on the content of *The Life Divine* as an evolutionary process between Human Aspiration and Divine Life, and discusses the three significant experiences of the Cosmic Consciousness, Nirguna and Saguna Brahman, Swami Vivekananda's vision in prison. The author mentions similar experiences at different points in Sri Aurobindo's life and is convinced that these form the base of *The Life Divine*. Equally brilliant is Dr. Reddy's exposition of *The Synthesis of Yoga* as the practice and methodology of Sri Aurobindo's own yoga and as a complement to *The Life Divine*. He draws our attention to the fact that Sri Aurobindo's yoga, begun in 1914, was concluded only in 1973. He explains the logic of this observation by relating it to the Mother's experiments with the process of physical death, asserting with confidence that the Mother's spiritual experiences culminate and complete the integral yoga. The language and tone of conviction will compel the eager reader to go through the 13 volumes of the *Mother's Agenda* too.

In exploring Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, the author re-emphasises Sri Aurobindo as a great synthesis by commenting on the contemporary relevance of the book and its spiritual need for modern day living. The main focus is his highlighting the differences between the Yoga of the Gita and Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, and also Sri Aurobindo's bringing together the Tantra and Vedanta. The new aspect of Shakti, the Mother is the special inclusion in the Yoga philosophy. The author drives home the point that mere commentaries and translations of verses do not fill the pages of the book *Essays on the Gita*, but that it is based on Sri Aurobindo's personal experiences. He also points out how we may study Sri Aurobindo's approach to the Gita on metaphysical and psychological grounds, and that gives a new direction to the student of Aurobindonian philosophy.

*The Secret of the Vedas* also has a psychological significance and may be approached in that way. Dr. Reddy's discussion brings out the essence of the book which deals with the meaning of Vedas and Vedic words and tempts the reader to delve deeper into Vedic philosophy/language as 'more remains to be discovered'. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* validates the Aurobindonian theory of the psychological approach to the Vedas. The author explains how the *Isha Upanishad* occupies an important place in Aurobindonian philosophy, and presents an integral vision of life. Very significant and thought provoking discussions on integration and the concept of the Supermind, makes it one of the most interesting chapters in Dr. Reddy's book. It gives a clue to the direction in which one may begin the study of the Upanishads, especially as he takes up for discussion some important verses of the *Isha Upanishad* dealing with Integration and Supermind. A surprising revelation is the fact of Sri Aurobindo's naming of the *Ishopnishad* commentaries as "The Life Divine", which the author takes particular care to focus upon. In the chapters on *Renaissance in India* the author successfully studies and exposes the spirit and soul of India's past and the various stages of its progress and exhaustion, in the light of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and discusses his defence of Indian culture. His discussion follows the three major phases of the vitality and intellectuality of the great Indian mind of the past, their exhaustion in later times, and the renaissance. In the next chapters, the author takes up for discussion two books seminal to the understanding of the Aurobindonian social and political philosophy. Here the focus is on 'evolution' which, the author convinces us, is one single term that may describe Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga. He studies the two books — *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* as Sri Aurobindo's vision of evolution of social consciousness and human unity of the future. Birth and growth of the nation lead to the next step in evolution, that of internationalism and world union. Discussion of the stages of unification and also the difficulties that may come in the way of this evolutionary progress offers a critical analysis of the Aurobindonian philosophy of spiritualisation and exposure to

present day international relations, especially as the author links organisations like SAARC/ ASEAN to the concept of the Religion of Humanity as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo.

The last part of the book is significantly titled 'Revelations' and here we have a wonderful, passionately convincing analytical exposition of two major works of Sri Aurobindo — *The Future Poetry* and *Savitri*. The discussion of the philosophy and spiritual aesthesis of *The Future Poetry* naturally guides the reader to the epic poem *Savitri*. Considering poetry as a psychological phenomenon and spiritual perspectives of literary criticism, opens newer vistas for poetry studies, and arouses keener interest in poetry, especially with illuminating discussions of the mystic symbolism, mantra, prophecy which the author focuses upon as core issues in *Savitri*. Dr. Reddy views *Savitri* as a dynamic and dramatised presentation of Sachchidananda in manifestation. This chapter offers several new directions for the study of the epic, especially as record of Yoga and the ultimate 'message' of Sri Aurobindo. What is novel and unique is the linking of *Savitri* to *The Synthesis of Yoga*, which brings back the reader's attention to the 'synthesis' in Sri Aurobindo.

The Epilogue contains informative and valuable exposition of the concepts of Hinduism, philosophy of the Vedas and the Vedic age, the Upanishads and the Gita. Very helpful discussions bordering on the definition of Hinduism and Sanatana Dharma, taken as experiences of spirituality, revelatory nature of Vedas, the two trinities of the Upanishads, are a fitting conclusion to the book as they once more focus upon the grand 'synthesis' of the spiritual, moral, metaphysical, intellectual ideals of the Indian mind. These are aptly substantiated with relevant references from the Mahabharata, Puranas, devotional literature of Indian saints like Mirabai, Kabir and others, the Tantras, which the author feels are preparations for the future, and establishes Sri Aurobindo as the path-finder to the Supermind. The book provides an excellent understanding of Sri Aurobindo, as the author powerfully drives home the point that Sri Aurobindo was the 'grand master' and 'the acme of the third synthesis'. He studies and analyses each work of Sri Aurobindo as a 'path-breaker in the evolution of human consciousness'.

*Sri Aurobindo: the Grand Synthesis* by Dr. Ananda Reddy is a wonderful book on any account. It is a compelling narrative of Sri Aurobindo's works in their unifying and synthesising role and aspect, and the book convinces us by its lucidly engaging style and by its informative, thought-provoking subject matter. In its broad survey, the neatly logical pattern is clearly visible. The author has provided first the genesis of each of Sri Aurobindo's work, followed by enlightening discussions and concluded each chapter with original, apt, relevant remarks and observations. Information provided, which arouses the intellectual curiosity of the reader, is based on very well-researched facts, which are complemented and supplemented with quotations and references from various authors, old and new, and from Sri Aurobindo's works too. It is sufficiently broad-based to cover all major aspects of Sri Aurobindo's works, and the smoothness of the language makes it effective and easy to comprehend and absorb the contents. The wide-ranging look, the sure-footedness of acute analysis, the vast knowledge and deep understanding and soulful absorption in the spirit of Aurobindonianism seem to be remarkable qualities of the author which are well reflected in his book *Sri Aurobindo: the Grand Synthesis*, its contents justifying and meeting the suggestion of the title in every way. It is a book which can certainly be recommended for the scholar, the researcher, the seeker alike, and also for the ordinary reader who is curious and wants to know about Sri Aurobindo, the man and his life through his major works.

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## Our Recent Publications

### **Deliberations on *The Life Divine*.**

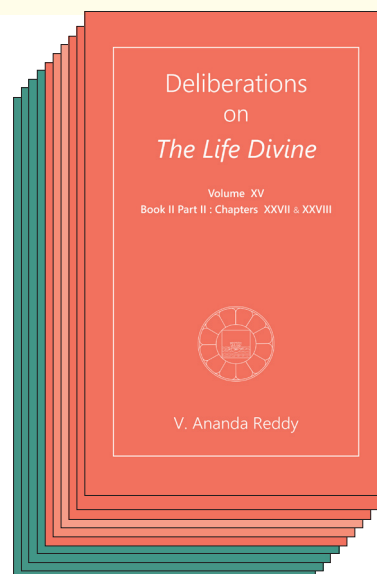
(Volumes 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 & 15)

Author: Dr. V. Ananda Reddy

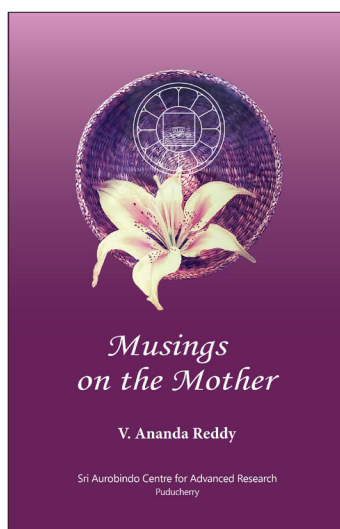
Published by: SACAR Trust, Puducherry

These volumes cover the explanations of all the chapters of Book II Part I and II of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*. The Author has taken the key ideas from each chapter, explained and expanded it in simple words. Since these are edited transcripts of the talks delivered over many years, the text maintains an oral style.

The books are available at SACAR trust and SABDA, Puducherry.



### **Musings on the Mother**



Author: Dr. V. Ananda Reddy

Published by: SACAR Trust, Puducherry

ISBN: 978-93-85391-18-7

Price: ₹380/-

This book, *Musings on the Mother*, is a transcription and edited version of 34 of my talks delivered at Savitri Bhavan, Auroville, from March 2012 to February 2013. We get a fair idea of the contents of the book even by glancing at the titles of the chapters which are arranged in a beautifully precise manner exposing a significant pattern, which serves as a key to the subject of the book.

The books are available at SACAR trust and SABDA, Puducherry.

### **Explanations on *Essays on the Gita***

Author: Dr. V. Ananda Reddy

Published by: SACAR Trust

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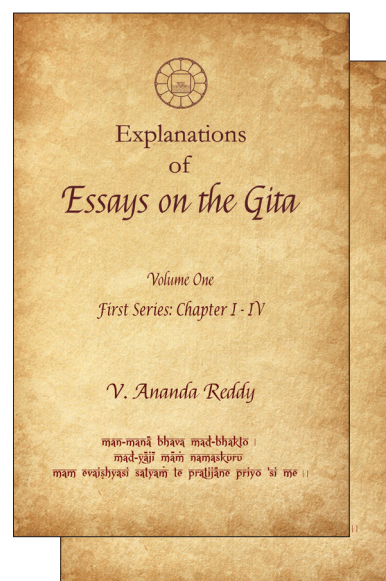
**Volume Two:**

ISBN: 978-93-85391-27-9

Price: ₹ ₹ 280/-

This series of books is a transcription of Dr. Reddy's summary talks given on Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*. The classes were held at Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, (SACAR). Since these are edited transcripts of the talks delivered over several years, the text maintains an oral style.

The books are available at SACAR trust and SABDA, Puducherry.



## Discourses on *The Synthesis of Yoga*

(Volume One and Two)

Author: Dr. V. Ananda Reddy

Published by: SACAR Trust, Puducherry

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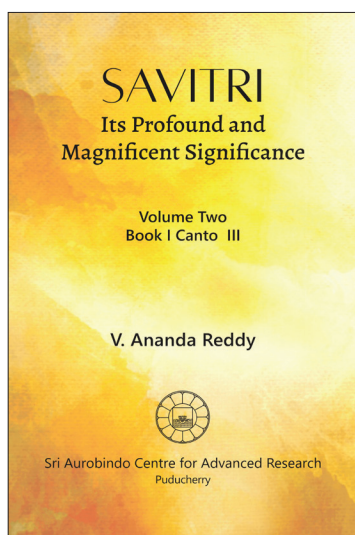
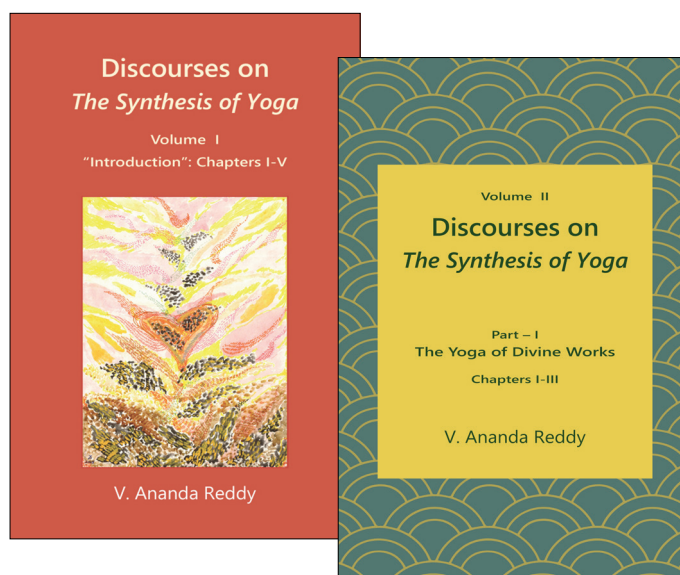
ISBN: 978-93-85391-30-9

Price: ₹ 390/-

These volumes are a transcription of Dr. Reddy's class talks given on Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

The classes were held at the Hall of Harmony, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Puducherry.

The books are available at SACAR trust and SABDA, Puducherry.



## **Savitri: Its Profound and Magnificent Significance**

(Volume Two)

Author: Dr. V. Ananda Reddy

Published by: SACAR Trust, Puducherry

ISBN: 978-93-85391-19-4

Price: ₹375/-

This book bring greater clarity in explanations to understand Sri Aurobindo's Savitri. This book is based on talks which delivered at Savitri Bhavan by Dr. Ananda Reddy.

The books are available at SACAR trust and SABDA, Puducherry.

## **Sri Aurobindo: An Extraordinary Phenomenon**

Editors : Dr. V. Ananda Reddy, Dr. Larry Seidlitz

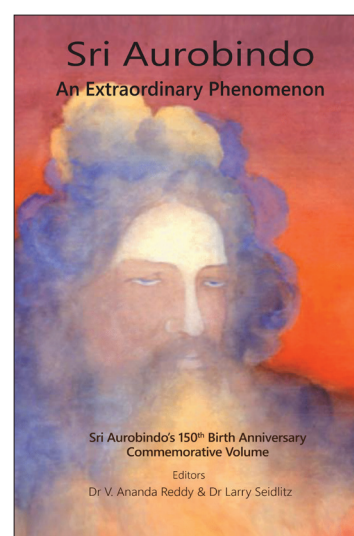
Published by: SACAR Trust, Puducherry

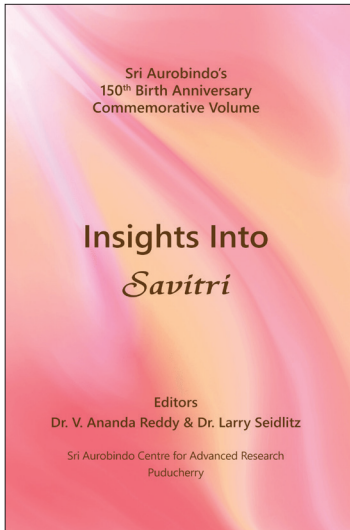
ISBN: 978-93-85391-20-0

Price: ₹480/-

In this book we have collected together a set of 23 edited talks prepared and presented online by various scholars and devotees in honour of Sri Aurobindo's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary by SACAR between 15 August 2021 and 15 August 2022, and supplemented them with two relevant writings by the luminaries Nolini Kanta Gupta and V. Madhusudan Reddy. It is a book that reveals the outer personality of Sri Aurobindo which is but splendid expression of his ever evolving inner spiritual consciousness. For the sympathetic reader the book will open vistas of spiritual insights.

This book is available at SACAR trust and SABDA, Puducherry.





## Insights Into Savitri

Editors : Dr. V. Ananda Reddy, Dr. Larry Seidlitz  
Published by: SACAR Trust, Puducherry  
ISBN: 978-93-85391-29-3  
Price: ₹320/-

To capture the moods and secrets of the unique adventure of consciousness as hidden in Savitri is best done by the Mother, the one who had travelled along with Sri Aurobindo in his manifestation of the poetic-archetype. Other authors were invited to pick up some bright gems from this infinite treasure trove of the Divine. Their talks formed part of "The Magnificent Savitri" series that was relayed by Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research between August 8, 2021 to August 7, 2022.

They are available on SACAR YouTube Channel. These talks transcribed and edited form part of the present volume: *Insights Into Savitri*. Of course, these explorations are somewhat a reflection of the central revelation of *Savitri*, given by the Mother.

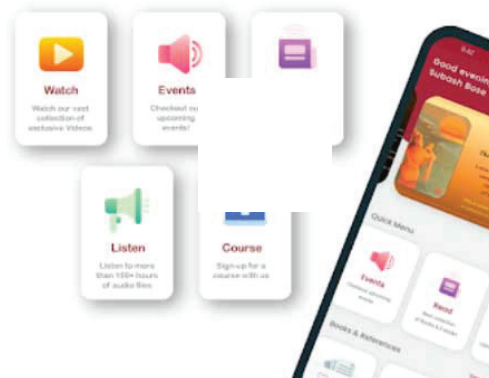
This book is available at SACAR trust and SABDA, Puducherry.

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# Our Contributors

## **Dr. V. Ananda Reddy**

Dr. Ananda Reddy is the Chairman of Institute of Human Study, Hyderabad and the Director of Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Puducherry. He is an alumnus of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Puducherry and has received his doctorate on Sri Aurobindo's concept of Physical Transformation from Madras University. He has travelled across India and to USA, Europe and far East to disseminate the thought and vision of Sri Aurobindo. He continues to work and inspire the younger generations. He has authored about ten books on the work and vision of Sri Aurobindo and has delivered about 2000 hours of talks.

## **Dr. Charan Singh**

Dr. Charan Singh Kedarkhandi is a poet, thinker and an avid seeker of Sri Aurobindo's path and is closely associated with the works of Sri Aurobindo Society in Uttar Pradesh and Uttrakhand. In 2013, he earned his PhD on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. He regularly contributes articles and papers on different aspects of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. At present he is working as assistant professor in English at a govt college in Joshimath, Uttrakhand.

## **Dr. Beloo Mehra**

Dr. Beloo Mehra felt a divine love for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sometime in the summer of 2004. On the intellectual side it was primarily the cultural, social and educational thought of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which first drew her in. It was the love of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that brought Beloo back to India in 2007 after having studied, lived and worked for more than 14 years in the US. She writes regularly for several journals and magazines and also for her blogs.

## **Oeendrilu Guha**

Oeendrilu Guha is an alumnus of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (S.A.I.C.E) and Pondicherry University. Her interest lies in literature. She is now in to content writing.

## **Dr. Shruti Bidwaikar**

Shruti Bidwaikar is an aspiring devotee and learner of Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision. Her doctorate thesis was on Sri Aurobindo's Poetics and Aesthetics. From being a student of SACAR from 2007, she joined work at SACAR as Assistant Director in 2014 to serve here and grow closer to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Shruti is also the Assistant Editor of the journal *New Race* which was blessed by the Mother in 1964. She has published several papers in various journals and continues to research on Aesthetics, Indian Culture and *Savitri*.

## **Debaleena Bhattacharjee**

Debaleena Bhattacharjee has been trained in Kathak under the guidance of her Guru, Shrimati Ila Devi Poddar, for the past sixteen years as she began to explore the Jaipur Gharana style. A performing artist, a choreographer and a composer, she has performed in Kathak Recitals and Dance Dramas, before select audience in temple courtyards, dance festivals as well as in theatres across the country. She spent her formative years in the unique environment of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (S.A.I.C.E). At present, she continues to learn under the guidance of her Guru and take forward the ancient Guru-Shishya Parampara of imparting the knowledge learned from a Guru to others.

### **Dr. Madhumita Dutta**

Dr Dutta is an Associate Professor in English with Vidyasagar College for Women, Kolkata. She has done her PhD on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, from Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan. She has published five books and has presented many papers in conferences in India and abroad. She regularly contributes articles and papers on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

### **Srikrishna Dikshit**

At present Sri Krishna Dixit is the Chairman of Maharashtra and Goa region of Sri Aurobindo Society. He has been actively engaged in bringing awareness among people about the work and vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. For this he has been organising camps in Marathi language, since more than fifteen years in various places in India. He has dedicated his life at the service of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and keep striving towards it.

### **Poorva Sharma**

Poorva Sharma completed her postgraduation in Psychology from University of Delhi in 2011 and MPhil in Clinical Psychology from IHBAS, Delhi in 2013. She got introduced to Mother and Sri Aurobindo while attending a workshop in Pondicherry on Indian Psychology in 2007, and has been on her spiritual journey since. Currently she is associated with SACAR and contributes in editing work, apart from volunteering in Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch.

### **Subhra Nath Maiti**

Subhra Nath Maiti has done M.A in English Literature and M.A in English Language. At present he is working as Assistant Professor at MCKV Institute of Engineering, Liluah, Howrah, West Bengal.

### **Sushila Prakash**

A well-renowned artist and art educator, Suhsila Prakash pursued her lifelong passion - Art, after a distinguished career as a Lawyer for over 25 years. Her artistic repertoire includes oil and acrylic, pencil and charcoal sketches, mixed media, and occasionally watercolors. She has created over 300 works of art across various styles and genres with a special focus on traditional Indian art forms, particularly Kerala Mural Paintings.

Over the years, she has trained hundreds of students at Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced levels, through both online and in-person classes. She annually hosts art exhibitions and student showcases with the aim of promoting young, upcoming talent. She keenly looks forward to contributing to the growth of traditional Indian arts across the globe.

### **Debashish Mukherjee**

Debashish Mukherjee is from Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry. Born in Kolkata, West Bengal, he had moved to Pondicherry at the tender age of two, ever since continues to reside there. He has received his schooling from kindergarten till graduation in the unique environment of S.A.I.C.E. Then went on to pursue a BCom degree from P.U. Currently, he works in S.A.A and pursues his love for photography which he developed thanks to the multifaceted education system of S.A.I.C.E.

The Gita is a book that has worn extraordinarily well, and it is almost as fresh and still in its real substance quite as new, because always renewable in experience, as when it first appeared in or was written into the frame of the 'Mahabharata'. It is still received in India as one of the great bodies of doctrine that most authoritatively govern religious thinking; and its teaching is acknowledged as of the highest value if not wholly accepted, by almost all shades of religious belief and opinion. Its influence is not merely philosophic or academic but immediate and living, an influence both for thought and action, and its ideas are actually at work as a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and a culture. It has even been said recently by a great voice that all we need of spiritual truth for the spiritual life is to be found in the Gita. It would be to encourage the superstition of the book to take too literally that utterance. The truth of the spirit is infinite and cannot be circumscribed in that manner. Still it may be said that most of the main clues are there and that after all the later developments of spiritual experience and discovery, we can still return to it for a large inspiration and guidance. Outside India too it is universally acknowledged as one of the world's great scriptures, although in Europe its thought is better understood than its secret of spiritual practice.

– Sri Aurobindo