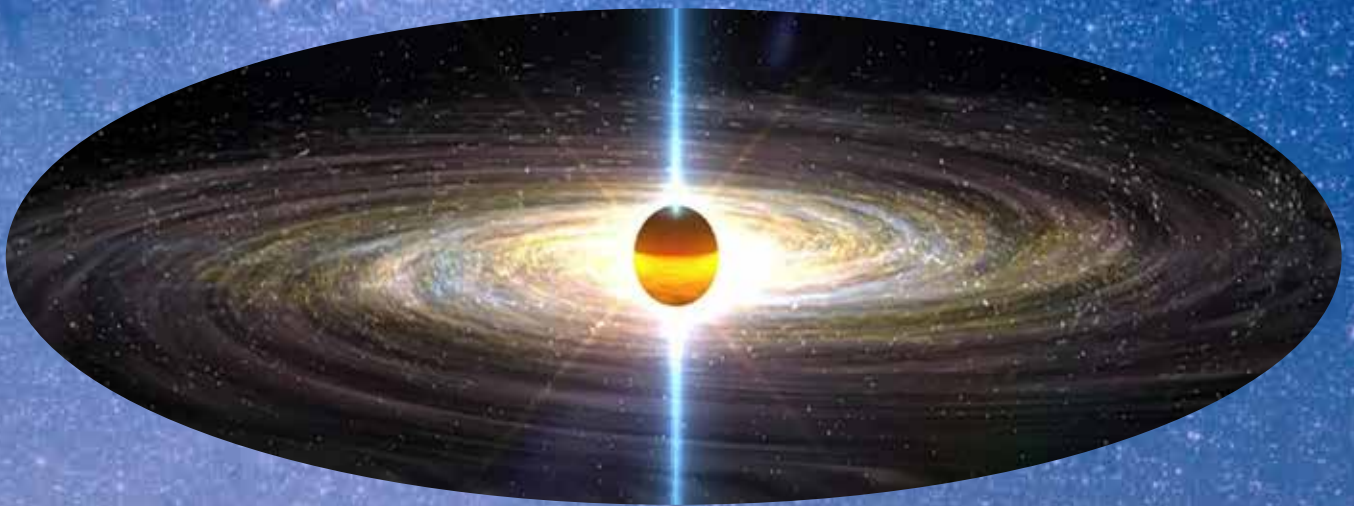


# *New Race*

*A Journal of Integral & Future Studies*

Special Issue

**Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:  
A Whole Universe in Verse**



**Celebrating  
75 years of the Completion of *Savitri*  
&  
25 years of SACAR**

**February 2026: Volume XII Issue I**

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*New Race*

*blessings*  


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# NEW RACE

## A Journal of Integral & Future Studies

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Volume XII Issue I



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## From the Editor's Desk...

The year 2025 marked the 75 years of the completion of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. Since the news of its composition came out it has mesmerised and attracted many a scholar and seekers of Integral Yoga. People have approached *Savitri* for various reasons—its rhythm, imagery, story or just to be in touch with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It is the body of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that he has left for us to feel and experience. Whatever the reason for which one reads *Savitri*, one thing is sure that it creates a nearness to the poet. The Mother also told the sadhaks, one should read *Savitri* for as long as one can—for to be in its atmosphere is extremely rewarding. She says, we get all answers to our questions if we read this work of Sri Aurobindo.

To commemorate this wonderful *Savitri* of Sri Aurobindo, we organised a workshop called "Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*: A whole Universe in Verse". Since the Mother gave strict instructions that *Savitri* cannot be compared with any other literature written so far, we tried studying this epic with the help of other works of Sri Aurobindo like: *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Record of Yoga*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Mother* and his plays. Many scholars shared their papers with us and presented fresh insights into the epic. In this issue we share with our reader selected papers from this workshop.

Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga* is presented as a Divine experiment. While doing intense tapasya, he noted down all the experiments, experiences and even failures. These writings are difficult to understand. Later Sri Aurobindo consolidated many of these experiences and wrote them in *The Synthesis of Yoga* and poured them into rhythm in *Savitri*. A close study of these texts reveal the underlying unity of the poet's experience. *Savitri*, the Mahakavya is unlike other epic poems written in the past. It is the future epic. Sri Aurobindo has left a sample of this future poetry for posterity and given guidelines on how a poet can grow in consciousness to be able to write such a poetry. Similarly, in *Savitri* we find the philosophic Truths which are very difficult to articulate in poetic form, for the expression tends to become prosaic. The future evolution of man and humanity about which Sri Aurobindo has written in *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *The Human Cycle* also find their rightful place in rhythm in this epic. All the papers here only aim to substantiate what the Mother said that everything is there in *Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo has "crammed" the whole world in *Savitri*, she said.

We present to our readers a few insightful papers in this issue. We hope that these will take us closer to Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and his consciousness.

Shruti

## Musings in Eternity: *Savitri* as Future Poetry

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*Madhumita Dutta*

Sri Aurobindo's epic, *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol* has been read and analyzed from many different perspectives over several decades. Studying the epic from the perspective of poetry, especially as a template for future poetry, adds yet another dimension to the interpretative stands. Aspects of Sri Aurobindo's epic is here studied in relation to his own unique and revolutionary philosophy of poetry—his poetics—as laid out in his book *The Future Poetry*, which is an invaluable text in itself, outstepping the bounds of literature and poetry.

We may begin by clarifying the idea of "future" or "future poetry", as the term itself may sound like something of a misnomer. To avoid any misunderstanding of the concept, we will attempt to explain it along the lines of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Even when he focuses on the future, or on future aspects of poetry, he does not leave out the past. Rather, he includes it, assimilates it, and builds upon it—especially poetry that was written, or rather created, from the highest reaches of consciousness, and which shall help and enrich poetry in / of the future with its firm spiritual basis. Through this route, in the evolutionary journey of poetry, we arrive at the concept of the Mantra: mantric poetry, which belonged to the past and, according to Sri Aurobindo, will become the main type of poetry in the future. At this point, we will take a very brief refresher on the enunciations in *The Future Poetry*, that is, the most salient essential features of what Sri Aurobindo is proposing and predicting for the future. In attempting to study *Savitri* as future poetry, the main point of reference will naturally, thus be *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo's own book.

As poetry, we may say that it is about the past as well as the future; it is as much about life as it is about the spirit, as much about language as about rhythm, and as much about Indian poets as about the spiritual seekers of the rest of the world. In fact, one of the fundamental motives, one of the basic aims, in the poetical creation of *Savitri* was, for Sri Aurobindo, to experiment and to see how, and how far, the mantric rhythm could be obtained and contained in and through the English language. Even when we speak of the Indian temperament, it is in no way a narrowing down to any specific cultural ethos or regional sensibility. Rather, what Sri Aurobindo speaks of is a spiritual aesthesis. In this context, the question arises: is the English language capable of that rhythmic speech which was achieved by our ancient seers of the past? Much of *Savitri*, when considered from its literary perspective, is concerned precisely with this question.

In one of his letters, in fact, Sri Aurobindo had written:

...*Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished...  
(CWSA 27: 272)

Technically, we know, it is not finished, but more importantly, the poet regarded

it as a field of experimentation—to see how far ‘poetry could be written from one’s own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative’. We can therefore consider *Savitri* as an experiment in the modes of future poetry. In studying *Savitri* as future poetry, we will examine the role of poetry within the context of spirituality, and vice versa. This will involve taking into account the sources of inspiration in creative work, particularly those that relate to the heights of consciousness the poet has reached. It must also include a discussion of the unique Aurobindonian philosophy of the five suns of poetry—truth, life (by which he means a greater life), delight, beauty, and spirit—and how the motive, or rather the spiritual motive, will decide the form poetry will take in the future. Through all this, we shall see how Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol*, serves as an example of future poetry through its intuitive and revelatory style and through the idea of the Overmind aesthesis.

Any poetical work, especially one of such great length and magnitude as *Savitri*, inevitably renders pluralistic meanings. We can look at it from social or ethical perspectives; we can consider gender issues, we can examine the background, milieu, and cultural ethos. However, when we come to Sri Aurobindo’s epic, it goes beyond all these considerations. We leave behind much of the material critic’s framework, as the poem speaks directly to the soul and, in its gathered intensity, helps us take a step towards eternity, illumined as it is by the five suns, or the five eternal lamps, of poetry. In fact, Sri Aurobindo himself had said that *Savitri* is a sort of poetic philosophy of the Spirit and of Life. We see here that when he speaks of spirit or spirituality, he does not leave out life, and when he speaks of the soul, he does not leave out the body. Poetry, for him, must express some kind of truth, and this truth relates to the aim and purpose of creation. However, to grasp this truth, our intellect often becomes the stumbling block. We must remember that we are speaking here of ‘Poetic Truth’, for which no external verification is possible or even required. The truth expressed is what the poet has experienced—perhaps at a level of consciousness different from the one on which we are grounded, or perhaps in describing a world beyond our material existence. It may well be a non-conceptual experience. With this in mind, let us consider certain lines from *Savitri* where Sri Aurobindo writes about Aswapati’s experiences—experiences which we know were also his own. These lines are from Book One of *Savitri*. After the first two cantos, we actually enter into the yogic realms through which Aswapati travels:

A vision came of higher realms than ours,  
A consciousness of brighter fields and skies,  
Of beings less circumscribed than brief-lived men... (*Savitri*: 28)

We can see that a demarcation, a division, is already being made by that small word than. We do not question it here, because we are not dwellers in that realm to question, verify, or ask why it is so or why it is not otherwise. The poet then speaks of subtler bodies than these passing frames. But, we ‘brief-

lived men' have not experienced that. Therefore, this may not appear to our minds as true, because we are not aware of these occult realms of existence. Even if we try to imagine it, or project it onto a material screen—because the images are there—it may seem to us like a work of fiction, perhaps some kind of elevated science-fiction narrative. But, as Sri Aurobindo himself said: "The mystic feels as real and present..." (CWSA 27: 93) truths which to the ordinary reader are intellectual abstractions or metaphysical speculations. He is writing of experiences that are foreign to the ordinary mentality.

This is what we mean by poetic truth. It signifies and contains much more than the ordinary meaning or common sense of truth; it connotes far more. There are many short poems by Sri Aurobindo which can serve as illustrations. For instance, the poem called *Nirvana*, of which he has given a long explanation, was a 'transcription' of a major experience. So he had to use language and images 'to convey to the mind some figure of that which is beyond thought':

All is abolished but the mute Alone.  
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief  
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;  
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown. ...  
Only the illimitable Permanent  
Is here. (CWSA 2: 563)

This poem attracted severe criticism, largely because it was beyond comprehension. When we read a line such as "the heart from grief released", it is still somewhat comprehensible; we have at least some familiarity with self-control and emotional discipline. But what about the phrase in the first part of the line, "the mind from thought released"? We cannot easily conceive of the mind separated from thought. Yet, in *Savitri* itself, Sri Aurobindo uses a very beautiful metaphor, where thoughts are compared to ships coming towards the mind, and where, if we choose, we can stop those ships from entering the shores of the mind. This, however, is something that can only be realised experientially. Any explanation will inevitably remain at the 'mental' level. So how do we rationalise this kind of poetry? The vision, the experience, and therefore the language and expression, all belong to a different plane altogether. *Savitri* contains many such passages, especially when Sri Aurobindo writes about Aswapati's yoga or Savitri's yoga. These experiences lie beyond what is scientifically knowable—yet! Poetic truth is expressed through poetic insight and the intuitive eye at work. The greater the inspired seeing, the greater is the measure of poetic utterance. Consider these lines from *Savitri*:

In a mystical barrage of dynamic light  
He saw a lone immense high-curved world-pile  
Erect like a mountain chariot of the Gods  
Motionless under an inscrutable sky. (*Savitri*: 98)

Now, we have no clear conception of what "dynamic light" is. What does

dynamic light mean? This is a phrase that comes directly to the poet. We know, in ordinary terms, that light travels in a straight line, that it travels fast, and that one who attains the speed of light is said to attain immortality, and so on. But "dynamic light" is something else altogether; it cannot be coined or constructed by the mind. It has come to him as an experience. Sri Aurobindo is speaking of Aswapati's voyages in the occult worlds, describing what he calls the 'World-Stair'. By the world-stair he means the gradations of consciousness, and there are, in fact, about fifteen cantos in which he describes each of these worlds. This touch of inward life, this direct spiritual perception and vision—these are some of the measures of the power of poetic utterance. Poetry must open up to us new and possible ways of being. Traditional ideas are sometimes displaced, and new meanings are attached to what may appear to be stale ideas and customs. That is how a poem becomes revelatory. One of the characteristics of mystical or spiritual poetry is that it becomes a communicative process charged with truth-substance and truth-rhythm.

The next aspect is the breath of life, or the 'greater life'. Sri Aurobindo says that this is the sustaining power of the poet's creation. Truth alone may not always be enough; it has to be infused with something more, and that something more is the breath of the greater life. He says that poetry is a rhythmic voice of life, and the more that voice is heard in poetry, the greater the poetry becomes. So what is this sun of greater life? According to Sri Aurobindo, it is the real life of man. It includes all that the poet experiences of God, of the Self, of Nature, and of his passion for self-exceeding. The poetry of the future, he says, will be something like this: a poetry of the deeper nature of earthly life, a profound earthly life, 'more real, rich, full, and living' for human beings. In *Savitri* once again this promise has been fulfilled:

The shining Edens of the vital gods  
Received him in their deathless harmonies.  
All things were perfect there that flower in Time;  
Beauty was there creation's native mould,  
Peace was a thrilled voluptuous purity. ...  
Sweet common things turned into miracles:... (*Savitri*: 234-235)

Phrases like 'deathless harmonies', seem to come from something more than the higher mind. In the regions of which this passage is a description, Beauty was natural, not something artificially imposed, as it often seems to be here. Ugliness had no part there. All that we dream of here, all that we aspire for here, are presented as realities on a higher plane of existence. They do exist, but because we do not know them directly, we cannot conceive of them fully. Here, whenever we have beauty, we also have ugliness; white is accompanied by black. Similarly, truth is accompanied by falsehood. Because of this mixture, we

have no clear conception of such pure states. Our common life, however, is still swayed by the rhythm of a greater life.

We may also consider these lines from *Savitri*, which describe the destined meeting place of Savitri and Satyavan. The description has to match the momentous nature of that day, that decisive moment of meeting, where even this very earth is seen in a greater light. These lines show the contrast between what a conventional nature poet might write and what Sri Aurobindo is expressing here. He says:

A highland world of free and green delight  
Where spring and summer lay together and strove  
In indolent and amicable debate, ...  
Pale waters ran like glimmering threads of pearl. ...  
Cool-perfumed with slow pleasure-burdened feet  
Faint stumbling breezes faltered among flowers. ...  
Moved by a universal will of joy  
The trees bloomed in their green felicity. (*Savitri*: 389-390)

This goes far beyond mere nature poetry. For instance, the word 'faltered' here means almost the opposite of its usual sense. It does not suggest an obstacle or a weakness. Rather, it suggests a happy lingering, a willful pause, as if the breeze itself wishes to remain among the flowers. That is why the poet uses the word 'faltered'. Even this line, 'the trees bloomed in their green felicity', is on a different note, where a transferred epithet is beautifully handled. The 'trees' go beyond mere personification. And then there is that one line, 'moved by a universal will of joy', which gathers everything together and holds it in a single breath: the trees, the waters, the breeze, the flowers—all are shown as parts of one universal existence. This is no Eden or vision of paradise. It is a poetic picture of our own earth, of the very earth that surrounds us, but minted in a different rhythm and seen through the eyes of a great poet. Here, it may not be strictly mantric—indeed, not all of *Savitri* is mantric—yet it is certainly not ordinary either. A Higher Mind is clearly at work.

Speaking of the poetry of the future illumined by the sun of greater life, Sri Aurobindo says:

This poetry will be the voice and rhythmic utterance of our greater, our total, our infinite existence, and will give us the strong and infinite sense, the spiritual and vital joy, the exalting power of a greater breath of life. (CWSA 26: 253)

Along with the touch of greater life and the illumination of truth, there are many passages in the epic that are radiant with aesthesis—the *rasa*, the essence of beauty and delight. A poet has said that poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom. Even if it ends in wisdom, it has to be a higher wisdom. Sri Aurobindo, however, has a slightly different philosophy to offer, and this is in keeping with

the high function of art and poetry. As we all know, the line “a thing of beauty is a joy forever” is one of the most universal psychological statements, whether in philosophy or aesthetics, uttered by a poet in one of his greatest moments of inspiration. Sri Aurobindo, too, considers delight and beauty as a single power. He says that this power is ‘a greater godhead even than the sun of truth or the breath of life’. Truth, by itself, can sometimes be bare, raw, or even crude. But the moment we infuse it with that universal *ānanda rasa*, that universal beauty, it receives, as it were, the stamp of immortality. Truth alone can do this, but delight and beauty make it fuller and richer. It is a psychological fact that the mere sight of something truly beautiful gives us an experience of joy or delight that is very difficult to define in precise psychological terms. Anything—a painting, architecture, sculpture, song, music, even a beautifully crafted piece of apparel or jewellery—can be a creation in beauty, and then it becomes poetry. The sensation we experience is born of ‘a deeper rapture’, because this kind of beauty touches our soul, and that is where the delight comes from. At times, we are held in a kind of trance and can only marvel at the perfect execution of the artist. At such moments, we feel that the conflated powers of Mahasaraswati and Mahalakshmi are at work. Consider some more lines from *Savitri*:

Out of the sorrow and darkness of the world,  
Out of the depths where life and thought are tombed,  
Lonely mounts up to heaven the deathless Flame. (*Savitri*: 279)

That one image of beauty—the ‘deathless flame’—inspires something that we cannot really define. It destroys, at once, the darkness of ages; it gives us joy, it gives us delight. One of the essential characteristics of beauty and delight is ‘an unaging youth, an eternal moment, an immortal presence’. That single image of the deathless flame contains all of this: an immortal presence and an eternal moment, precisely because it is deathless. Let us consider a few more lines from *Savitri* that reflect this power of the poet:

An incense floated in the quivering air,  
A mystic happiness trembled in the breast  
As if the invisible Beloved had come  
Assuming the sudden loveliness of a face  
And close glad hands could seize his fugitive feet  
And the world change with the beauty of a smile. (*Savitri*: 290)

This mystic happiness is the universal *ānanda*, the divine delight. Here, the invisible Beloved has not yet come, so he uses the phrase *as if*. Yet we can see the power of beauty and delight here—the power that can change a person’s entire world -‘the beauty of a smile’. This is what future poetry will do: it will change our world. It will produce that deluge of delight under which, naturally and willingly, all baser passions submerge. In those moments, we actually ‘live’, experiencing the universal *ānanda*.

Some of Sri Aurobindo's shorter poems also contain this soul of ānanda, this beauty of delight. Consider the poem "The Divine Sight", composed around 1939. We know that Sri Aurobindo was steadily progressing on his path of yoga during this time and that he recorded his experiences in poetry. In this sonnet he writes:

Each sight is now immortal with Thy bliss:  
My soul through the rapt eyes has come to see; ...  
Into an ecstasy of vision caught  
Each natural object is of Thee a part,  
A rapture-symbol from Thy substance wrought,  
A poem shaped in Beauty's living heart,... (CWSA 2: 623)

Once again, this is a transcription, not something written merely because he was a poet writing verses. It is the record of a spiritual experience, a realisation. This echoes what he has said elsewhere, in *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*: that everything is a manifestation of the Divine. Here, he feels it; he has realised it. There is here the kind of rapture, the deeper joy, that Sri Aurobindo means by delight and beauty—"the joy of Being on the peaks of God", as he has written in *Savitri*. In another poem *The Divine Sense*, written in the same year, he says:

In every contact's deep invading thrill,  
That lasts as if its source were infinite,  
I feel Thy touch; Thy bliss imperishable  
Is crowded into that moment of delight. (Ibid)

The lines convey the idea that in one moment that delight is crowded, condensed. From that centre, it can spread through time and space; it can carry one through life. That moment becomes the centre, and from there it can radiate outward and touch other souls as well.

Thus, poetry interprets truth and expresses beauty and delight as felt and experienced by the soul, along with the Truth of the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo associates poetry with spiritual life and also with that which embraces reality in its fullness. We have many poems of spiritual experience by him—Transformation, Revelation, Rishi, Ascent, Soul-Scene. Even the titles themselves are highly suggestive. The spiritual note is prominent in the expression of the poet's soul-states: Revelation is one soul-state, Ascent is another. In *Savitri*, we find many passages that are deeply anchored in the spiritual, for that is, after all, the centre and core of the epic. For instance:

In an outburst of heavenly joy and ease  
Life yields to the divinity within  
And gives the rapture-offering of its all,  
And the soul opens to felicity. ...  
A fiery stillness wakes the slumbering cells,  
A passion of the flesh becoming spirit,  
And marvellously is fulfilled at last  
The miracle for which our life was made. (*Savitri*: 278)

And what is this miracle? It is the Divinisation of man, the bridging of Matter and Spirit, the Spiritualisation of life itself. How is this effected? When every cell is awakened to felicity. These are clearly the poet's own spiritual realisations, translated into the poetry of the Spirit. In *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo discusses this aspect in great detail. He says that such poetry shall restore to us our sense of the Divine, revealing the Eternal Presence. About the highest kind of poetry that may be written in the future, he says:

His indeed may be the song of greatest flight that will reveal from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purpose of the Divinity in man and the universe. (CWSA 26: 286)

And has not *Savitri* already reached those heights of the Spirit from which most of its lines were composed? In many passages of the poem, we witness the yogic consciousness at work, especially in the later parts and wherever he is relating a spiritual experience. For example, when he says, 'The intimacy of God was everywhere,' he has experienced that intimacy. In the lines that follow, he brings this experience within our comprehension:

No veil was felt, no brute barrier inert,  
Distance could not divide, Time could not change.  
A fire of passion burned in spirit-depths,  
A constant touch of sweetness linked all hearts,  
The throb of one adoration's single bliss  
In a rapt ether of undying love.  
An inner happiness abode in all,  
A sense of universal harmonies,  
A measureless secure eternity  
Of truth and beauty and good and joy made one. (*Savitri*: 291)

The last line of the passage reveals that all these become aspects of a single experience, a single spiritual realisation. And that can happen only when the mind has transcended itself. To comprehend such poetry—and even more, to write it—one needs the touch of the soul. Poetry evolves as it follows the development of the soul in man. Here, we may consider Sri Aurobindo's own journey in this realm, and we find a marked difference between his early, or earliest, youthful compositions and the creation of *Savitri*. Composing, writing, describing, transcribing, and creating are not the same; these are fundamentally different processes. His journey, therefore, was from that of a poet—one might even say a versifier—to that of a seer-poet. The evolution of poetry runs parallel to the evolution of consciousness. Even within *Savitri* itself, there are many levels, which is why the poem was subject to so many revisions. We know that he went on revising it continuously, and in one of his letters he wrote:

I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental

level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level.  
(*Sri Aurobindo—a biography and a history*: 660)

When we compare the earlier versions with the final version, we sometimes find that even punctuation marks have been altered, or capital letters have replaced small letters. These are very minute revisions, but they are significant. In fact, the first canto itself was changed several times, until he finally wrote that line, 'It was the hour before the Gods awake.' Perhaps this was precisely the kind of ascension he was referring to. He also admitted that during the early composition of some parts of the poem, the inspiration was insufficient. As he reached higher yogic heights, as he himself journeyed through occult realms and advanced in his sadhana, he composed as much as possible from those higher planes of inspiration. That, according to him, is how poetry will be created in the future. When consciousness reaches its highest levels, poetry will be created from those heights. Then there will be a new birth, a new age, with new diction and new rhythmic patterns. Familiar things will be illumined by a divine light, revealing hidden meanings that were hitherto concealed. The journey of life will then move towards its spiritual completion: divine love, union with the Divine Will. This will inform the spirit of poetry, experienced in a concrete way by the seer-poet of the future. As the poet of *Savitri* sings, 'The unseen grew visible and audible.' When one advances to that level of consciousness, all that lies beyond the ordinary human range becomes accessible. What is beyond the human range at present will become accessible to the yogi. And what is the Yogi's realisation? :

This world is a vast unbroken totality,  
A deep solidarity joins its contrary powers;...  
The high meets the low, all is a single plan. (*Savitri*: 541)

The unity that the poet writes about is not mere theory; it is a concrete experience for the yogi-poet.

There have been mystic poets all over the world, and in India too we have had many. We may take an example from the West, the great mystic poet Saint John of the Cross, and reflect on the subtle difference between the mystical and the strictly spiritual. When we compare his lines with those we have quoted earlier from *Savitri*, some of the differences become clear. Saint John writes:

In that happy night,  
In secret, seen of none,  
Seeing nought myself,  
Without other light or guide  
Save that which in my heart was burning.

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/157984/the-dark-night-of-the-soul>)

Comparing this with one phrase of Sri Aurobindo's -the 'deathless flame', the difference between the mystical, which may be described as a partial or veiled vision of truth, and the spiritual, which is a direct yogic experience, is clear. Again, when Saint John writes:

I entered the unknown,  
and there I remained unknowing,  
all knowledge transcended.

Where I entered I knew not,  
but seeing myself there,  
not knowing where,  
great things then made themselves known.

What I sensed I cannot say,  
for I remained unknowing,  
all knowledge transcended. (<https://sacredpoetryproject.com/i-entered-the-unknown/>)

We see that he is trying to express something that cannot be fully explained, because it lies beyond human language; whereas Sri Aurobindo describes exactly what he has experienced. That is where we encounter what he calls spiritual poetry—something concrete, grounded in realised experience. These lines from the Western mystic poet are undoubtedly expressions of deep spiritual experience, and the ecstasy of divine contemplation resounds through the language. Yet, somewhere, the more personal note tends to dilute the strictly spiritual theme. This, perhaps, marks the subtle distinction between mystical poetry and the fully realised poetry of the spirit that Sri Aurobindo envisages for the future. In *Savitri*, much like the Vedas, spiritual truth is revealed through symbols and imagery, and this becomes a transformative spiritual experience for one who can read and tune in rightly with its incantatory rhythm. Why does a Mantra not work for everyone alike? It is because we cannot participate in that Mantra. The Mantra is there, ready-made for us, but if we can tune in rightly, if we can receive the vibrations, the Mantra will work for us; so we have to be participants. With spiritual poetry, the intellect need not struggle anymore; it will directly touch the soul.

Sri Aurobindo, the Mahakavi, the seer-poet who experienced God, who experienced God's delight, and who experienced the Spirit, expressed that in immortal lines in *Savitri*—from the Self to the Self. That is where poetry has always belonged, and great poets do transform the world; they transform our vision of the world and help us to open to the touch of God even in the darkest spaces. To do that, to express the ineffable and to unveil spiritual reality, a different language is needed. How to express what needs to be expressed? Many find it difficult. Sri Aurobindo talked about great French poets who had to struggle with the language available to them. They did not have a ready-made language in which to express these things, so they coined their own words and phrases. How, then, to express a world beyond the human and the material, to show how the world is 'charged with the grandeur of God'? This comes from some Overhead inspiration; it cannot be minted in the ordinary mind. It is a creative engagement with the inner self that the poet indulges in,

so the language also has to be that which touches the soul and it has to be the Mantra -'coming from infinity, rushing into infinity and touching the soul forever' -a speech that belongs to the transcendental planes! The sublime power of language belongs to the Overmental, which gives presence to absence and materiality to the abstract, brings occult truths before the reader, and draws the soul into the super-logic of the spirit. Sri Aurobindo said that the Overmind is a spiritual power that puts truth first and 'brings out the essential truth in things', and gives these lines from *Savitri* as an instance of Overmind intuition:

Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,  
Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit  
Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm  
Overflew the ways of Thought to unborn things. (*Savitri*: 14)

The word 'unborn' itself suggests the future; it does not mean it is not going to be born, it means 'not yet manifested'. Here we see the Overmind aesthesis at work in the visionary and interpretative power of the poet, when the unseen becomes visible and the unheard becomes audible, and when the inner being of the audience and also of the creator—awakes and becomes receptive to the Mantra. The poet, like the yogi Aswapati, must be:

A Seer within who knows the ordered plan  
Concealed behind our momentary steps,  
Inspires our ascent to viewless heights. (*Savitri*: 101)

And that is the function of poetry—it is not for mere entertainment; the rhythms should be such that they will inspire us to reach viewless heights. In *Savitri*, much like the Vedas, spiritual truth is revealed through symbols and imagery, and this becomes a transformative, a revelatory experience for the reader. And to do that, to express the ineffable, to unveil spiritual reality, a different language is needed. Sri Aurobindo has said that the future poetry will be governed by two mentalities: a large spiritual mind of the Orient with its eye turned inward upon the Self, and the Occidental with its free spirit and life energy. So it has always been a kind of assimilation and transformation; we do not actually reject everything. And using the shock of these two Oriental and Occidental mentalities upon each other will produce the poetry of the future. And in his book *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo has done a detailed analysis of the characteristics of English poetry up to modern times—that is, up to Yeats and Whitman. He has also given instances from Rabindranath Tagore, and he shows how English poetry follows the 'natural ascending curve of the human spirit'. English has the largest, freest poetic energy and natural power, he said, and this quality of the English language is reflected in his own epic poem. But more importantly, the issue here is: how can the Rishi, the seer-poet, utter his Mantra in English? We have it in Sanskrit, but there are not many in India who understand this language. Does it mean that they will not have access to spiritual

truths? It is not that. We need an international, global language, but at the same time it cannot remain as mere poetry; it has to be the Rishi who utters the Mantra. And because English had shown its capacities for what Sri Aurobindo was trying to achieve as mantric verse and poetry, we will see the return of the Rishi more than the mere poet:

A Rishi is one who sees or discovers an inner truth and puts it into self-effective language—the mantra. Either new truth or old truth made new by expression and realisation. (CWSA 27: 103)

In *Savitri*, we do hear the voice of the Rishi again and again, who expresses some eternal truth he has realised. For instance:

For the Eternal's powers are like himself,  
Timeless in the Timeless, in Time ever-born. (*Savitri*: 541)

Profound philosophy is condensed in these two lines - about the manifest and unmanifest. This is poetic truth, poetry of the Spirit. Or we can consider these hymn-like verses from *Savitri*—and get into the spirit of the incantatory rhythm:

In all we feel his presence and his power.  
A blaze of his sovereign glory is the sun,  
A glory is the gold and glimmering moon,  
A glory is his dream of purple sky.  
A march of his greatness are the wheeling stars. (*Savitri*: 623-624)

These anaphoric lines contribute to this kind of incantatory rhythm. And then the poet says that 'this world is God fulfilled in outwardness'. So it is philosophy, it is poetry, it is the Rishi uttering the Mantra—it is all in one line. Verses like this, with an Upanishadic caste, are grand, noble, and they affect our senses, our soul, our being, and continue to inspire across time and culture. Here we see the aim of poetry and yoga actually coincide: that is, to reveal truth, to liberate, to transform. And thereby poetry, the act of poetic creation, becomes a spiritual activity, because ultimately what is the aim—what is this philosophy ultimately about? It is about Transformation. And the transformation that is to be effected, it has to be radical, it has to be deep, it has to be profound. And also it has to be permanent. That is why a Mantra is to be chanted till liberation comes, till the healing is done. In *Savitri*, we hear the enchanting Mantra of the Rishi in the poem's profounder passages, revealing to us 'God's everlasting day' which will surround the superman of the future as it did Savitri after her victory over Death and Darkness:

The Spirit's mightiness shall cast of its mask;  
Its greatness shall be felt shaping the world's course:  
A few shall glimpse the miraculous Origin...  
Adventurers into a mightier Day.  
Ascending out of the limiting breadths of mind,  
They shall discover the world's huge design  
And step into the Truth, the Right, the Vast. ...

*Musings in Eternity: Savitri as Future Poetry*

Even there shall come as a high crown of all

The end of Death, the death of Ignorance. (*Savitri*: 704-708)

That is what *Savitri* is about; that is what *The Life Divine* is about; that is what *The Ideal of Human Unity* is about; that is what Sri Aurobindo's yoga is all about. So here we have, in one line, the poetry of the spirit expressing everything. *Savitri* fulfils in a great measure the prophecy of *The Future Poetry*, where Spirit will be the master and the poets will sing of the 'growing godhead of the kind, of human unity, of spiritual freedom, of the coming supermanhood of man...' But the question is, who will understand the poet and the poetry of *Savitri*? Here 'All is subliminal, screened, mystical'. Sri Aurobindo himself gives the answer. To understand this 'needs the intuitive heart, the inward turn, ... the power of a spiritual gaze'.

A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer. (CWSA 27: 93)

Sri Aurobindo also hoped that poetry will afford a wider space to explore and express the hidden and the unexplored and reveal the deepest secrets of the universe. Surely we are progressing towards that great evolutionary future. In a letter he wrote:

The door that has been shut to all but a few may open; the kingdom of the Spirit may be established not only in man's inner being but, in his life, and his works. Poetry also may have its share in that revolution and become part of the spiritual empire. (Ibid, 807-808)

That is Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*—the inner epic of the soul, and as the Mother said, it is the 'poetry of tomorrow'.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth  
And the undying suns here burn;  
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth  
The incarnate spirits yearn  
Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:  
Down a gold-red stairway wend  
The radiant children of Paradise  
Clarioning darkness' end.

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA 02: 537)

# The Divine Experiment: Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga and Savitri*

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Richard Hartz

## Introduction: The Divine Experiment

The title of this presentation, "The Divine Experiment", was suggested to me by these lines that occur near the end of Book One, Canto Three of *Savitri*, "The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release":

Once only registering the heavy tread  
Of a blind Power on human littleness,  
Life now became a sure approach to God,  
Existence a divine experiment  
And cosmos the soul's opportunity. (*Savitri*: 43)

Earlier in the same canto, we also find these lines:

In every hour loosed from the quiver of Time  
There rose a song of new discovery,  
A bow-twang's hum of young experiment. (*Savitri*: 30)

The experimental aspect of the Yoga—the fact that it is an attempt to do something new, an adventure into the unknown—is part of the reason why it can be interesting to compare *Savitri* with the diary of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual practice, which he called the *Record of Yoga*.

It is true that most of the passages depicting Aswapati's Yoga were written after Sri Aurobindo had stopped keeping the diary. But as we will see, Aswapati's experiences correspond closely with many of those that Sri Aurobindo had previously documented day by day, in a very different format, in his diary even before he started to write *Savitri*.

## Scientific Method in the *Record of Yoga*

Let us turn now to a typical entry in the *Record*. It will soon become clear that although the *Record of Yoga* is referred to as a diary because of its chronological format, it is quite unlike any other diary. For one thing, there are several hundred pages of the diary where the words "I", "me" and "my" do not occur.

Part of the experimental method of science, which Sri Aurobindo applied in a certain way to psychological development and spiritual experience, is that failures are recorded in the same detail and with the same impartiality and rectitude as successes. So we read in the last entry of 1912:

This day closes the year 1912.... At present there is no sign of any rapid progress or of really great results. All is petty, hampered & limited... Continuity in the higher states seems as yet impossible, and from accomplishment there is always a relapse into a condition of partial asiddhi.... (CWSA 10: 173)

Different as this might sound from the triumphant tone of much of "The Yoga of the King", Aswapati also experiences relapses, as we see in these lines:

Only awhile at first these heavenlier states,  
These large wide-poised upliftings could endure. (*Savitri*: 34)

Compare that with the phrase from the entry in the *Record of Yoga* which I just read: "Continuity in the higher states seems as yet impossible." This changed after a certain stage was reached, but such alternations were recorded during much of the period when the diary was kept.

The source of the difficulty is also similarly identified in both texts as being a kind of gravitation. The passage in *Savitri* continues:

An old pull of subconscious cords renews;  
It draws the unwilling spirit from the heights,  
Or a dull gravitation drags us down  
To the blind driven inertia of our base. (*Savitri*: 34)

Likewise, we read in the *Record* on 23 May 1918:

The main defect lies now in the downward gravitation which prevents the thought from being of the highest elevation possible...(*Record of Yoga*: 1087)

### **The Integral Yoga: Harmony of *Nivṛtti* and *Pravṛtti***

But to come back to the entry of December 31st, 1912, it continues and concludes in a more positive vein:

On the other hand the theory of the Yoga has been proved. The perfectibility of the human being, trikaldrishti, Power, the play of the Divine Force in the individual, the existence of the other worlds, & of extra-mental influences, even the possibility of the physical siddhis are established facts—vijñana, the Vedic psychology, the seven streams, everything is established. What is wanting is the perfect application, free from the confusions of the anritam which result from the play of mind. It has been seen that in repose, in nivṛtti[,] in udasinata, perfect peace and ananda are possible; but the thing the Yoga has set out to establish is the perfect harmony of Nivṛtti & Pravṛtti, of desirelessness & Lipsa, of Guna & Nirguna, complete Ananda, Tapas, Knowledge, Love, Power & Infinite Egoless Being, consummating in the full and vehement flow of the Pravṛtti. By the fulfilment or failure of this harmony the Yoga stands or falls. (CWSA 10: 173-74)

This is a key statement about Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The harmonisation of passive and active, negative and positive, static and dynamic realisations—called here *nivṛtti* and *pravṛtti*—constitutes the integrality of the Integral Yoga.

### **The *Sapta Catuṣṭaya***

This integrality is summed up in what Sri Aurobindo called the *sapta catuṣṭaya*, a system consisting of seven terms, each further subdivided into four. The seven terms are: 1. *samatā*, 2. *śakti*, 3. *vijñāna*, 4. *śārīra*, 5. *karma*, 6. *brahma* and 7. *siddhi*.

A pyramid arrangement of the *sapta catuṣṭaya* brings out the underlying logic of the system, as I will show in a moment. But before I do that, let me point out that the whole of the Yoga of Self-Perfection is encapsulated in three extraordinary lines in the first paragraph of "The Yoga of the King":

A static Oneness and dynamic Power  
Descend in him, the integral Godhead's seals;  
His soul and body take that splendid stamp. (*Savitri*: 24)

Now let me juxtapose this with the pyramid arrangement of the *sapta catuṣṭaya*:

7. *siddhi*  
3. *vijñāna*    4. *śarīra*  
2. *śakti*                      5. *karma*  
1. *samatā*                      6. *brahma*

Here one can see the "static Oneness" consisting of the realisations of *samatā* and *brahma*, the first and sixth *catuṣṭayas*, as the foundation. The second level, on that basis, is the "dynamic Power", the realisation of *śakti* and *karma*, the second and fifth *catuṣṭayas*. At the apex, the *siddhi* of "the integral Godhead" depends on the union of the *vijñāna* and *śarīra catuṣṭayas*, overcoming the division between soul and body: "His soul and body take that splendid stamp."

In June 1916, Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to the Mother, who was then in Japan, which is one of his first explanations of the *sapta catuṣṭaya*, the system of the Yoga of Self-Perfection as he calls it in Part Four of *The Synthesis of Yoga*. There he wrote, referring to the *sapta catuṣṭaya* as a "map":

As I have long had the map of my advance sketched out before me, I am able to measure my progress at each step and the particular losses are compensated for by the clear consciousness of the general advance that has been made. The final goal is far but the progress made in the face of so constant and massive an opposition is the guarantee of its being gained in the end... (*CWSA* 36: 289)

Sri Aurobindo goes on in his letter to the Mother to explain the *sapta catuṣṭaya*, without calling it that, but beginning with *samatā* and the *brahma catuṣṭaya*:

An absolute equality of the mind and heart and a clear purity and calm strength in all the members of the being have long been the primary condition on which the Power working in me has insisted.... As they become firmer and more complete the system is more able to hold consistently and vividly the settled perception of the One in all things and beings. ...

When the Unity has been well founded, the static half of our work is done, but the active half remains. It is then that in the One we must see the Master and His Power,... the Master using, directing, enjoying the Power to his ends, not mine, with that which I call myself only as a centre of his universal existence....

When that has been done, then we may hope to found securely the play in us of his divine Knowledge governing the action of his divine Power. The rest is the full

opening up of the different planes of his world-play and the subjection of Matter and the body and the material world to the law of the higher heavens of the Truth. (CWSA 36: 289-90)

What we see described here is, first, *samatā* and the realisation of *brahman*, then *śakti* and *karma*, and finally *vijñāna* ("divine Knowledge") and *śārīra*—the beginning of the transformation of the body and Matter itself constituting the final *siddhi*.

### **The Interdependence of the *Catuṣṭayas***

So we find the whole of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga encapsulated in just three lines in the very first paragraph of Book One, Canto Three of *Savitri*.

To emphasise how important it is to understand and master the *sapta catuṣṭaya* if one hopes to have any understanding of the *Record of Yoga*, here is a typical entry:

It is the replacement of the mental perceptions & impulses that is the work of the Vijnanachatusthaya. It is because that work is not yet done, that the first two chatusthayas are open to shocks & disturbances through the disappointment of the faith.... But the entire fulfilment of the third implies the fulfilment of the fourth and fifth and therefore necessarily of the sixth and seventh. Therefore it is an integral fulfilment that is being worked out & this aim prevents the separate perfection of each chatusthaya by itself without relation to the rest. (*Record of Yoga*: 647)

So obviously, in order to read this, one has to first know exactly what the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh *catuṣṭayas* are.

Now let's come back to "The Yoga of the King" and go on to the second section, which begins with these lines:

As so he grew into his larger self,  
Humanity framed his movements less and less;  
A greater being saw a greater world. (*Savitri*: 26)

In the *Record of Yoga*, we read:

The shadow of intellectual consideration and hesitation over the act or the thought, the shadow of intellectual determination of the act or thought, the shadow of reflection & judgment over it when accomplished,... all these glints of the lower humanity must be effaced.... They must be utterly replaced by unchecked Force in the act and pure Sight in the vision.... (CWSA 10: 183)

Remember the line: "Humanity framed his movements less and less." And here we read: "All these glints of the lower humanity must be effaced."

### **The *Śakti Catuṣṭaya***

The passage in *Savitri* continues:

A fearless will for knowledge dared to erase  
The lines of safety Reason draws that bar  
Mind's soar, soul's dive into the Infinite. (*Savitri*: 26)

Although these lines are concerned with knowledge, in order to see their relation to the *sapta catuṣṭaya* we have to turn now to the *śakti catuṣṭaya*. Because the "fearless will for knowledge" is related to one member of the *śakti catuṣṭaya*, which Sri Aurobindo explains in *The Synthesis of Yoga* in the chapter called "Soul-Force and the Fourfold Personality". In an earlier explanation of the *sapta catuṣṭaya* he writes, introducing the *śakti catuṣṭaya*:

This may be called the siddhi of the temperament or nature in the lower system, in the internal triloka of mind, life & body, manas, prana, annam. To put it from a higher standpoint, it is the siddhi of the divine Shakti working in these three principles. (CWSA 10: 7)

Here we have the first example of a *catuṣṭaya*, meaning a group of four things. In this case, the four terms are: *vīrya*, *śakti*, *caṇḍībhāva*, *śraddhā*. The terminology varies a little bit—later on he changed *caṇḍībhāva* to *devībhāva* or *daivī prakṛti*. But let's start with *vīrya*, because this is the soul-force that manifests through the fourfold personality of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *sūdra*, the *cāturvarṇya*. Sri Aurobindo explains:

By Virya is meant the fundamental swabhavashakti or the energy of the divine temperament expressing itself in the fourfold type of the chaturvarṇya.... Every man has in himself all the four dharmas, but one predominates.... The perfected man develops in himself all four capacities.... (CWSA 10: 7)

Now the first is *brahmatejas* and that has again four parts: "*jñānalipsā jñānaprakāśo brahmavarcasyam sthairyam iti brahmatejah.*" Sri Aurobindo explains *jñānalipsā* under the heading "*Lipsa*":

The purna Yogin... accepts the jñānalipsa and purifying it of desire turns it into a divine reaching out towards prakasha of knowledge.... (Ibid: 8)

In other words, *jñānalipsā* is the "will for knowledge." *Kṣatratejas* consists of *abhaya*, *sāhasa*, *yaśolipsā* and *ātmaślāghā*. *Abhaya* and *sāhasa* together constitute courage, which has two different forms:

Abhayam is the passive freedom from fear which with a bold calmness meets and receives every menace of danger and shock of misfortune. Sahasam is the active courage and daring which shrinks from no enterprise however difficult or perilous.... (CWSA 10: 9)

So here we have the "fearlessness" and the "daring" in the first line of the *Savitri* quote: "A fearless will for knowledge dared to erase...." The fearlessness and daring are qualities of the *kṣatriya*; the will for knowledge is a quality of

the *brāhmaṇa*. So in one line, we have three terms from the *Record of Yoga* all packed together. The passage in *Savitri* goes on:

In hands sustained by a transfiguring Might  
He caught up lightly like a giant's bow  
Left slumbering in a sealed and secret cave  
The powers that sleep unused in man within.  
He made of miracle a normal act  
And turned to a common part of divine works,  
Magnificently natural at this height,  
Efforts that would shatter the strength of mortal hearts.... (*Savitri*: 26)

This is related to the qualities of *dehaśakti*. The second member of the śakti *catuṣṭaya* was called śakti and is explained in *The Synthesis of Yoga* in the chapter "The Power of the Instruments". Sri Aurobindo explains it concisely:

Shakti is that perfection of the different parts of the system which enables them to do their work freely and perfectly. (CWSA 10: 11)

It consists of *dehaśakti*, *prāṇaśakti*, *cittaśakti* and *buddhiśakti*. Within *dehaśakti* (the power of the body), four attributes are listed: "*mahattvabodho, balaślāghā, laghutā, dhāraṇasāmarthyam iti dehaśaktiḥ.*" The best explanation of this is found in the *Synthesis* in the chapter I mentioned:

And in the body itself there will be a presence of a greatness of sustaining force.... (CWSA 23-24: 731)

You remember the words, "In hands sustained by a transfiguring Might...." This is the "greatness of sustaining force". The passage in *Savitri* goes on: "He caught up lightly...." This is *laghutā*, the third attribute of *dehaśakti*. First you have "an abounding strength, energy and puissance of outgoing and managing force", then "a lightness, swiftness and adaptability of the nervous and physical being...." And finally, and most importantly, as Sri Aurobindo explains, "the body must develop a perfect power to hold whatever force is brought into it by the spirit and to contain its action without spilling and wasting it or itself getting cracked." (CWSA 24: 731-732) So we have in *Savitri* the "efforts that would shatter the strength of mortal hearts". These were "turned to a common part of divine works" by *dhāraṇasāmarthyā*, which Sri Aurobindo considered an essential part of the preparation of the body.

This is not yet the transformation of the body, which comes in the fourth *catuṣṭaya*, the *śarīra catuṣṭaya*. But under śakti, which includes the preliminary perfection of all of the parts of the being and the fourfold personality, this is the preparation of the body that comes under the heading of *dehaśakti*.

### **The *Vijñāna Catuṣṭaya*: *Aṣṭasiddhi***

Now we come to some of the terms that occur in the *vijñāna catuṣṭaya*, which

is perhaps the most important of the seven in the sense that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the supramental Yoga and *vijñāna* is equivalent to supermind. In *vijñāna* there are again four terms: *jñāna*, *trikāladrṣṭi*, *aṣṭasiddhi* and *samādhi*. I'll take *aṣṭasiddhi* first because that is what comes next in the passage in *Savitri* we have been looking at.

Two of the *aṣṭasiddhi* or eight superpowers, as you could call them, are mentioned here. The eight siddhis are part of the Rajayogic tradition. They don't occur in Patanjali's Yogasutras themselves, but commentaries on the Yogasutra include a list which is similar to Sri Aurobindo's. He takes almost the same terms and gives them his own interpretation.

The eight are: *vyāpti*, *prākāmya*, *aiśvarya*, *īśitā*, *vaśitā*, *mahimā*, *laghimā*, *aṇimā*. We are going to look particularly at the first two, *vyāpti* and *prākāmya*. They are divided into three groups: the siddhis of knowledge, the siddhis of power and the siddhis of the body. To take first the siddhis of knowledge, Sri Aurobindo explains:

Consciousness in one material being communicates with the same consciousness in another material being by certain fixed methods such as speech, gesture, writing etc.... But these limitations are mere habits.... Consciousness in itself is free to communicate between one mind and another without physical means consciously and voluntarily. The two siddhis by which this is done are called Vyapti and Prakamya....

Vyapti is when the thoughts, feelings etc. of others or any kind of knowledge of things outside yourself are felt coming to the mind from those things or persons. This is the power of receptive Vyapti. There is also a power of communicative Vyapti, when you can send or put your own thought, feeling etc. into someone else. (*Record of Yoga*: 1473-74)

We will see all these things in *Savitri* in a moment. Sri Aurobindo's explanation of the siddhis of knowledge continues:

Prakamya is when you look mentally or physically at somebody or something and perceive what is in that person or thing, thoughts, feelings, facts about them etc. (CWSA 11: 1474)

In *Savitri* we have these lines where the word "perception" and the idea of "looking" occur as in the definition of *prākāmya*:

A pure perception lent its lucent joy:  
Its intimate vision waited not to think;  
It enveloped all Nature in a single glance,  
It looked into the very self of things;  
Deceived no more by form he saw the soul. (*Savitri*: 26)

Then we have *vyāpti*, first receptive *vyāpti*:

He felt the beating life in other men  
Invade him with their happiness and their grief;

Their love, their anger, their unspoken hopes  
Entered in currents or in pouring waves  
Into the immobile ocean of his calm. (*Savitri*: 27)

This is followed by communicative *vyāpti*:

He heard the inspired sound of his own thoughts  
Re-echoed in the vault of other minds;  
The world's thought-streams travelled into his ken. (*Savitri*: 27)

*Vyāpti* and *prākāmya* are a major topic of the *Record of Yoga*. Sri Aurobindo sometimes translates *vyāpti* or the combination of *vyāpti* and *prākāmya* as telepathy. He did hundreds of experiments to confirm the possibility of telepathy, thought-reading, etc. He writes in one entry in 1912:

There has long been a free & successful telepathy (*vyapti*) & reading (*prakamyā*) of the characters, feelings & states of mind of others.... But the thought contents of the minds of other have been hidden from me except occasionally... Today, however, the veil was lifted, the barrier finally broken. Not only did telepathy & thought-reading abound, but in a single day the proof of correctness began to be ample. (*Record of Yoga*: 85-86)

Sri Aurobindo very often refers to his experiences as proving the validity and the working of the various siddhis which he was testing in his Yoga.

### **Samādhi and the Subtle Senses**

Now let's go on to the next member of the *vijñāna catuṣṭaya*. We'll come back to the first two (*jñāna* and *trikāladrṣṭi*), but first let's go on to *samādhi*. This is defined in a somewhat unusual way in the *Record of Yoga*:

Samadhi is the power... to extend the range of knowledge & consciousness... to the experience, either in reflected images or in the things themselves, of other worlds and planes of consciousness.... (CWSA 10: 22)

Because *samādhi* depends on the development of subtle senses in order to become aware of other worlds, part it consists of extending the range of the senses and using subtle senses rather than being confined to the gross physical senses of our ordinary consciousness.

So here we have in the *Record*:

Sukshma sparsha [subtle touch] is increasing in force & keenness... Sukshma gandha [subtle smell] & gandha-rasa [smell and taste] with sparsha is keen & powerful, but irregular in occurrence. Sravana & drishti [hearing and vision] of actual forms & voices as opposed to images & symbolic sounds are still behindhand. All these are now recognised as parts of samadhi or visvagati... (CWSA 10: 145)

Now, *visvagati* is a very interesting term which Sri Aurobindo uses as equivalent

to *samādhi*, especially if we think of the *Record of Yoga* in relation to *Savitri*, because the longest book of *Savitri* is the second, "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds." And *viśvagati* is precisely the ability to travel through other worlds, to enter into other worlds. This is what is meant by referring to Samadhi as *viśvagati*, moving everywhere. The whole universe opens itself up to us and other universes beyond the physical.

In *Savitri*, we find the contact with hidden worlds first associated with the development of the different senses in a passage that begins:

The mind leaned out to meet the hidden worlds:... (*Savitri*: 28)

This is Samadhi as it is defined in the *Record*. The sentence continues:

Air glowed and teemed with marvellous shapes and hues,  
In the nostrils quivered celestial fragrances,  
On the tongue lingered the honey of paradise.  
A channel of universal harmony,  
Hearing was a stream of magic audience. (*Savitri*: 29)

Here we have shapes and hues, fragrances, taste and hearing, all the senses except touch, sparsha, but that comes a couple of pages later:

A contact thrilled of mighty unknown things.  
Awakened to new unearthly closenesses,  
The touch replied to subtle infinities,  
And with a silver cry of opening gates  
Sight's lightnings leaped into the invisible. (*Savitri*: 31)

### *Samatā*

We haven't talked yet about the first *catuṣṭaya* which is the *samatā catuṣṭaya*, also referred to sometimes as the *śānti catuṣṭaya*, since the first two members are *samatā* and *śānti*. This of course is extremely important in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. In *Savitri* it comes specifically into the Yoga of the King a few pages after the passages we were just reading.

Here we have quite a precise description of what Sri Aurobindo calls passive *samatā*. He defines *samatā* in this way:

The basis of internal peace is samata, the capacity of receiving with a calm and equal mind all the attacks and appearances of outward things.... There are two forms of samata, passive and active, samata in reception of the things of the outward world and samata in reaction to them. (CWSA 10: 3)

Passive *samatā* consists of three things: endurance, indifference, submission—"*titikṣā udāśinatā natiḥ iti samatā*". First *titikṣā*, endurance:

Titiksha is the bearing firmly of all contacts pleasant or unpleasant, not being overpowered by that which is painful, not being carried away by that which is pleasant. Calmly and firmly to receive both and hold and bear them

as one who is stronger, greater, vaster than any attack of the world, is the attitude of *titiksha*. (CWSA 10: 3)

The second stage of passive *samatā* is called *udāsinatā*:

Udasinata is indifference to the *dvandvas* or dualities; it means literally being seated above, superior to all physical and mental touches. (Ibid)

Finally, *nati*:

Nati is the submission of the soul to the will of God; its acceptance of all touches as His touches, of all experience as His play with the soul of man. (CWSA 10: 4)

The account of equality or *samatā* in "The Yoga of the King" begins with *udāsinatā* in the literal sense of being "seated above":

His heights of being lived in the still Self;  
His mind could rest on a supernal ground  
And look down on the magic and the play....  
To the still heights and to the troubled depths  
His equal spirit gave its vast assent.... (*Savitri*: 36)

One could say that this "vast assent" is *nati*, the acceptance of all contacts as the divine Will. Then we have specifically *titikṣā* and *udāsinatā*:

A poised serenity of tranquil strength,  
A wide unshaken look on Time's unrest  
Faced all experience with unaltered peace. (*Savitri*: 36)

This is *titikṣā*, endurance, what Sri Aurobindo explains elsewhere as the stoic equality that depends on the strength of the will, whereas *udāsinatā* is the philosophical equality of indifference or "being seated above", indifferent to the *dvandvas* or dualities:

Indifferent to the sorrow and delight,  
Untempted by the marvel and the call,  
Immobile it beheld the flux of things. (*Savitri*: 36)

*Jñāna*: Direct Knowledge

Now to come briefly back to *jñāna*, the first member of the *vijñāna catuṣṭaya*.

By Jnana is meant that power of direct and divine knowledge which works independently of the intellect & senses or uses them only as subordinate assistants. (*Record of Yoga*: 16)

To take just one example from several pages in *Savitri* beginning with "Oft Inspiration with her lightning feet" etc.. Here we have two of the powers of this intuitive or inspired knowledge, *jñāna*:

An inspired Knowledge sat enthroned within  
Whose seconds illumined more than reason's years:  
An ictus of revealing lustre fell

As if a pointing accent upon Truth,  
And like a sky-flare showing all the ground  
A swift intuitive discernment shone. (*Savitri*: 37)

### **The *Brahma Catuṣṭaya*: Seeing the Divine Everywhere**

Now we come to the *brahma catuṣṭaya*, which consists of *sarvam anantaṁ jñānam ānandaṁ brahma*. Sri Aurobindo explains *sarvam brahma* as "when we realise one thing in the universe". *Anantaṁ brahma* is "when we realise Infinite Force and Quality at play in all forms". *Jñānam brahma* is "when we realise a consciousness in everything which is aware of all" and *ānandaṁ brahma* "when we realise in that consciousness a delight in all things". (*Record of Yoga*: 1478)

All four of these are described in a passage in *Savitri*, which we will come to. First, let me read a passage from an entry in the *Record of Yoga*:

It is seen that the Sarvam Brahma is prominent when the Tapas of mental Chaitanya is fixed on Matter... Sarvam Anantam is felt when the Tapas is fixed on Matter & Life... Sarvam Anantam Jnanam when the Tapas is fixed on Life, Matter & Mind... but when the Jnanam increases & is sun-illuminated, then the Anandam also appears & the Saguna Brahman becomes the Lilamaya Para Purusha. (CWSA 10: 397-98)

So here in *Savitri*, first we have Sarvam Brahma in the description of the physical world changing its nature from that of an immense machine or mechanism to that of "the living body of God":

The universe was not now this senseless whirl  
Borne round inert on an immense machine;  
It cast away its grandiose lifeless front,  
A mechanism no more or work of Chance,  
But a living movement of the body of God.

Then *anantam* is felt when the concentration is on life, the play of forces:

Life kept no more a dull and meaningless shape.  
In the struggle and upheaval of the world  
He saw the labour of a godhead's birth.

Then, when the concentration shifts to Mind, *jñānam brahma* appears, *brahman* as knowledge:

A secret knowledge masked as Ignorance;  
Fate covered with an unseen necessity  
The game of chance of an omnipotent Will.

And finally, *ānandaṁ brahma* or *ānanda brahman*, *brahman* as delight:

A glory and a rapture and a charm,  
The All-Blissful sat unknown within the heart;  
Earth's pains were the ransom of its prisoned delight. (*Savitri*: 42-43)

### **The *Śarīra Catuṣṭaya***

At the bottom of the same page, where we are getting close to the end of this

canto, we have a reference to the beginning of the transformation of the body. This is the subject of the fourth *catuṣṭaya*, the *śārīra catuṣṭaya*:

Even his body's subtle self within  
Could raise the earthly parts towards higher things  
And feel on it the breath of heavenlier air.  
Already it journeyed towards divinity:  
Upbuoyed upon winged winds of rapid joy,  
Upheld to a Light it could not always hold,  
It left mind's distance from the Truth supreme  
And lost life's incapacity for bliss. (*Savitri*: 43-44)

Here we have a couple of aspects of the *śārīra catuṣṭaya*. The four terms listed in the *śārīra catuṣṭaya* are *ārogya*, *utthapanā*, *saundarya* and *ānanda*. The loss of "life's incapacity for bliss" at the end of this passage in *Savitri* suggests the final member of the fourth *catuṣṭaya*, *ānanda*. But it is especially *utthapanā* that is described here. This word ultimately means levitation, but in the *śārīra catuṣṭaya* it means more broadly, as Sri Aurobindo explains, "the state of not being subject to the pressure of physical forces". In this passage we have words like "upbuoyed" and "upheld", where "up" corresponds to the Sanskrit prefix *ut* in *utthapanā*.

There are three stages of *utthapanā*: "When there is a great force, lightness and strength in the body.... When there is no physical weariness.... When one is not necessarily subject to the law of gravitation or other physical laws." (CWSA 11: 1477) All of these are things that Sri Aurobindo experienced and was working on during the period of the *Record of Yoga* and the lines in *Savitri* give some sense of what this was all about.

### ***Trikāladṛṣṭi*: The Triple Time-Vision**

Now we come to the remaining term in the *vijñāna catuṣṭaya* that I haven't talked about, *trikāladṛṣṭi*, "the vision of the three times", past, present and future:

Time's secrets were to him an oft-read book;  
The records of the future and the past  
Outlined their excerpts on the etheric page. (*Savitri*: 44)

I won't go into the details of what is meant in the last line by "the etheric page", which is related to *ākāśalipi*, the writing in the ether. But what is meant by the "records of the future"? The knowledge of the future was of great interest to Sri Aurobindo, since it is what the ordinary human consciousness totally lacks. He explains *trikāladṛṣṭi* as "a special faculty of jnana by which that general power is applied to the actuality of things, their details of event, tendency etc in the past, present & future of the world as it exists, has existed & will exist in Time. It deals with particular fact, just as jnana deals with general truth." (*Record of Yoga*: 19)

A particularly interesting entry on this subject in the *Record of Yoga* refers to

"a struggle between static perception of event & dynamic perception of event (passive & active Chit)." In this context, Sri Aurobindo notes: "The latter which alters the event predestined by the ensemble of forces by a personal intervention (ie of higher forces) is becoming rapidly stronger." This is of special interest in relation to *Savitri* because in the story of Savitri and Satyavan, basically Narad gives the "static perception of event" and Savitri gives the "dynamic perception of event" which "alters the event predestined by the ensemble of forces". (*Record of Yoga: 738*) The death of Satyavan had been predicted quite accurately on a certain plane of consciousness by Narad, but Narad himself says toward the end: "What else shall be is written in her soul." (*Savitri: 458*) So he leaves it to Savitri to see whether it is possible to change fate.

Now, finally we come the three siddhis of the *aṣṭasiddhi* that constitute what Sri Aurobindo called Power. This is described in *Savitri* in the lines:

Apart he lived in his mind's solitude,  
A demigod shaping the lives of men:  
One soul's ambition lifted up the race;  
A Power worked, but none knew whence it came. (*Savitri: 44*)

Sri Aurobindo introduces the "siddhis of power" by saying:

There is a power in the consciousness of acting upon other conscious beings or even upon things without physical means or persuasion or compulsion... The three powers are Aishwarya, Ishita, Vashita. These powers can only be entirely acquired or safely used when we have got rid of egoism and identified ourselves with the infinite Will and the infinite Consciousness. (CWSA 11: 1474)

*Vaśitā*, he explains, "is when you concentrate your will on a person or object so as to control it." *Aiśvarya*, on the other hand, "is when you merely use the will without any such concentration or control and things happen or people act according to that will", whereas *īśitā* "is when you do not will but merely have a want or need or a sense that something ought to be and that thing comes to you or happens." (*Record of Yoga: 1475*) But often Sri Aurobindo refers to the three collectively as simply "power", as in this entry:

Power works in preparing the subjective state of others & the world steadily but slowly & against a dull & heavy resistance; in objective result it is as yet poor & uncertain except in isolated details. (CWSA 10: 117)

This was in 1912, early in the period of the *Record*. The siddhis of power increased in effectivity later on, of course. Sometimes Sri Aurobindo also used the word *aiśvarya* (or *aiśvarya*) to stand for the three together:

Aishwarya increases considerably & rapidly in force & effectiveness, no longer in the old field of exercise mainly (movements of birds, beasts, insects, people around) but in the wider range of life... In the outside

world events in the Balkans show a considerable increase in the particular effectiveness. (CWSA 10: 280)

This was a year before the outbreak of the first World War. Unfortunately I haven't had time to give examples of the experiments that Sri Aurobindo was doing which he refers to here as conducted in the "field of exercise". Later in the same year he makes a similar statement referring to the "field of experiment" rather than the "field of exercise" and contrasts it with the "karma of life":

Power is greatly increased & always produces some kind of effect, even often the exact effect, but owing to the surviving strength of the resistance fails often of its specific purpose, is insufficient in finality and, even producing specific & final effects, does it with effort, waverings in the object, variations from the settled arrangement. This is the case even in the field of experiment & in the karma of life these defects are much more pronounced... (CWSA 11: 350-51)

The "field of experiment" was the immediate environment in which he developed the siddhis. The "karma of life", on the other hand, belongs properly not to the third or *vijñāna catuṣṭaya*, but to the fifth, the *catuṣṭaya*.

### **The Karma Catuṣṭaya**

I won't go into detail about the *karma catuṣṭaya*, but two key terms in relation to *karma* are *svarāt* and *samrāt*. On his birthday, August 15, 1914, the date on which the publication of the *Arya* began, Sri Aurobindo received a message from the Master of the Yoga:

Become master in the karma, samrat as well as swarat. (CWSA 11: 600)

In *Savitri* both *svārājya* and *sāmrajya* are referred to:

His inner self grew near to others' selves  
And bore a kinship's weight, a common tie,  
Yet stood untouched, king of itself, alone. (*Savitri*: 27)

"King of itself" is a literal translation of Swarat. *Sāmrajya* properly speaking comes only at the end of Aswapati's Yoga, at the very end of Part One, on the last page of Book Three:

He raised his brow of conquest to the heavens  
Establishing the empire of the soul  
On Matter and its bounded universe  
As on a solid rock in infinite seas. (*Savitri*: 348)

This "empire of the soul" is *sāmrajya*, "mastery over the world". With regard to *svārājya* and *sāmrajya*, Sri Aurobindo writes at one point in the *Record*:

It is not yet clearly fixed for the intellect that the Master of the Yoga is the Master of the World, but it is fixed for the faith; & this is clear that it is the Swarat of the system accepting the conditions he has created for

the work of development and not at once manifesting his full power and knowledge. (CWSA 11: 898-99)

We haven't talked about faith, but faith or *śraddhā* is in fact an important part of the śakti *catuṣṭaya*. This entry continues:

It had already been indicated that this was his method—a progressive unveiling out of the satyam and anritam of the human creature. The same rule would then apply to him as Master of the World, Samrat,—but there the mastery is not yet so wide & absolute, the evolution has not proceeded so far and is therefore not so evident. (CWSA 11: 899)

In fact, the *karma catuṣṭaya* is one of the parts of the *sapta catuṣṭaya* that remained in an unsatisfactory state during the whole period of the *Record of Yoga* and even afterwards, because of the difficulty of influencing world events and ultimately transforming the world.

## Conclusion

I will conclude with a short but extremely interesting entry on November 13, 1913, under the heading "Amrita". This brings out the difference between the *Record of Yoga* and *Savitri*:

A clear distinction must now be made between the vidya-avidya-siddhi [the siddhi of the Knowledge-Ignorance, later defined as the Overmind siddhi] which is constituted by the seven chatusthayas & the higher Amrita in which all limitation is removed & Death, etc entirely cease. Only the first will in this life be entirely accomplished. (CWSA 11: 311)

In this prophetic insight, we get a glimpse of how *Savitri* takes up where the *Record of Yoga* leaves off. *Savitri*, as we have seen, includes descriptions of many parts of the Yoga of the seven *catuṣṭayas* whose process is seen in the *Record*, but ultimately it goes even further. At a certain point, Sri Aurobindo stopped keeping the diary and after 1927 focused more and more on *Savitri* when he had time for writing apart from his correspondence.

The *sapta catuṣṭaya* and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga up to the Siddhi of November 1926 represent the highest and largest spiritual possibilities of the present world. But *Savitri* points towards the future and represents the removal of all limitations, "the higher Amrita", symbolised by Savitri's victory over Death. So in the end *Savitri* goes beyond the *Record of Yoga*. Yet it includes a quite detailed account of Sri Aurobindo's experiences during the period when he was practising the Yoga of self-perfection according to the *sapta catuṣṭaya*, as meticulously documented day by day in his remarkable diary, the *Record of Yoga*.

## The Soul's Ascent & the Descent of the Divine in Collective Form

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V. Ananda Reddy

*The Ideal of Human Unity* is a work to which I repeatedly return with sustained attention and reflection. When this topic was entrusted to me, I immediately perceived the convergence of two significant dimensions of Sri Aurobindo's thought. His literary and philosophical writings constitute a profound synthesis of spiritual vision and socio-political reflection. Among these, *Savitri*, a vast poetic and metaphysical work, and *The Ideal of Human Unity*, a rigorous and analytical political treatise, occupy a central place. Despite their differences in form and method, both works are united by a common aspiration: the realisation of a divine life upon earth.

The connection between these two texts becomes evident at once. Both articulate the possibility of a transformed human existence grounded in a higher consciousness. *Savitri* gives poetic expression to what Sri Aurobindo himself described as the fifth dream—"a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness" (Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*). *The Ideal of Human Unity*, on the other hand, examines the practical, historical, and psychological conditions necessary for the progressive realisation of unity among human beings. Together, these works reveal complementary aspects of a single vision: the spiritual and the collective dimensions of humanity's evolutionary destiny.

When these two works are considered together, they may be seen as fulfilling, at least in part, several of the aspirations articulated by Sri Aurobindo in what are commonly referred to as his five dreams. The first of these concerns the freedom and unity of the nation. Sri Aurobindo himself worked actively towards this goal over a number of years, laying the foundations for India's independence. It can be stated with confidence that this particular dream has been realised, and it remains the one in which he was directly and historically involved.

The second dream envisages the resurgence of Asia. Although this did not occur within Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, contemporary developments suggest that this movement has begun to take shape in recent decades. The third dream concerns *The Ideal of Human Unity*. During his lifetime, Sri Aurobindo initiated the earliest impulses and movements in this direction, although this dream also possesses a further dimension that requires deeper examination, and to which I shall return later.

The fourth dream relates to Sri Aurobindo's vision of India's role in the world: the dissemination of India's knowledge beyond its borders. This vision does not refer exclusively to ancient Vedic wisdom. While what is now termed the Indian Knowledge System is rightly receiving attention today, this must be

complemented by an integral knowledge system. The integral vision articulated by Sri Aurobindo cannot remain marginal or excluded; it must be incorporated into the nation's self-understanding and shared widely beyond India. The Mother herself emphasised that Sri Aurobindo's knowledge and his solutions to the problems confronting both the nation and the world must be disseminated universally. She explicitly permitted the use of seminars, conferences, workshops, and similar means, affirming that whatever methods were adopted should serve to transmit his conclusions, insights, and wisdom. This, then, constitutes the fourth dream.

The fifth and final dream concerns the advent of a new step in evolution. This was the work to which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother jointly dedicated themselves. In 1950 and again in 1956, the force required for this evolutionary transformation was brought down, and humanity is now engaged in the process of embodying and consolidating this new possibility. These, therefore, are the five dreams. Among them, it is the third dream of human unity and the fifth dream of evolutionary transformation that I see converging most clearly in *Savitri* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

What particularly draws my attention is the attempt to establish a living connection between these two works. On the one hand, *Savitri* presents a spiritual and visionary articulation of transformation; on the other, *The Ideal of Human Unity* offers a political and analytical examination of the conditions necessary for collective unity. Between these two stands Auroville. This intermediary position is what I find especially significant and is the primary reason for my engagement with this subject.

The importance of Auroville becomes evident in the Mother's statement:

Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity. (*The Mother on Auroville*: 30)

This declaration provides a crucial interpretative key. One text articulates the vision, the other formulates the theory of human unity, but the Mother identifies Auroville as the locus of its concrete realisation. To grasp the true significance of Auroville is therefore essential, for it is here that the dream of human unity can be translated into lived reality. In this sense, Auroville fulfils not only the third dream of human unity but also the fifth dream of evolutionary transformation. Its importance does not lie in its status as a destination for visitors or a site for voluntary activity alone; rather, its deeper purpose and meaning must be understood.

With this perspective, I propose to reflect further by drawing upon selected passages from *Savitri* alongside key ideas from *The Ideal of Human Unity*. In doing so, I follow a direction that the Mother herself explicitly affirmed.

Ultimately, I would like to highlight what I consider to be the central point of this discussion, which I have already indicated earlier. Sri Aurobindo himself

attained a profound ascent of consciousness, and *Savitri* stands as the poetic embodiment of this ascent. It is evident that this ascent reached a level beyond the stage at which he was writing *Arya*. The later movement was more comprehensive and emerged from a higher plane of inspiration, commonly identified as the Overmental or the Supramental. This is why, throughout *Savitri*, these deeper truths are woven into the texture of the poem, awaiting discovery by the attentive reader.

In my earlier readings of *Savitri*, despite having read the text many times, I did not perceive these lines in the manner in which they now present themselves. It was only when I approached the poem from a different perspective—namely, through the lens of *The Ideal of Human Unity*, or more broadly through the idea of human unity and the oneness of humankind—that these passages emerged with particular clarity. Viewed in this light, several lines in *Savitri* speak directly and unmistakably of human unity. One such line is:

The earthly life become the life divine. (*Savitri*: 710)

Here, Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that the ultimate aim of human existence is not an escape from the world, but its transformation. Earthly life itself is envisioned as becoming divine, with the spiritual principle fully permeating and transfiguring ordinary existence.

Another significant passage:

That a diviner Force might enter life,  
A breath of Godhead greaten human time. (*Savitri*: 366)

At a superficial level, these lines may be appreciated simply as evocative poetic expressions of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. However, when read through the conceptual framework of the human cycle or *The Ideal of Human Unity*, their deeper implications become evident. They point to a future in which the Divine is no longer confined to a distant transcendence, but actively enters into, shapes, and transforms the very rhythm and movement of human life.

It is also important to recognise that *Savitri* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* represent two distinct yet complementary dimensions of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness and thought. One addresses the question of individual transcendence and ascent, as indicated in the title of this paper, while the other is concerned with the collective dimension of human existence. The latter envisages a collective transformation, in which the Divine descends into the shared life of humanity. This fundamental difference explains why one work focuses primarily on the individual journey of consciousness, while the other concentrates on the collective evolution of humankind.

What is essential for both the individual and the collective, however, is that they be firmly grounded in spirituality. Without this foundation, neither individual realisation nor collective transformation can be genuinely achieved. With this understanding, the central idea may be summarised as follows.

The Divine will no longer remain a distant transcendent reality, but will enter into and transform the very flow of human life. The “breath of Godhead” symbolises the descent of a new force that uplifts earthly existence and expands the scope of human time, destiny, and purpose. Such a spiritual infusion provides the true basis for unity—not as an abstract or theoretical ideal, but as a lived reality in which each individual becomes conscious of his or her divine role. In this vision, humanity evolves into a body of conscious participants in the divine play.

This movement is further clarified in another significant line from *Savitri*:

The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze  
And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. (*Savitri*: 709)

These lines articulate Sri Aurobindo's vision of integral unity, in which spirit and matter are no longer perceived as opposites but are harmonised and reconciled. Spirit manifests through matter, and matter, in turn, becomes the means through which the truth of the spirit is revealed. This integration operates both inwardly and outwardly, applying equally to the individual and to the collective life of humanity.

It is important, therefore, not to regard this vision merely as philosophical speculation. While the idea of the spirit looking out through matter may appear philosophical in formulation, Sri Aurobindo was not concerned with theorising or with the presentation of abstract metaphysical systems. He was not a philosopher in the conventional sense, nor was he interested in offering yet another philosophical doctrine to be placed alongside those of the great *ācāryas*. Rather, he perceived reality as something lived and experienced—either already realised or inevitably to be realised.

Sri Aurobindo may thus be understood as a *Trikāladṛṣṭā*, one who has seen the past and who also sees the future. This perspective is essential when approaching his work, for his vision of the future is not merely speculative; it refers to a manifestation that has already taken place on the subtle physical plane. When this standpoint is kept in mind, our understanding deepens and a richer *rasa* emerges. Moreover, it offers a new framework for interpreting contemporary world events. Conflicts and upheavals—whether in the East or in the Middle East—may appear disturbing, yet they also form part of the larger evolutionary process that Sri Aurobindo foresaw. He never suggested that the emergence of the supramental being would be easy or without struggle; on the contrary, he consistently anticipated periods of intense difficulty through which humanity would have to pass before transcending them.

This evolutionary vision is expressed with particular force in another passage from *Savitri*:

To mould humanity into God's own shape  
And lead this great blind struggling world to light  
Or a new world discover or create. (*Savitri*: 486)

These lines reflect Sri Aurobindo's profound conviction that humanity is

destined for transformation. They speak not merely of aspiration, but of an evolutionary necessity: the moulding of humanity into a divine form and the guidance of a struggling world towards light. This is presented not as an idealised hope, but as a prophetic affirmation of an impending evolutionary leap towards a divinised and unified humanity.

At this point, one important clarification is required. The divinisation of the world cannot take place in isolation. It cannot be achieved through a few exceptional individuals, scattered groups, or isolated communities. Divinisation, in Sri Aurobindo's vision, requires the platform of the whole of humanity. This is a fundamental principle of his thought.

Sri Aurobindo explains that each major evolutionary step corresponds to a specific foundation of consciousness. When the nation emerged as a dominant form, the evolutionary process required a mental consciousness as its basis. As the human mind developed, it could no longer remain confined to small villages or isolated political units. Historical evolution moved from villages to states, and eventually to nations, reflecting the growing capacity of the rational and organising mind. The emergence of the nation thus became a necessity once the reasoning and unifying powers of the human mind reached a certain level of development.

In the same manner, as consciousness continues its evolutionary movement, it requires an increasingly expansive basis for its expression and action. Sri Aurobindo observes that when supramental or divine consciousness descends, it demands the widest possible physical foundation, and this foundation can only be humanity itself. It is for this reason that the following lines acquire such central importance: "To mould humanity into God's own shape / And lead this great blind struggling world to light." What is envisaged here, therefore, is not merely a divinised humanity, but a humanity that has achieved unity at the collective level.

Sri Aurobindo presents this unified divinisation as the true goal of human destiny, a destiny in which spiritual awakening reshapes and transforms collective life. This vision reflects his unwavering conviction that the future of humanity is not one of decline or dissolution, but of progressive ascent into a higher and more luminous consciousness, wherein humanity itself becomes a conscious vessel of the Divine.

This vision is further deepened in another passage from *Savitri*:

There Oneness was not tied to monotone;  
It showed a thousand aspects of itself,  
Its calm immutable stability... (*Savitri*: 324)

Here, Sri Aurobindo offers a compelling vision of the future in which unity is not achieved through the suppression or erasure of individuality. On the contrary, true unity emerges through the recognition of the Divine within each individual and within every form. This conception immediately recalls the Mother's vision

for Auroville, where she consistently emphasised individuality and the principle of variety. Uniformity was explicitly rejected. Each person—whether artist, mechanic, or worker of any kind—was encouraged to follow their own nature and vocation. This principle informed not only the founding ideals of Auroville but also the organisation of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, where diversity was valued as an expression of inner truth rather than as a source of disorder.

Sri Aurobindo thus reiterates that unity does not negate difference; instead, it affirms individuality as an essential expression of the One. Each being is simultaneously a unique manifestation and an integral part of a greater unity. In *Savitri*, this points towards a cosmic transformation in which differences no longer function as sources of division but are recognised as expressions of a deeper harmony. The struggles and conflicts that have characterised much of human history are gradually transcended, giving way to a profound spiritual oneness. What emerges is a vision of a world healed and uplifted, where harmony does not suppress diversity but embraces it as the smiling play of the Divine.

These ideas are not merely poetic or rhetorical. They resonate deeply with the fundamental principles of *Sanātana Dharma*, which has consistently upheld the view that differences should not become causes of fragmentation or antagonism, but should instead be integrated within a larger and more inclusive harmony. Within the Indian civilisational context, diversity has traditionally been understood not as permanent division, but as a dynamic multiplicity to be harmonised. In this light, the conflicts and oppositions that have shaped human history are seen as transitional stages, ultimately yielding to a deeper spiritual unity. This is a vision of a world restored and uplifted, where harmony does not diminish diversity but celebrates it as the aspiring play of the Divine.

This evolutionary trajectory reaches a further culmination in the following lines from *Savitri*:

Thus shall the earth open to divinity  
And common natures feel the wide uplift,  
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray  
And meet the deity in common things. (*Savitri*: 710)

Here, Sri Aurobindo offers a vision of a future in which the Divine is no longer remote or abstract, but intimately present within the fabric of everyday life. Ordinary actions, circumstances, and human relations become illuminated by spiritual consciousness. Every individual, irrespective of background or social position, becomes capable of participating in a shared and collective spiritual awakening.

This emphasis reveals one of the central strengths of spirituality as Sri Aurobindo understood it. A significant distinction may be drawn here between religion and spirituality. Religion often tends towards uniformity—prescribing a single form of dress, colour, ritual, practice, sacred space, or prayer. Wherever such insistence on uniformity prevails, a narrowing of expression frequently follows. Spirituality,

by contrast, offers an entirely different foundation. It allows for diversity, freedom, and individuality, while simultaneously guiding humanity towards a common spiritual fulfilment and a shared awakening of consciousness.

### **Steps Towards Human Unity**

I now turn to the next section of the discussion, which focuses explicitly on the question of human unity. At this stage, attention shifts to *The Ideal of Human Unity*. This work comprises a series of essays in which Sri Aurobindo examines the historical, political, and psychological conditions necessary for the emergence of global unity. Written during and in the aftermath of the First World War—a period when humanity stood on the brink of unprecedented destruction—the book is both prophetic in its vision and practical in its analysis. Sri Aurobindo argues that genuine unity cannot be achieved through external mechanisms alone, such as political structures or institutional arrangements. Rather, true unity must be spiritual in origin, arising from an inner realisation of a shared divine essence, instead of being imposed solely through outward organisation.

This, in essence, is the central argument of the entire work. Although *The Ideal of Human Unity* was written nearly a century ago, its relevance remains strikingly contemporary. Sri Aurobindo himself observes:

Today the ideal of human unity is more or less vaguely making its way to the front of our consciousness. (CWSA 25: 280)

To understand Sri Aurobindo's vision fully, it is essential to recognise that he views humanity within the larger framework of an evolutionary process. This point must be kept firmly in mind. For Sri Aurobindo, everything is evolution. Whether he is writing poetry, engaging in political thought, formulating philosophy, analysing society, or interpreting history, the single concept that best encapsulates his vision is evolution. A grasp of this principle provides the key to understanding his work as a whole. In this context, *The Ideal of Human Unity* is not a sudden invention but a gradual emergence within human consciousness. As he further explains:

The emergence of an ideal in human thought is always the sign of an intention in Nature, but not always of an intention to accomplish; sometimes it indicates only an attempt which is predestined to temporary failure. (CWSA 25: 280)

In other words, the idea of human unity is steadily gaining ground, though often in a vague and incomplete form. From a century ago to the present day, this idea has continued to advance within human awareness. At the same time, it is crucial to recognise that this forward movement is accompanied by resistance and obstruction. The tension between progress and opposition is itself an integral aspect of evolution. Evolution continually presses forward, encountering obstacles and setbacks, yet persists in its onward movement.

Sri Aurobindo then makes another observation of considerable importance:

It must be remembered that a greater social or political unity is not necessarily a boon in itself; it is only worth pursuing in so far as it provides a means and a framework for a better, richer, more happy and puissant individual and collective life. But hitherto the experience of mankind has not favoured the view that huge aggregations, closely united and strictly organised, are favourable to a rich and puissant human life. (CWSA 25: 281)

This insight is particularly striking. Before arriving at the ideal of genuine human unity, Nature experimented with the formation of large nations and vast empires. History offers numerous examples, including the Islamic empires, Hindu empires, the Roman Empire, and others. Yet, in time, all such empires declined and disappeared. These developments suggest that Nature has consistently experimented with increasingly large groupings of humanity, testing their capacity to sustain collective life. Prior to moving towards true human unity, the imperial form served as one such experiment.

At certain stages of historical development, these empires fulfilled important functions. They facilitated economic expansion, cultural exchange, and social organisation. Nevertheless, they ultimately failed to satisfy the deeper needs of humanity, and Nature therefore moved beyond them. Even the great Hindu empire of Shivaji Maharaj—historically significant and geographically extensive—did not endure. The question then arises: why did such empires fail? Sri Aurobindo offers a clear explanation. These imperial formations were founded upon a single religious, cultural, or ideological identity. He makes it evident that the future unity of humanity cannot be Hindu, Islamic, Roman, British, or of any single exclusive type.

For this reason, even the Roman Empire and the British Empire eventually dissolved. They served as transitional experiments in the evolutionary process, but they were inherently limited in scope. Nature is now attempting to create a fundamentally different form of human unity. The nature of this new unity is precisely what Sri Aurobindo seeks to articulate in *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Human experience has demonstrated that empire-based systems do not foster a genuinely rich, harmonious, and fulfilling human life. Consequently, the future will not belong to a single Russian empire, Islamic empire, or Hindu empire.

Even contemporary notions such as a single "Hindu Rashtra" must therefore be approached with caution, for the aim cannot be the domination of the world by one ideology alone. What is required is not uniformity, but variety and individuality—not division, but difference held within a greater harmony. It is in this context that *Sanātana Dharma* assumes particular significance, as a flexible and inclusive ideal capable of accommodating diversity within an overarching unity.

When speaking of *Sanātana Dharma* today, this principle must be kept clearly in view. The objective cannot be the imposition of one rigid ideology or a fixed system. Indeed, it would run counter to Sri Aurobindo's vision if the world were to become uniformly "Sri Aurobindonian". The aim is not to impose one Christ, one Muhammad, one Sri Aurobindo, or one Shiva upon the entirety of humanity. The universe itself is founded upon diversity. Sri Aurobindo's vision may well spread across the world, but neither his name nor his personality is intended to become a uniform model. Uniformity, once again, would contradict the very spirit and intention of his teaching.

Sri Aurobindo therefore observes:

It would seem rather that collective life is more at ease with itself, more genial, varied, fruitful when it can concentrate itself in small spaces and simpler organisms. (CWSA 25: 281)

Throughout *The Ideal of Human Unity*, he consistently emphasises the importance of smaller social units. Historically, city-states such as Athens and Sparta exemplify this principle, having provided fertile conditions for cultural and intellectual flourishing—conditions that were notably absent in the vast and centralised Roman Empire. Similarly, in the Indian context, Sri Aurobindo suggests that genuine creativity and vitality arise not solely from large national structures, but from states, smaller communities, and even villages. Such smaller formations allow for flexibility, originality, and organic growth. Uniformity, by contrast, tends to weaken the evolutionary process; it restricts variation and is therefore inimical to authentic development.

One of the most significant principles Sri Aurobindo articulates in relation to human unity is what he terms a "spiritual religion of humanity":

A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite. (CWSA 25: 577)

This formulation makes it clear that Sri Aurobindo is not advocating a single global religion or ideological system. On the contrary, freedom and variety are essential. The Mother, too, emphasised that Integral Yoga should not be practised in a single fixed manner. She affirmed that in the future there would be many ways of practising Integral Yoga, and that what truly matters is an understanding of its principles rather than the imitation of Sri Aurobindo or herself. Their work was their own; what they have given is a set of guiding principles, which each individual must realise in a manner consonant with their own nature.

Sri Aurobindo further clarifies this position when he writes:

The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development.

A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one. (CWSA 25: 577)

This passage expresses the core principle of the spiritual religion of humanity: the recognition of a single divine Reality present within all beings. Unity, in this vision, does not arise from uniform belief, rigid structures, or enforced conformity, but from an inner awakening to this shared spiritual essence. Spiritual life, accordingly, flourishes through freedom, diversity, and individual modes of self-expression.

Sri Aurobindo also offers a practical framework for the realisation of human unity:

On this line of development also and indeed on any line of development the principle of a free and natural grouping of peoples must be the eventual conclusion, the final and perfect basis. (CWSA 25: 431)

This represents his concrete solution to the problem of human unity. Peoples must be allowed to group themselves freely and organically, rather than being bound together by geographical accident or political coercion. Cultural affinity, shared values, and psychological resonance are of greater importance than mere physical proximity. Sri Aurobindo even suggests that societies separated by great distances may nonetheless belong to the same cultural or spiritual grouping. Geography, in this perspective, is secondary; inner affinity is primary.

In summary, whether one considers the poetic vision articulated in *Savitri* or the philosophical and socio-political analysis developed in *The Ideal of Human Unity*, the underlying message remains consistent. Genuine and enduring human unity cannot be established through social contracts, political arrangements, or external systems alone. It must be rooted in spiritual consciousness and in the recognition of a shared divine reality.

Transformation, therefore, is the central requirement—both at the individual and the collective levels. Just as *Savitri* speaks of an inner transformation of consciousness, the realisation of human unity demands a collective awakening. Ego must be transcended not only individually, but also collectively, at the level of nations. The Mother herself affirmed that national egos must be crossed. In the same way that yoga becomes possible only through the transcendence of the individual ego, human unity becomes possible only when national egos are transformed.

What is visible today is not merely the assertion of national ego, but, in some cases, its gradual expansion. A nation may begin by affirming its own identity, but can grow into a wider sense of responsibility, recognising the need to support and uplift others. This widening of consciousness—rather than narrow domination—represents a positive evolutionary movement, one that the Mother had already anticipated many years ago.

*Savitri* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* thus stand as complementary expressions of Sri Aurobindo's integral vision. One articulates the ascent of the individual

soul, while the other delineates the conditions for the descent of the spirit into collective human life. Together, they offer not merely inspiration, but a coherent roadmap for both personal and planetary transformation—a meeting point where poetry and politics, mysticism and modernity, converge.

It is at this juncture that we arrive at the bridge between these two works, and that bridge is Auroville. This point was introduced at the outset because it is central to the present inquiry. Without this living bridge, one might be tempted to regard *Savitri* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* as visions intended for a distant future, perhaps thousands of years away. What the Mother accomplished, however, was something unprecedented: she brought the future into the present through the creation of Auroville.

The Mother conceived Auroville in the following terms:

Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity. (CWM 13: 188)

In this formulation, the Mother offers a concise yet comprehensive definition of human unity. Contemporary humanity is divided primarily along the lines of creed, politics, and nationality, which constitute some of the most persistent sources of conflict and fragmentation. The Mother makes it explicit that Auroville is intended to stand beyond these divisions. Its purpose is not to reform or reconcile competing ideologies, but to transcend them altogether in the lived realisation of human unity.

Auroville, therefore, is not merely a residential settlement or social project. It is an experiment in human unity—an attempt to embody the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in a practical, collective form. This perspective clarifies why the Mother founded Auroville. It is not simply an initiative of the present, but a seed of the future, containing within itself the potential fulfilment of both Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's evolutionary vision. It is not merely a harmonious communal space or an interesting social undertaking; it carries within it the promise of a future directly connected to Sri Aurobindo's fifth dream, the advent of a new step in human evolution.

At the very centre of Auroville stands the Matrimandir, the great golden sphere envisioned by the Mother. The Matrimandir is not a temple in the conventional sense, nor a place of worship bound to ritual or belief. It is conceived as a sanctuary of silence—a space dedicated to concentration, inwardness, and inner discovery. As such, it represents the spiritual core of Auroville and affirms the principle that true human unity can be founded only upon inner growth and spiritual realisation.

The Matrimandir thus stands not only as an architectural landmark, but as

the living heart of Auroville, embodying the aspiration for both individual transformation and a new collective future. The Mother herself described its significance in the following words:

The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection—union with the Divine manifesting in a progressive human unity. (CWM 13: 223)

Every element of this statement is significant, particularly the phrase “a progressive human unity”. The Mother is not referring to a static ideal or a distant utopia to be realised after several generations. Rather, she points to an ongoing evolutionary process that unfolds in correspondence with the growth of human consciousness itself. As humanity advances towards unity, Auroville and the Matrimandir are meant to reflect that movement. Conversely, as individuals within Auroville undergo inner growth and experience deeper forms of unity, this transformation is intended to exert a subtle but real influence upon the wider world. There is, therefore, a reciprocal relationship between individual transformation and collective evolution.

This reciprocal dynamic lies at the heart of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Social change, in this view, cannot be achieved solely through laws, political systems, or external reforms. It requires a transformation of consciousness at the individual level. As increasing numbers of individuals undergo inner change, the collective inevitably reflects that transformation. The Matrimandir embodies this principle in a concrete and symbolic form.

Its architectural design is rich in spiritual symbolism. The golden dome represents the supramental consciousness and the Sun of Truth. The four supporting pillars embody the four aspects of the Divine Mother—Maheshwari (Wisdom), Mahakali (Strength), Mahalakshmi (Harmony), and Mahasaraswati (Perfection). These four powers uphold the entire structure, symbolising the manner in which the world itself is sustained and guided by the forces of the Divine. The Matrimandir, therefore, is not merely an architectural construction, but a spiritual form imbued with consciousness and meaning.

The inner chamber constitutes the spiritual centre of the Matrimandir's design. It embodies silence, purity, and concentrated inwardness. Those who have entered this space recognise its distinctive atmosphere through direct experience. Unlike religious edifices filled with images, icons, and ritual symbols, the inner chamber is intentionally devoid of all religious iconography. There are no representations of the Mother, Sri Aurobindo, or any deity. This deliberate absence invites the seeker to move beyond creed, culture, and symbolic form. The white marble surfaces and the subtle play of light emanating from the crystal globe at the centre create an atmosphere of stillness and luminous clarity.

In this space, communion with the Divine is direct and unmediated by doctrine or tradition. Concentration is directed not towards form or image, but towards

the essence of the Divine presence itself. By removing all external symbols, the Matrimandir gently turns consciousness inward, towards the indwelling reality. In this sense, it resonates with the ancient spiritual insight articulated in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita—that the Divine is ultimately to be discovered within, in the Atman.

At the centre of the Matrimandir stands the golden globe, symbolising the Divine presence within matter and the call to inner awakening. Surrounding the Matrimandir lies the Park of Unity, an extensive space dedicated to meditation and harmony. The twelve gardens encircling it are not merely aesthetic features; each embodies a distinct quality of the Divine Mother, such as Light, Bliss, Harmony, and Progress.

The Matrimandir is neither a temple nor a monument. It is a living symbol of humanity's spiritual destiny. The Mother described it as a "silent call to the future". It neither instructs nor imposes; rather, it quietly invites each individual to awaken inwardly. People from all religious and cultural backgrounds are drawn to it precisely because it transcends external identities. In this space, one encounters oneself rather than one's religious labels or inherited forms. The experience it offers is thus not doctrinal but existential—a direct and living sense of inner connection. For this reason, the Matrimandir stands at the heart of Auroville as a beacon of truth.

In this context, I would like to refer to a line from *Savitri* that holds particular significance for me:

Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born. (*Savitri*)

When I encountered this line, the connection became immediately apparent. Auroville is not merely a city; it is an embodied aspiration for a divine life on earth, a concrete hope for the future. This is why Auroville carries such profound significance. It is not free from difficulties or contradictions, yet these tensions are integral to the evolutionary process itself. Human nature must evolve, and as it does, Auroville too must undergo its own process of growth and transformation.

Auroville, therefore, should not be viewed simply as a city grappling with problems or inconsistencies. It is a living experiment—the initial working out of Sri Aurobindo's fifth dream, the emergence of a new step in evolution. *The Ideal of Human Unity* is not confined to philosophical texts; it is being tested, however imperfectly, in lived reality.

In this sense, *Savitri*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and Auroville belong to a single, continuous line of vision. One articulates the poetic revelation, another provides the philosophical framework, and the third attempts a practical realisation. Together, they gesture towards a future that is already in the process of becoming.

This, in essence, is how I understand the relationship between *Savitri*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and Auroville.

I would now like to raise a question that arises from this discussion. Within the Aurovillian community, or among those sympathetic to its ideals, there is sometimes a tendency to justify developments retrospectively. Whether one considers *The Life Divine*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, or even questions of individual becoming, the interpretative framework can appear largely retrospective. This raises a further question: does this vision also possess predictive power? In other words, does it offer insight into what is yet to come, rather than merely explaining what has already occurred?

To put this differently, certain forms, institutions, or ways of life appear, over time, to become unnecessary and therefore disappear. This observation leads to a deeper and more troubling question: what does such an evolutionary perspective imply about the disappearance of entire human communities and cultures? Consider, for instance, the indigenous peoples often referred to as Native Americans, or the populations historically labelled as Red Indians. Entire cultures were nearly eradicated. Similarly, many of the original peoples of the Caribbean disappeared, leaving behind only fragmented remnants. From the standpoint of evolution, are such communities to be regarded as dispensable? From the perspective of the Mother's vision—or even from a basic human and ethical standpoint—we are inclined to feel that everyone must have a place. Or is this assumption itself open to question?

The response, perhaps, lies in a careful qualification. Everyone does indeed have a place—but within a particular time and beyond a particular time. Evolution moves forward, often rapidly, and always towards a wider and more luminous unity. Each individual, community, civilisation, and culture represents a step in the evolutionary process. As steps, each has its own significance and necessity. Yet evolution does not come to a halt. It continues to move forward, carrying humanity beyond previous forms towards new possibilities of collective existence and consciousness.

There are historical moments in which struggle becomes unavoidable. For example, when figures such as Sheridan resisted Hitler and Nazi Germany, history later affirmed the necessity and legitimacy of that resistance. Yet our present condition differs in an important respect. We are not merely reflecting upon struggles that have already been resolved; we are living within an ongoing condition of struggle—internally within the human psyche, and externally across social, political, cultural, and economic domains.

This situation is widely recognised, and it may be summarised by a single, crucial insight: the present crisis is fundamentally a crisis of consciousness. If this perspective is kept firmly in mind, many contemporary events become intelligible. The proliferation of external conflicts—whether in Ukraine or elsewhere—cannot be adequately understood merely in geopolitical terms; at their root, they reflect deeper dislocations in human consciousness.

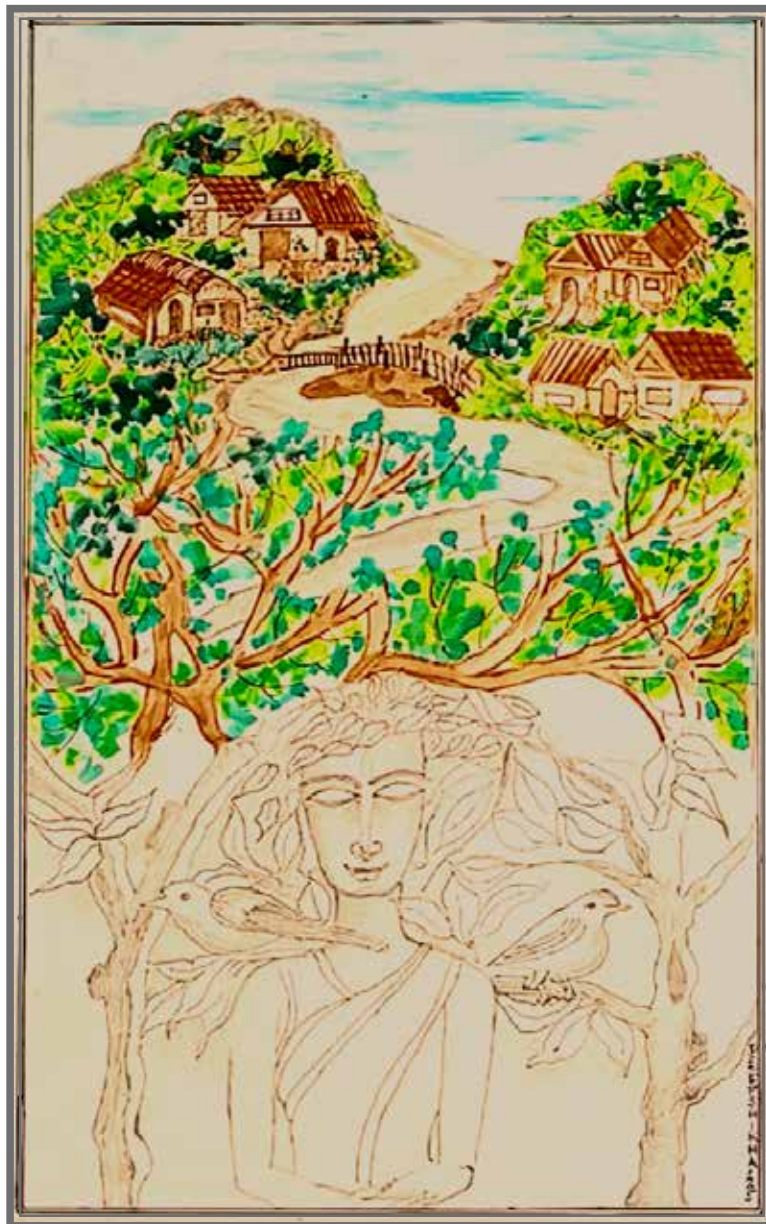
This insight is directly relevant to the question of Auroville. Auroville, too, functions as a mirror of consciousness. Unless there is a corresponding growth

and refinement of consciousness, its ideal cannot be fully realised. The challenges faced there are not accidental or merely organisational; they are symptomatic of the same broader crisis that confronts humanity as a whole.

Ultimately, therefore, the issue returns to a single, decisive factor: the evolution of consciousness. This is the central key through which both global conflict and the difficulties of collective experiments such as Auroville must be understood. Without such an evolution, structural or external solutions remain inadequate. With it, transformation—both individual and collective—becomes possible.

### **Painting on *Savitri***

*Deepshikha Reddy*



*In distance sank the crowded tramp of life.  
The Silence was his sole companion left.  
(Savitri: 78-79)*

## Savitri's Education: A 'Heavenly Bloom'

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*Chhalamayi Reddy*

Savitri's Education: A 'Heavenly Bloom' is not merely a poetic metaphor; it is a luminous symbol of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future of human learning and growth. In his integral conception, education must awaken the hidden divinity within the human being, cultivate the powers of the soul, and prepare humanity for its evolutionary destiny. Savitri, the incarnate Flame, stands as the living archetype of this ideal. Her childhood and youth embody the highest principles of true education—one that does not merely inform the intellect but transforms the whole being, that does not impose knowledge from without but reveals divine wisdom from within. Through her progressive unfolding, Sri Aurobindo presents education as the blossoming of consciousness into a "heavenly bloom," radiant with spiritual perfection.

### A Greater Destiny

Sri Aurobindo's essential vision is oriented towards future realisations in every domain of life, to be initiated in the present through an awareness of humanity's evolving destiny. It is rooted in the latent potential of the human being and in the truth of our divine purpose. Across his works, he illuminates the path leading to the fulfilment of humanity's highest spiritual possibilities—the manifestation of the divine life on earth. "We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future." (CWSA 19: 10)

He envisages a progressive evolution of human consciousness beyond the limits of the mind, driven by an inner impetus arising from the soul itself.

A greater destiny waits you in your front:

This transient earthly being if he wills

Can fit his acts to a transcendent scheme. (*Savitri*: 370)

Sri Aurobindo affirms that, despite the profound ignorance in which present humanity is immersed, the path ahead is sustained by the promise of a divine afflatus—one that can transform human life into life divine.

The earth you tread is a border screened from heaven;

The life you lead conceals the light you are. (*Savitri*: 370)

The call, therefore, is to the emergence of a gnostic human being, endowed with a higher dimension of consciousness that transcends and is free from the limitations of the mind, guiding humanity and the earth towards their evolutionary fulfilment. To realise such a destiny, education must respond to the psychological and spiritual needs of the future human being. Within the ascending arc of evolution, the human is a transitional being; rationalised mental consciousness is not the final summit. Nature is preparing humanity for an evolutionary leap towards a higher spiritual consciousness, liberated from ignorance.

## **Education Beyond the Utilitarian**

If humanity is to advance towards this destination, the aim of education can no longer remain purely utilitarian—confined to economics, politics, commerce, management, or material science and technology. Rather, education must be shaped to meet the psychic and spiritual needs of the human being, distinct from religious practices or ritual performances. By psychic is meant a progressive awakening to the inner reality of one's being, to the true self beyond mind, life, and body. By spiritual is meant the aspiration to know, to enter into contact and union with the greater Reality that is both universal and indwelling. Through this aspiration, contact, and union, a turning—a conversion—occurs, marking a birth into a new being.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit.

And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being. Education for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities. (CWSA1: 426)

It remains an open question how long humanity will take to consent, in any substantial measure, to such a process of spiritualisation. Yet within contemporary humanity there is a growing aspiration towards a higher consciousness, and numerous organisations, institutions, and schools are already working towards this evolutionary aim.

## **Savitri's Divine Birth**

Sri Aurobindo presents Savitri's education as the ideal model of spiritual blossoming. Her education is multifaceted and extends far beyond conventional academic learning. It embraces a profound inner quest and a process of self-discovery that culminates in the realisation of her soul and the Divine within.

Savitri is no ordinary being; she is a divine incarnation, an embodiment of the Divine Mother who descends to earth to confront the forces of darkness and ignorance. Her birth represents the culmination of "A soul made ready through a thousand years" (*Savitri*: 398), signifying a decisive spiritual event—a "supreme Descent" of the Divine into human form.

One had returned from the transcendent planes  
And bore anew the load of mortal breath,  
Who had striven of old with our darkness and our pain;  
She took again her divine unfinished task:  
Survivor of death and the aeonic years,  
Once more with her fathomless heart she fronted Time. (*Savitri*: 353)

Book IV, Canto I of *Savitri*, titled "The Birth and Childhood of the Flame", describes the changing seasons as symbols of an awakening consciousness and the approach of a new era. It portrays the earth's preparation for the advent of a divine being—Savitri—destined to effect a transformative change.

Some missioned Power in the half-wakened frame  
Nursed a transcendent birth's dumb glorious seed  
For which this vivid tenement was made.  
But soon the link of soul with form grew sure;  
Flooded was the dim cave with slow conscient light,  
The seed grew into a delicate marvelous bud,  
The bud disclosed a great and heavenly bloom.  
At once she seemed to find a mightier race. (*Savitri*: 355)

The lines that follow in this canto focus on subtle movements within Nature, foreshadowing the advent of a momentous event and a new consciousness. For such a divine birth, Nature herself prepares to receive Savitri, assuming the task of creating a harmonious and receptive atmosphere for the coming of the divine child.

Where Nature seemed a dream of the Divine  
And beauty and grace and grandeur had their home,  
Harboured the childhood of the incarnate Flame.  
Over her watched millennial influences  
And the deep godheads of a grandiose past  
Looked on her and saw the future's godheads come  
As if this magnet drew their powers unseen.  
Earth's brooding wisdom spoke to her still breast;... (*Savitri*: 359)

Great influences and ancient godheads watch over Savitri as she grows in a land of beauty, grace, and grandeur. Earth's brooding wisdom communes with her silent heart; her consciousness moves beyond thought and opens for humanity new horizons of the unknown and the infinite.

### **Principles of Education in Savitri's Growth**

Sri Aurobindo places strong emphasis on the environment in which education is imparted, particularly when it concerns the unfolding of the soul's qualities. In the third principle of teaching, he observes that:

The basis of a man's nature is almost always, in addition to his soul's past, his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country, the soil from which he draws sustenance, the air he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed. They mould him not the less powerfully because insensibly, and from that then we must begin.

It is an education proper to the Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we are in quest of. (CWSA 1: 385)

Savitri exemplifies the ideal seeker, as every true student should. Her education

is an inner unfolding of divine potential, culminating in a "heavenly bloom". It involves yogic disciplines that lead her to the realisation of the purpose of her birth and her divine mission on earth. This process entails an ascent into higher modes of thought, meditation, and direct spiritual realisation.

### **The Four Aids in Yoga and Education**

Within such an educational process, four essential aids operate. Sri Aurobindo explains that Yoga-siddhi, or the perfection of Yoga, is attained through the combined action of four instruments: knowledge (*śāstra*) of spiritual truths and processes; personal effort (*utsāha*) sustained by patient and persistent practice; the guidance of the Teacher (*guru*), who elevates knowledge and effort into living spiritual experience; and time (*kāla*), since every spiritual process unfolds according to its own divine rhythm.

The supreme Shastra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every thinking and living being. (CWSA 23: 61)

The soul contains within itself the latent potential for eternal knowledge and perfection, comparable to a closed lotus bud. When the mind turns towards the Eternal and the heart aspires to the Infinite, the experiences of life—gradually or swiftly—awaken this potential, remove inner obstacles, and allow the soul to blossom fully.

Nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature. So also, all perfection of which the outer man is capable, is only a realising of the eternal perfection of the Spirit within him. We know the Divine and become the Divine, because we are That already in our secret nature. All teaching is a revealing, all becoming is an unfolding. Self-attainment is the secret; self-knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process. (Ibid: 54)

The first principle of teaching reiterates this truth: "nothing can be taught." Savitri requires no formal system of education; she is guided inwardly by her soul.

As the supreme Shastra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every man, so its supreme Guide and Teacher is the inner Guide, the World-Teacher, jagad-guru, secret within us. It is he who destroys our darkness by the resplendent light of his knowledge; that light becomes within us the increasing glory of his own self-revelation. (CWSA 23: 61)

For Savitri, the indwelling Power shapes her sense. She remains in constant communion with the 'parent Sun'. She has no need of an external *śāstra* or *guru*, being wholly nurtured by the divine Presence within.

For with a greater Nature she was one.

As from the soil sprang glory of branch and flower,

As from the animal's life rose thinking man,

A new epiphany appeared in her.  
A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force,  
A body instinct with hidden divinity  
Prepared an image of the coming god;... (*Savitri*: 357)

Sri Aurobindo clarifies that the Word, whether arising from within or conveyed from without, functions only as a medium to awaken hidden knowledge. It may be the voice of the soul in communion with the Divine or the guidance of the universal Teacher present in every heart. While a few rare individuals awaken this inner knowledge solely through the Divine presence within, most seekers require external supports—such as sacred texts or the guidance of a living teacher—to facilitate their spiritual unfolding. These aids act as channels or catalysts for the awakening of the inner power.

All Shastra is the outcome of past experience and a help to future experience.  
It is an aid and a partial guide. (CWSA 23: 57)

Savitri is,

The child remembering inly a far home  
Lived guarded in her spirit's luminous cell,  
Alone mid men in her diviner kind. (*Savitri*: 355)

Her birth is the culmination of a journey spanning thousands of years, now fully ripened for her divine mission. Hence she is filled with

...this zeal for the Lord, *utsāha*, the zeal of the whole nature for its divine results, *vyākulatā*, the heart's eagerness for the attainment of the Divine, that devours the ego and breaks up the limitations of its petty and narrow mould for the full and wide reception of that which it seeks, that which, being universal, exceeds and, being transcendent, surpasses even the largest and highest individual self and nature. (CWSA 23: 58)

Through this ardent aspiration, Savitri shapes her future.

Her aspiration called high destiny down;  
A silent warrior paced in her city of strength  
Inviolable, guarding Truth's diamond throne. (*Savitri*: 358)

Nurtured within the serene environment of Nature and sustained by the spiritual influences of her parents and the rishis, Savitri gradually blossoms into a strong-willed and luminous spiritual being. Time remains the final aid essential to the efficacy of this process.

Time presents itself to human effort as an enemy or a friend, as a resistance, a medium or an instrument. But always it is really the instrument of the soul. Time is a field of circumstances and forces meeting and working out a resultant progression whose course it measures. To the ego it is a tyrant or a resistance, to the Divine an instrument. (CWSA 23: 68)

Everything in Savitri's life-journey is portrayed as a process of preparation for

her divinely ordained mission: to confront and transform death itself. The earth, too, is shown as resting in a state of tranquil expectancy, awaiting the advent of a "mighty birth". The waning year and the changing temper of Nature suggest a passage from the old to the new, a threshold moment in cosmic time:

Three thoughtful seasons passed with shining tread  
And scanning one by one the pregnant hours  
Watched for a flame that lurked in luminous depths,  
The vigil of some mighty birth to come.  
A silence in the noise of earthly things  
Immutably revealed the secret Word,  
A mightier influx filled the oblivious clay:  
A lamp was lit, a sacred image made. (*Savitri*: 351)

These lines convey an atmosphere of intense anticipation, accompanied by a foreknowledge of what must inevitably occur. Earth, though still unconscious, nurses the indwelling flame; a subtle stirring announces the approach of a new possibility:

Earth nursed, unconscious still, the inhabiting flame,  
Yet something deeply stirred and dimly knew;  
There was a movement and a passionate call,  
A rainbow dream, a hope of golden change;  
Some secret wing of expectation beat,  
A growing sense of something new and rare  
And beautiful stole across the heart of Time. (*Savitri*: 367)

For Savitri, Time itself becomes a divine instrument, for she is born for a specific mission:

A world's desire compelled her mortal birth (*Savitri*: 22)

She is inwardly conscious of her destiny and constantly prepares herself to meet it. A true seeker, Sri Aurobindo suggests, must cultivate infinite patience, trust the eternal process of growth, and yet strive with intense energy for progress, until transformation occurs swiftly and powerfully through the Divine.

Savitri embodies this infinite patience. Though aware of her fate, she is resolute in her will to alter its outcome:

In her the Unseen, the Unknown waited his hour. (*Savitri*: 554)

She bears alone the burden of this knowledge:

Whoever is too great must lonely live,  
His only comrade is the strength within.  
A single lamp lit in perfection's house,  
A bright pure image in a priestless shrine.  
Midst those encircling lives her spirit dwelt,  
Apart in herself until her hour of fate. (*Savitri*: 368)

## **Universality and Self-realisation**

Sri Aurobindo observes that a living and true education must take into account three dimensions: the individual in both his commonness and uniqueness, the nation or people, and universal humanity (A Preface on National Education). Savitri's discovery and realisation of the Self enables her to transcend egoism and embrace universality, as these lines reveal:

Aware of the universal Self in all  
She turned to living hearts and human forms,  
Her soul's reflections, complements, counterparts,  
The close outlying portions of her being  
Divided from her by walls of body and mind  
Yet to her spirit bound by ties divine.  
Overcoming invisible hedge and masked defence  
And the loneliness that separates soul from soul,  
She wished to make all one immense embrace  
That she might house in it all living things  
Raised into a splendid point of seeing light  
Out of division's dense unconscious cleft,  
And make them one with God and world and her. (*Savitri*: 362)

Savitri's consciousness remains pure and inwardly aligned with her true being. To become a perfect instrument of the Divine will, she consciously educates, cultivates, and refines her personality.

## **Art, Culture, and the Cultivation of the Spirit**

In the second principle of teaching, Sri Aurobindo emphasises that "the mind has to be consulted in its own growth", affirming that each individual carries within a unique divine possibility. The task of education is to discover, develop, and perfect this inner potential for noble use (CWSA 1: 384). Savitri pursues the arts—music, painting, and philosophy—not for ornamentation, but for the cultivation of her spirit.

Sri Aurobindo further insists that a complete education must cultivate all aspects of the being—mental, intellectual, ethical, dynamic, aesthetic, vital, and physical—while recognising them as powers of the soul manifesting through these forms (A Preface on National Education). In "*The National Value of Art*", he elaborates that the true aim of liberal education is the cultivation of the spirit, best achieved through language, literature, the arts, philosophy, history, and the study of Nature and humanity.

*Savitri* illustrates this ideal vividly. Art, in all its forms—esthetic, intellectual, and spiritual—becomes for Savitri a means of inner realisation:

A shoreless sweep was lent to the mortal's acts,  
And art and beauty sprang from the human depths;

Nature and soul vied in nobility.  
Overpassing lines that please the outward eyes  
But hide the sight of that which lives within  
Sculpture and painting concentrated sense  
Upon an inner vision's motionless verge,  
Revealed a figure of the invisible,  
Unveiled all Nature's meaning in a form,  
Or caught into a body the Divine.  
The architecture of the Infinite... (*Savitri*: 359)

Through the highest spiritual use of art, Savitri realises her divine potential. She fulfils herself by perceiving divine beauty in the world, in humanity, in life and Nature. Loving what she sees, she delights in pure and unalloyed bliss, and through that love and beauty she ascends towards God:

Music brought down celestial yearnings, song  
Held the merged heart absorbed in rapturous depths,  
Linking the human with the cosmic cry;  
The world-interpreting movements of the dance  
Moulded idea and mood to a rhythmic sway  
And posture; crafts minute in subtle lines  
Eternised a swift moment's memory  
Or showed in a carving's sweep, a cup's design  
The underlying patterns of the unseen:  
Poems in largeness cast like moving worlds  
And metres surging with the ocean's voice  
Translated by grandeurs locked in Nature's heart  
But thrown now into a crowded glory of speech... (*Savitri*: 361)

Nature herself participates in and supports Savitri's ascent towards sublime perfection:

The beauty and sublimity of her forms,  
The passion of her moments and her moods  
Lifting the human word nearer to the god's... (*Savitri*: 361)

Thus, Savitri's education—rooted in inner awakening, universality, and the cultivation of the spirit—becomes the means by which she prepares herself for her supreme transformative mission.

### **Beyond the Mind: Towards Supramental Wisdom**

...its [of Education] central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit..., the evoking of knowledge and will and of the power to use knowledge, character, culture." (CWSA 1: 421)

Savitri's intellectual development far exceeds the cultivation of mental faculties. She emerges as a seeker of the unknown, daring to transcend the

limits of the ordinary mind. Her ascent towards supramental wisdom embodies Sri Aurobindo's conviction that the rational intellect is not the final summit of human evolution. Beyond mind awaits a higher consciousness, and a true education must prepare humanity for this evolutionary leap. Savitri carries a light from the Ineffable, striving to rend the veil of ultimate mysteries and to open new horizons of knowledge.

Aspiring to the Immortals' unseen world,  
Leaving earth's safety daring wings of Mind,  
A mystic acolyte trained in Nature's school,  
Seeker of the unknown and the unborn,  
Carrying a light from the Ineffable  
To rend the veil of the last mysteries.  
Intense philosophies pointed earth to heaven  
Or on foundations broad as cosmic Space  
Upraised the earth-mind to superhuman heights. (*Savitri*: 360)

She employs her already heightened intellectual capacities as a means of entering the loftiest realms of divine wisdom. Yet even these achievements do not fully satisfy the vastness of her being:

But these alone could fill not her wide Self:  
A growing out there was to numberless sides,  
But not the widest seeing of the soul,  
Not yet the vast direct immediate touch,  
Nor yet the art and wisdom of the Gods. (*Savitri*: 361)

Savitri thus traverses the higher domains beyond the mind, moving towards the ultimate spheres of supramental consciousness:

Earth's brooding wisdom spoke to her still breast;  
Mounting from mind's last peaks to mate with gods,  
Making earth's brilliant thoughts a springing-board  
To dive into the cosmic vastnesses,  
The knowledge of the thinker and the seer  
Saw the unseen and thought the unthinkable,  
Opened the enormous doors of the unknown,  
Rent man's horizons into infinity. (*Savitri*: 359)

## **Conclusion**

Savitri's education stands as the supreme exemplar of the integral education to which Sri Aurobindo calls humanity. Her growth—nurtured by Nature, guided by the soul, and uplifted by divine aspiration—demonstrates how the latent divinity in the human being can unfold into fullness. She learns not merely through books or external teachers, but through the four great aids of Yoga—knowledge, effort, guidance, and time—which together prepare her to fulfil her divine mission. Art, philosophy, and culture become instruments of

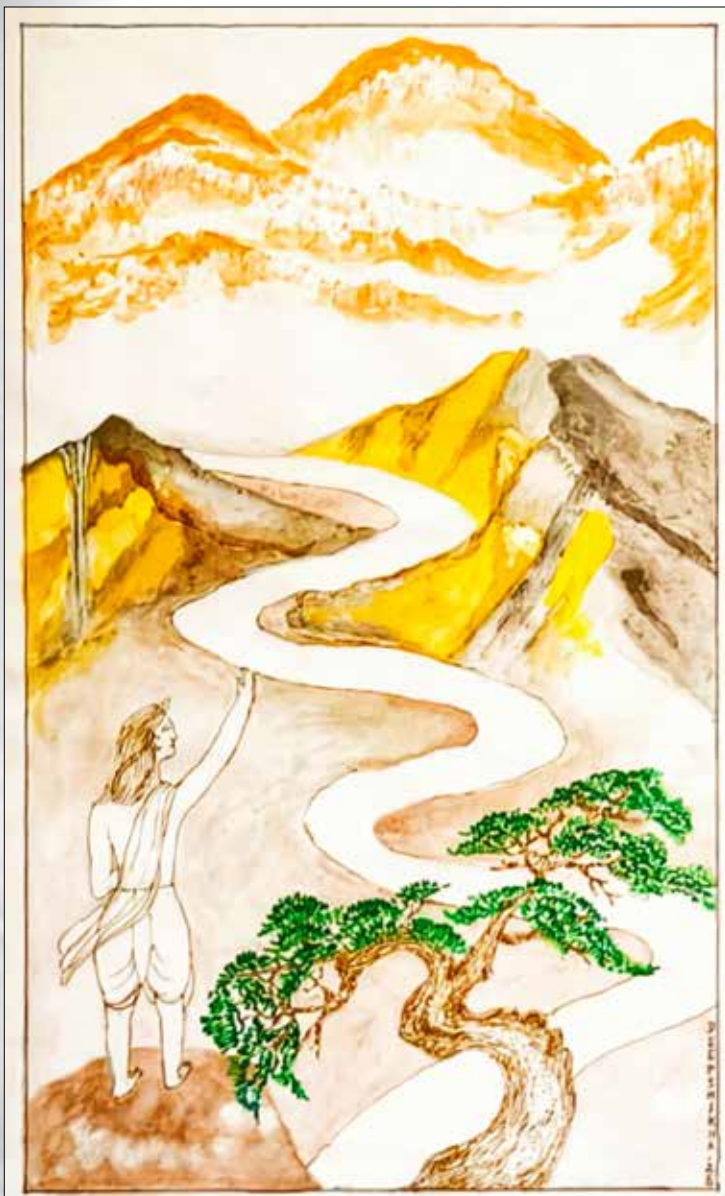
*Savitri's Education: A 'Heavenly Bloom'*

the spirit; meditation and inner contact shape her consciousness beyond the confines of the mind; and ultimately, the secret flame within her flowers into the splendour of a supramental destiny.

Savitri's "heavenly bloom" is not hers alone; it symbolises the potential of the human soul when nurtured by a true education. Every child is a portion of the Divine, a bud awaiting its blossoming, a seeker destined to rise beyond ignorance. The future of humanity depends upon recognising this truth and shaping education not for material acquisition, but for psychic awakening and spiritual growth. In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo offers not only a vision of the divine life, but also a map by which education itself may become the sacred path to its realisation.

**Painting on *Savitri***

*Deepshikha Reddy*



On A height  
he stood  
that looked towards  
greater heights.  
Our early approaches  
to the Infinite  
Are sunrise splendours  
on a marvellous verge  
While lingers  
yet unseen  
the glorious sun.

(*Savitri*: 46)

***Savitri: “An Unfailing Aspiration”***  
**&**  
***“A Supreme Grace from above that Answers”***

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***Shruti Bidwaikar***

When we read *Savitri*, we realise that it is aphoristic in nature. In fact, if one wishes to read Sri Aurobindo’s aphorisms, one may turn to his small but profound book *The Mother*. In each line, he has condensed so much meaning that it can be regarded as an aphorism in itself. *Savitri*, of course, is aphoristic in a different manner and on a far vaster scale. Thus, every time we read *The Mother*, we realise that it functions as a guide; it offers a formula—indeed, a triple formula—of our *sadhana*, emphasising aspiration, rejection, and surrender. In the present context, however, I shall focus on the first aspect, namely ‘aspiration’, and examine the many ways in which this principle runs through the entire work.

If one wishes to practise *sadhana*, one can read *The Mother*, follow it, and take guidance from it; and one can read it again and again. And then, when Sri Aurobindo begins *The Mother* with its very first sentence—“There are two powers...” —somehow, we tend to stop there.

This particular phrase—“a call from below and an unfailing aspiration from above and a supreme grace that answers”—caught my attention. While pondering over it, I realised that this, in essence, is the whole of *Savitri*. It is *Savitri* expressed in an aphoristic manner. If one wishes to summarise *Savitri*, it is contained precisely here.

There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*: Chapter I)

The entire *Savitri* can be summed up in these lines. This realisation led me to reflect further: what kinds of aspiration do we encounter in *Savitri*? To my understanding, several distinct forms emerge. There is the poet’s aspiration. There is Ashwapati’s *tapasya* as narrated in the legend—his ascent of the world’s stairs, both as myth and as symbol. There is Ashwapati’s aspiration for the earth in his role as a king. There is *Savitri*’s aspiration for Satyavan, for the earth, and for humanity.

We shall come to the question of Grace a little later. But first, let us consider Sri Aurobindo himself—that is, the poet’s aspiration. Some of Sri Aurobindo’s letters are, of course, frequently quoted; yet those who have read the *Letters on Savitri* would know how many revisions he undertook in the making of this epic.

*Savitri* is a work by itself unlike all the others. I made some eight or ten recasts of it originally under the old insufficient inspiration. Afterwards I am

*Savitri: "An Unfailing Aspiration" & "A Supreme Grace from above that Answers"*

altogether rewriting it, concentrating on the first Book and working on it over and over again with the hope that every line may be of a perfect perfection. (CWSA 27: 211)

After so much trouble and pain, yesterday's poem was maimed! What a capricious Goddess is the Muse! But how partial to you!

Not at all. I have to labour much more than you, except for sonnets which come easily and short lyrics which need only a single revision. But for the rest I have to rewrite 20 or 30 times. Moreover I write only at long intervals. (CWSA 27: 213)

This letter was written in 1934. By that time, already eight or ten recasts of Book One had been completed. Such was the immense labour Sri Aurobindo was investing in this epic. By contrast, we note that he had finished writing almost all his other major works by 1921, with the exception of the small booklet *The Mother* and the *Letters on the Mother*, which appeared later.

This naturally leads us to ask: what was it that Sri Aurobindo was attempting to achieve through those forty years of writing, rewriting, and revising *Savitri* again and again? Interestingly, as was often the case, Amal Kiran posed this very question to him, remarking, "Oh, it must be very easy for you to get inspiration." Sri Aurobindo replied—and though I regret that I do not have his exact words at hand—substantially to this effect: "Dear sir, it is even more difficult for me than for anybody else."

This response, once again, prompted deeper reflection. Sri Aurobindo was a yogi; why, then, should commanding inspiration be difficult for him? He himself often explains that inspiration is like a woman: one cannot please her at will; she will not come when one demands her presence. Nor can one pursue her; she arrives only when she chooses to do so. Thus, Sri Aurobindo remarks that he has to labour very, very hard.

My own interpretation is that he had to undergo the entire *tapasya* of aspiration, rejection, and surrender in order to make himself a channel through which inspiration could descend. When he speaks of rewriting *Savitri* from a particular level—having first written it under what he calls an old, insufficient inspiration—he is pointing precisely to this deeper labour of consciousness that lay behind the making of the epic.

So, until the work became what he felt it ought to be—until it carried a general Overmind influence—he was not satisfied. That, for him, perhaps constituted perfect perfection. He was not content with anything short of that standard. Therefore, in order to achieve such perfection, he continued to labour and labour. I recall that one of the papers mentioned that Sri Aurobindo was never satisfied with any particular level of consciousness; he was always aiming for something beyond.

There is also a very beautiful line in *The Life Divine* where he says: "and yet there is a beyond."

It is a single line, yet so evocative that it immediately sets one thinking: what is that 'beyond'? Sri Aurobindo is constantly moving towards it—there is a beyond, and then again there is a beyond. This same movement, I believe, guided his continual revision of *Savitri* as well.

These, then, are some of the factors that I felt may have constituted his difficulties. First, inspiration itself is difficult to command. Second, there was the pressure of time, for he does mention that he had an avalanche of letters to respond to. As a result, he was not always able to sit continuously with the task of revising his poetry or writing it afresh. Even when something was dawning upon him inwardly, he did not always have the time to record it immediately. Thus, as I have summarised it, there was a constant pressure of time.

Beyond this, there was also his larger task of bringing down the supramental force. He was not merely occupied with writing poetry, revising it, and imagining himself as another Wordsworth, or as one among a lineage of poets. As he himself states, he did not write *Savitri* for its own sake. It was used as a means of ascension, and that ascension was towards the supramental consciousness.

The nature of that ascension, as I understand it—and I may be mistaken, and I stand corrected if so—is somewhat like this: unless we rise to, say, the twentieth floor of a building, we do not truly understand what the nineteenth or the eighteenth floor looks like. For Sri Aurobindo, the twentieth floor was the supramental plane from which he perceived reality. From that height, he brought the entire *Savitri* down to at least the Overmental level. That, as I understand it, was the effort he was making, and it was by no means an easy one.

For centuries, poets have spoken of using poetry as a means of ascension. Yet, when Sri Aurobindo remarks upon this, it seems that many poets have in fact used poetry primarily as a means of expression, rather than as a means of ascension. If poetry is only expression, then one simply expresses whatever one is at a given moment. If one is on the vital plane, one expresses that; if one is on the mental plane, one expresses that. Sri Aurobindo, however, was acutely aware that whatever he expressed would inevitably reflect his level of consciousness.

We do not usually think in these terms. When we paint or write poetry, we are seldom conscious of the plane of consciousness from which we are working; we simply wish to express. Sri Aurobindo, by contrast, was deeply conscious of the fact that he did not want anything mundane. He did not want anything below perfect perfection. That is why he continued labouring, again and again, to place the perfect line in the perfect place.

The Mother has also told us that *Savitri* descended *en masse*—like a complete block of lines or even entire cantos. Sri Aurobindo only received them, and then,

through his craftsmanship, his technical mastery, and his intuition, he organised those lines. That is precisely what the Mother says: it descended, and he organised it. And as we learnt on the very first day, *Savitri* is something that Sri Aurobindo saw. It is *Drishti*. It is not *Shruti*; it is *Drishti*. It may be *Shruti* as well—I cannot say—but Sri Aurobindo himself affirms that it is a vision, something he saw repeatedly and consistently.

The Mother, too, repeatedly emphasises that *Savitri* is a revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision. Even at the revelatory level—when he speaks of revelation, inspiration, intuition, and related states—it is still *Drishti*, it is vision. That, unmistakably, is what Sri Aurobindo himself has said.

Now I shall introduce a small example drawn from Ashwapati, and then proceed to consider Ashwapati himself more directly. In the legend, we know that Ashwapati undertakes eighteen years of *tapasya* for a child, for an issue. This belongs to the traditional narrative, and in those times people perhaps did such things. They even undertook a hundred years of *tapasya* to attain something—*ānanda*, peace, or some form of power. Ashwapati, in the legend, does likewise. There, we do not feel that his act is either extraordinary or lesser than what others might have done.

In *Savitri*, however, Ashwapati undertakes something far greater: he acts for the earth and for humanity. What he does, he does as a father—not merely as the father of Savitri, but as the father of the earth, the father of humanity—who finds himself unable to secure a future for his children. He therefore takes upon himself this immense and unprecedented task.

Here we may recall what the Mother says—or, rather, what Sri Aurobindo says in *The Mother*. Indeed, I often feel that it is the Mother speaking through this text, for she had read it, and there is a constant sense that her consciousness is present within it. These two powers—especially Grace—will not descend unless there is light and truth. Grace descends only when the conditions of light and truth are fulfilled.

We see this very clearly in the following lines:

A skyward being nourishing its roots  
On sustenance from occult spiritual founts  
Climbed through white rays to meet an unseen Sun.  
His soul lived as eternity's delegate,  
His mind was like a fire assailing heaven,  
His will a hunter in the trails of light. (23)

Here we see that Ashwapati is a seeker of truth and a seeker of light. There are many such lines throughout the epic; I cannot reproduce them all here. Yet it is evident that he constantly maintains the conditions of truth and light. What Sri Aurobindo himself wrote in 1926, in his letters—when he composed the

first chapter of *The Mother*—is precisely this: that Grace will not descend unless these conditions of light and truth are fulfilled.

Ashwapati fulfils these conditions of light and truth, and here we see his perseverance—the aspect of aspiration upon which we are presently focusing. As Sri Aurobindo writes:

On a great height he stood that looked towards greater heights...

This line is particularly significant. Just as we read in *The Life Divine*, "and yet there is a beyond," here we encounter the same movement: on a height he stood that looked towards greater heights. A little later, we shall see how Ashwapati enters darkness and how he enters light. Yet merely fighting darkness is not his purpose, and merely abiding in light is not his goal either. He moves from light to light, from sun to sun, from height to height.

This is why Amal Kiran once asked how Sri Aurobindo should be crowned: is he greater as a poet, as a yogi, or as a philosopher? Amal Kiran answers by saying that wherever one looks, one finds one Himalaya facing another Himalaya. Sri Aurobindo thus moves from one Himalaya to another; he does not move merely from the plain to the mountain. That, I believe, is precisely what Ashwapati represents in Sri Aurobindo's epic.

These, then, are the levels—though I am not reading them out in detail. As you all know, across the fifteen cantos of Book II, as well as in Books I and III, we witness the different levels of consciousness that Ashwapati traverses. What fascinates me at times is the world of falsehood, the Mother of Evil, and the Sons of Darkness—how vividly Sri Aurobindo has described these regions as well, and not merely the ascent from light to light or from darkness to light. He differentiates with great precision between falsehood, evil, and darkness.

I shall not enter into that canto in detail, but only offer a glimpse of what Ashwapati passes through:

A violent, fierce and formidable world,  
An ancient womb of huge calamitous dreams,  
Coiled like a larva in the obscurity  
That keeps it from the spear-points of Heaven's stars.  
It was the gate of a false Infinite,  
An eternity of disastrous absolutes,  
An immense negation of spiritual things. (*Savitri*: 221)

Ordinarily, we encounter such worlds only in dreams, or perhaps in films, where certain artists have succeeded in capturing similar atmospheres. "An ancient womb of huge calamitous dreams, / Coiled like a larva in obscurity"—and then Sri Aurobindo goes on to describe slimy creatures and labyrinths in which one can become trapped. Here is another description:

Intoxicated by a burning breath  
And amorous grown of a destroying mouth,

Once a companion of the sacred Fire,  
The mortal perishes to God and Light,  
An Adversary governs heart and brain,  
A Nature hostile to the Mother-Force. (Ibid.)

These are the realms that Sri Aurobindo makes Ashwapati visit and traverse. This journey, significantly, occurs only after Ashwapati has already passed through the great mental worlds and the great life-worlds. He does not enter these regions bare-handed or ill-equipped; he is fully prepared when he reaches them.

While reading these passages, I could not help reflecting on people who take up certain tantric or occult practices. Are they truly equipped to deal with such forces? Recently, I heard an interview in which a person described how he began to experiment with these forces, became ensnared by them, and was ultimately destroyed. He was a very well-known figure in India and died at the age of thirty-four. It is on record that he was involved in occult practices—certain *jadoo* and tantric rituals—and that he deliberately invoked such forces and meddled with them.

Ashwapati, however, does not become ensnared in these realms, because he has prepared himself so thoroughly. What he is undertaking, as I understand it, is not the *tapasya* of an ordinary father seeking a child for the continuation of his kingdom. He is a king who represents the aspiration of the entire earth. What the earth itself undergoes—fear, darkness, falsehood, and evil—is precisely what he passes through on behalf of humanity.

The mortal perishes to God and Light, ...

When we enter these spheres of fear and darkness, we can indeed fall into the grip of evil. The mortal perishes—not only spiritually, but sometimes even physically. Even while still alive, one can become like Hitler: a being in whom there is no light, no soul, no positive contribution to the world.

An Adversary governs heart and brain,...

This penultimate line is particularly striking. We often say of certain individuals, "He is truly evil; he cannot think good of anyone." Such a personality is precisely one governed by hostile forces of this nature. Ashwapati, as the representative of humanity, must pass through these levels in order to experience them fully and then discover a way beyond them. He traverses them fearlessly. He possesses the strength, he carries the divine light within his heart, and therefore he moves forward.

Thus, Ashwapati embodies the aspiration of humanity. We have already considered the aspiration of the poet, and the aspiration of the father as presented in the legend. Now we encounter the king who symbolises and carries forward the aspiration of the human race as a whole. For this, he performs what Sri Aurobindo calls the great rejection:

He tore desire up from its bleeding roots  
And offered to the gods the vacant place.  
Thus could he bear the touch immaculate. (318)

I am always deeply moved by these lines, for they are almost unimaginable. We know how painful even a simple tooth extraction can be—how much it bleeds, how much anaesthesia is required. And yet here we read: "he tore desire up from its bleeding roots." In the second chapter of *The Mother*, Sri Aurobindo explains in great detail what aspiration and rejection truly entail—everything that must be rejected: desires, passions, wants, and preferences. Here, Ashwapati quite literally tears desire out and offers it to the gods.

This leads us to a crucial insight. One cannot bear the touch immaculate without first becoming vacant. This is not yet the final transformation; that comes later. But before transformation, the descent of the touch must occur. Here we see, both in Sri Aurobindo's own life and through the figure of Ashwapati, that aspiration is inseparable from rejection and surrender. This is precisely why Sri Aurobindo describes it as a triple labour.

Although, in the first chapter of *The Mother*, he speaks of "an aspiration from below and a grace from above," aspiration does not stand alone. It is accompanied by rejection, which requires personal effort, and by surrender of all parts of the being. It is at this point that *The Mother* and *Savitri* converge, for *Savitri* is the lived and visionary exemplification of what Sri Aurobindo articulates conceptually in *The Mother*.

Sri Aurobindo himself explains the nature of personal effort:

It is certain that one's own effort is necessary, though one cannot do the sadhana by one's own effort alone. The Mother's Force is needed, but the sadhak must open himself to it, reject what opposes the Force, put his full sincerity, aspiration, will power into the sadhana. It is only when all is open and there is the full surrender that the Divine Power takes up the sadhana so entirely that personal effort is no longer necessary. But that cannot happen at an early stage—one must go on opening oneself, consecrating oneself, making the surrender till that later stage comes. This has been explained in the book *The Mother*. (CWSA 32: 220)

This explanation comes directly from *The Mother* itself, and it is Sri Aurobindo speaking in his own voice. The personal effort that Ashwapati undertakes is precisely of this nature.

Finally, as a king, we encounter this line:

Her light, her bliss he asked for earth and men.... (*Savitri*: 315)

As a representative king, Ashwapati asks nothing for himself; he asks for earth and for humanity. He has ascended to great heights and acquired immense powers while traversing these worlds, yet he seeks no personal reward. Just as Sri Aurobindo practised yoga not for his own fulfilment but for his country and for humanity, Ashwapati undertakes *tapasya* and yoga for earth and men.

This, inevitably, brings us to that profound and moving cry:

How shall I rest content with mortal days  
And the dull measure of terrestrial things,  
I who have seen behind the cosmic mask  
The glory and the beauty of thy face? (*Savitri*: 341)

Here, Ashwapati makes his position unmistakably clear. He tells the Divine Mother that he cannot rest content with whatever limited attainment he has received. His aspiration is persistent and uncompromising; it is not for himself alone, but for the earth and for humanity. He refuses to be satisfied with individual realisation. As someone remarked earlier, why should only one person attain immortality? Why should it not be for all? That, precisely, is what Ashwapati is striving for—to win immortality for all, or at least to secure that Grace for all. This is why he prays for the Divine to "Mission to earth some living form of thee."

Now we come to Savitri's aspiration. We have examined Ashwapati's aspiration; it is now Savitri's turn. By virtue of our familiarity with the narrative of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, we know that when Savitri learns of her destined fate with Satyavan, she does not waver. On the contrary, she emerges with extraordinary strength. If I may say so, it is at this very moment that the true Avatar Savitri comes forward, because she knows who she is and what she has come to accomplish. At that decisive point, she knows herself completely. This state of complete self-knowledge does not necessarily remain with her at all times, but at that crucial moment she is fully conscious of her identity and her mission. It is therefore with absolute certainty that she utters these words:

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. ...  
Fate's law may change, but not my spirit's will. (*Savitri*: 432)

Sri Aurobindo further reinforces this when he writes:

An adamant will, she cast her speech like bronze. (*Ibid*)

One should notice the sense of finality Sri Aurobindo gives to Savitri's utterance here. She has spoken many words throughout the epic, yet at this moment he tells us that her speech is as though cast in bronze. This image may be interpreted in several ways. When something is cast in bronze, it acquires permanence; it takes on material form, and yet it also possesses beauty. Bronze objects are often placed in our homes not merely as ornaments, but because they embody both strength and aesthetic grace. In the same manner, the phrase "she cast her speech like bronze" conveys both the beauty and the unyielding strength present in Savitri at this decisive moment.

What follows is her perseverance in the very face of Death. We are not entering here into her full yoga—though she has indeed undertaken that yoga for us, for the earth, and not merely for Satyavan—but even in her earliest dialogue with Death we hear her unwavering insistence:

*Savitri: "An Unfailing Aspiration" & "A Supreme Grace from above that Answers"*

Give me back Satyavan, my only lord.  
Thy thoughts are vacant to my soul that feels  
The deep eternal truth in transient things. (*Savitri*: 637)

These lines arise from her lived experience. Again and again, she asks for nothing except the return of her Lord. Death offers her many boons: a kingdom, the riches of the earth, even another handsome man to marry. She refuses them all. She says no — "Give me back Satyavan, my only lord." There is an unmistakable finality in her demand; she will ask for nothing else. This is her perseverance, and once again, this perseverance is not merely personal but for the earth itself. She knows, as she says elsewhere:

For I know now why my spirit came on earth  
And who I am and who he is I love. (*Savitri*: 436)

Therefore, her demand for Satyavan's return is not for herself alone. When Death tells her that love dies before the lover in the human heart, she replies that this is not a transient love of flesh and blood. It is a love that has descended to her from the Divine, and which she is offering to the earth. That love is Satyavan. They have come together to accomplish a work, and it is for this reason that she insists upon his return. Here we see Savitri's perseverance in its clearest and most luminous form.

Even after she has conquered Death, however, her struggle does not come to an end. She has won Satyavan back, and yet Sri Aurobindo writes that "a veil comes between her and Satyavan." Then the Supreme appears before her and once again offers her many boons. If we recall the lines—"Choose, spirit, thy supreme choice not given again"—we almost hear them in the Mother's voice. I personally find these lines extremely difficult to read; they are overwhelming in their implications. Even within the limits of our own understanding, when we grasp what is being offered to Savitri, we feel humbled. She could have accepted everything—even with Satyavan—and withdrawn from the world. Why should she continue to suffer on behalf of all of us? Yet what she asks for is extraordinary:

Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,  
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,  
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,  
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men. (*Savitri*: 697)

Once again, we see that Savitri speaks as the representative of the earth. She does not say merely, "give it to them"; she says, "give it to me", because she has herself become the channel. She is in conscious contact with the earth, and therefore she can serve as the conduit through which Grace is transmitted to the world. In my understanding, this reveals that there are multiple levels of aspiration at work throughout the epic.

Later, we shall see what Sri Aurobindo says about humanity as such—about the human condition, about humanity's aspiration, and about the many ways in

which human beings have sought immortality. One could easily devote an entire paper, or even two, to the theme of aspiration alone. But since I have chosen to speak of Grace as well, I must now move into that dimension. Indeed, one could write an entire book on this "aspiration from below" and the "call from above", simply to explore the luminous aspirations that Sri Aurobindo experienced through *Savitri*, or has bestowed upon us through it.

These, then, are some of the acts of Grace that I have identified: from ancient times, the Supreme Mother's response to Ashwapati; the birth of Savitri; the Supreme's boon for earth and men; and Savitri herself, as the Word of Sri Aurobindo. This morning, when Sir read out the passage, I felt momentarily that my chosen quotation had been taken away from me. But then I realised that without his exposition, I would never have understood that passage on my own. Even if I had read it three or four times, it would have remained obscure. I remember clearly that while he was teaching *The Life Divine*, he explained that this was not a single dawn that had arrived. There have been many dawns—just as there is a physical dawn every day.

In the same way, there have been spiritual dawns throughout history. On the day Savitri confronts Death, there is yet another dawn. It is precisely at this point that Grace enters the picture. Grace has never abandoned the earth; it has always been descending. Divine Love has always been present. It is we who are not prepared to receive it. In the very first canto of *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo suggests that Grace has come again and again, and each time it has returned because there was no one ready to receive it. The sun sets, as it were, because we fail to recognise its significance.

This is how Grace has been arriving, and this is how the dawns have been coming. In that beautiful line, "Dawn built its aura of magnificent hues", we can almost visualise it. If one goes to the seashore early in the morning—after about 6:30, although we rarely see the sunrise clearly because of the clouds—by around 6:30 or 7:00 the sky itself begins to build an aura of magnificent hues. That dawn, as Sir and the Mother have explained, is the same dawn spoken of in the *Rig Veda*. It has been coming since Vedic times, and even before. This is why the seers wrote of Uṣā coming again and again and again.

This time too, when it comes, it comes as Grace. Grace was always there—this is what I am trying to establish. Grace from above has never ceased. The first act of Grace that I have identified—though there are many—is expressed in these lines:

O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.  
One shall descend and break the iron Law,  
Change Nature's doom by the lone spirit's power. ...  
A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,  
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;  
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;  
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will. (*Savitri*: 346)

I know that all of you have read these lines many times. I have chosen to read them again because of their extraordinary beauty. Each line can be unfolded in multiple ways, and each carries a depth of meaning. However, that is not my intention here.

What we see very clearly once again is the movement of aspiration and the answering Grace. "I have heard thy cry" —the cry is the aspiration of the king for the earth. The response follows immediately: "One shall descend and break the iron Law." Notice the assurance contained in these words. It does not say that this has already happened at the very moment Ashwapati speaks, or even when the Divine Mother replies, but that it will happen in time. This is why Savitri is born to Ashwapati after this canto.

Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will. (*Savitri*: 346)

The use of *shall* and *will* makes the promise unmistakable. The assurance is firmly given. Even earlier than this, we find another beautiful line in the second or third canto of Book One itself:

A world's desire compelled her mortal birth. (*Savitri*: 22)

Once again, desire here signifies aspiration, and mortal birth signifies Grace descending from above. In this way, aspiration and Grace move together repeatedly throughout the poem.

The birth of Savitri itself is described with great beauty. We have already heard detailed expositions from other scholars on Book Four and Book Five, and therefore I shall not dwell on that at length here. But consider this parallel from our own lived experience. When we perform a *puja* at home, or when a festival such as Sharad Navratri approaches—as it will next week—we see the same instinct at work. At least in North India, the preparations begin early. The entire city is illuminated, decorated, and cleaned. It is an act of preparation to welcome the Goddess, to welcome joy. Even those who do not formally perform *puja* still clean and beautify their homes, because something auspicious, some joy, is expected to arrive.

This is exactly how the earth welcomes Savitri. Nature is fully adorned; spring arrives, like the lover described earlier. Her birth is a Grace for the earth—not only symbolically, but even on the physical plane. The earth rejoices; nature exults. As Sri Aurobindo writes, "All Nature was at beauty's festival" for the coming of Savitri, for the descent of a soul sent into the mortal world, and for the fulfilment of a promise already given by the Divine Mother. That promise is now in the process of being realised.

Then comes Savitri's own promise:

One day I will return, His hand in mine,  
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.  
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,  
Then shall the divine family be born.

There shall be light and peace in all the worlds. (*Savitri*: 521)

*Savitri: "An Unfailing Aspiration" & "A Supreme Grace from above that Answers"*

We know that this promise is given to the three Madonnas, and that Savitri addresses each of them individually. This is the final promise. Once again, we see Grace promised, followed by a long process through which that Grace is fulfilled. What Ashwapati receives as a promise is fulfilled in Savitri's birth. What Savitri promises is fulfilled in Book Eleven, Canto One, when she receives the full outpouring of divine love and Grace.

In this sense, even the promise itself is a form of Grace, because it prepares us. When we are told that Lakshmi *puja* will be performed in our home, we prepare ourselves; we make ourselves ready to receive her. That preparation is essential. If Grace were to descend suddenly, without any forewarning, we might not even recognise that it had arrived. The promise, therefore, and the period of preparation that follows, are both indispensable.

Now we come to Savitri's grace upon Death. She has already dissolved Death and transformed him, yet she says:

Live, Death, awhile, be still my instrument.  
One day man too shall know thy fathomless heart  
Of silence and the brooding peace of Night  
And grave obedience to eternal Law  
And the calm inflexible pity in thy gaze. (*Savitri*: 666)

There is something deeply tender here. Savitri asks Death to live a little longer, to become her instrument. One day, she says, humanity will understand who you are, why you exist, and what purpose you serve. Elsewhere, she even tells Death that he too is divine, that he is a god entrusted with a negative task. He is no less powerful than the other gods, yet because of his function he is feared and hated. This, however, is simply the role given to him.

At this avataric moment, Savitri says to Death, "be still my instrument." On the occult plane, Death has already been conquered and transformed. On the physical plane, however, she grants him continued existence: "live a while". According to my understanding, this too is an act of grace—Savitri, the Avatar, bestowing grace upon Death himself.

Next comes the Supreme's boon to Savitri: "descend to life with him thy heart desires." This is granted after her unwavering insistence—whether before Death or before the Supreme Mother—that she wishes to return to earth with Satyavan in order to carry out the work for which she has taken birth. After repeated testing, the Supreme responds:

Descend to life with him thy heart desires.  
O Satyavan, O luminous Savitri,  
I sent you forth of old beneath the stars,  
A dual power of God in an ignorant world,  
In a hedged creation shut from limitless self,  
Bringing down God to the insentient globe,  
Lifting earth-beings to immortality. (*Savitri*: 702)

*Savitri: "An Unfailing Aspiration" & "A Supreme Grace from above that Answers"*

They are described as a dual power of God, sent deliberately to earth. They are not withdrawn from life; rather, they are sent back into life. Their task is clear: to lift earth-beings to immortality. This descent itself is an act of grace, bestowed upon the earth for our upliftment. This is the Supreme's final answer, given as grace to humanity.

Finally, there is one more act of grace—perhaps the greatest of all. Sri Aurobindo's writing of Savitri itself is a grace. When the Mother says that Savitri is a guide that holds your hand and leads you through Integral Yoga, she is not speaking metaphorically. Sri Aurobindo's act of writing Savitri is a gift he has left behind for us. Whether we are ready or not, this grace has been given.

One could even say that he bypassed his own conditions. We may not be established in light and truth, and yet this grace has been placed in our hands. Savitri can hold our hand and lead us along whatever path we are capable of taking. All that is required is that we pick up the book and read—nothing more.

Rabindranath Tagore once told Sri Aurobindo, "You have the Word, and we are waiting to accept it from you."\* I once debated this with my mother—why word? What does that mean? Today, we understand. That word is the supreme creative Word, the mantra, the power descending from a Rishi, a Maharshi, an Avatar. Sri Aurobindo gave us Savitri out of his infinite grace, and through it he gave us "the Mother"—not merely a book, but a living presence whom we can approach anytime, anywhere.

That is why I feel that Savitri is the complete journey of "a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*), answered again and again by a "supreme grace from above" (Ibid).

\* <https://incarnateword.in/other-authors/nirodbaran/talks-by-nirodbaran-at-sri-aurobindo-international-centre-of-education/22-october-1969>

*Our Recent Publication*



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

**Book IV: The Book of Birth and Quest**

**Cantos: I to IV**

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Painting on *Savitri*

Deepshikha Reddy



That rapture's smile is secret everywhere;  
It flows in the wind's breath, in the tree's sap,  
Its hued magnificence blooms in leaves and flowers.  
(*Savitri*: 139)

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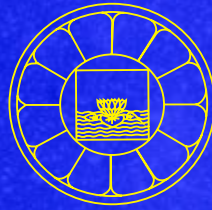
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Dr. Shruti is a devotee and a scholar of the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. She has done her Ph.D. on Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics. She has been editing, researching and publishing papers on their writings and is with SACAR since 2014 as Assistant Director.



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

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