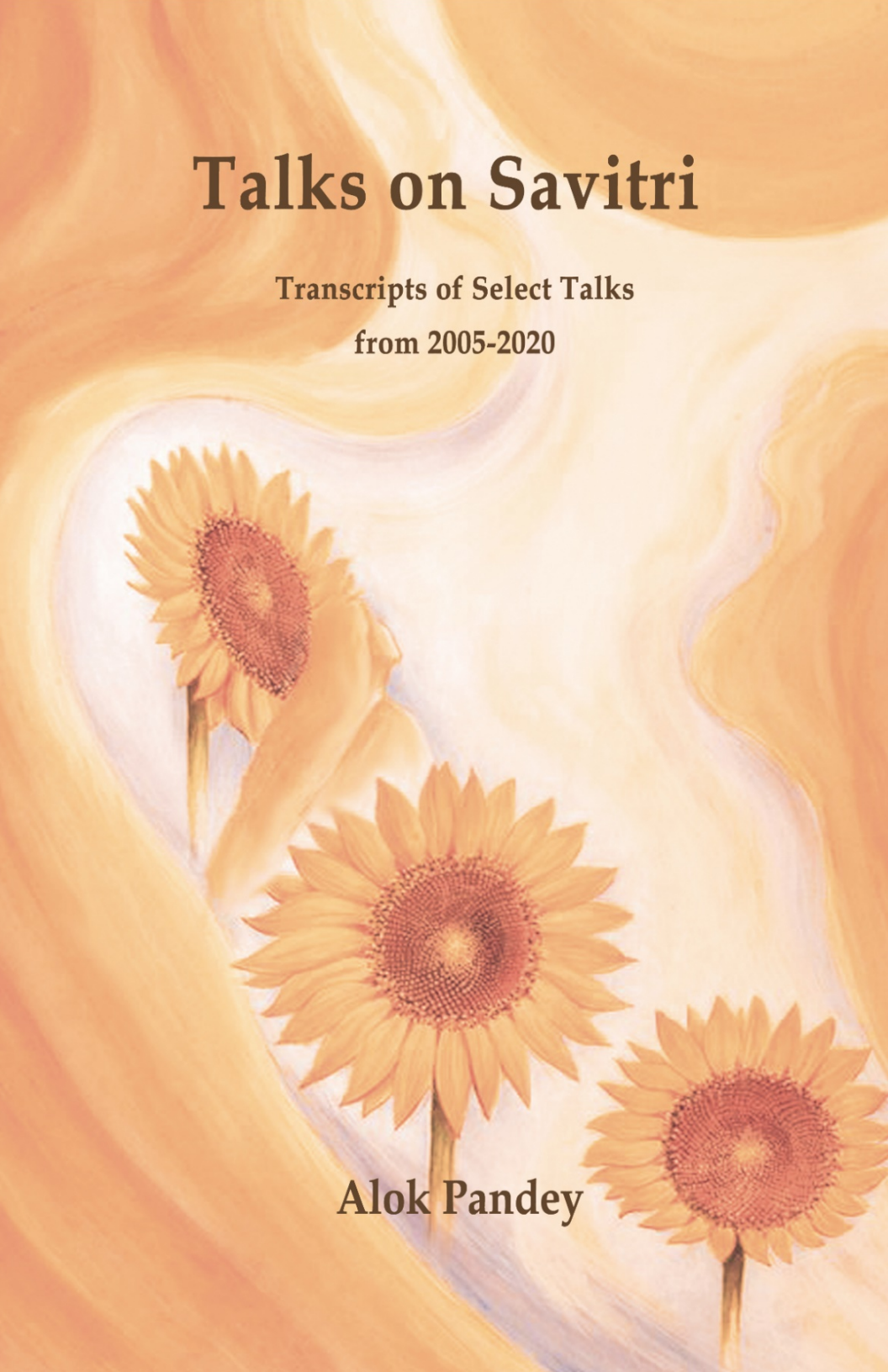
Talks on Savitri

Transcripts of Select Talks
from 2005-2020



Alok Pandey

TALKS ON *SAVITRI*

Transcripts of Select Talks, 2005-2020

Alok Pandey

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Introduction
My Journey with *Savitri*

Savitri is the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo, his most important work. It is a work of the future and perhaps we are not yet ready to receive it, let alone understand it. Yet it has been given to man as a supreme gift of Sri Aurobindo's Grace to steer us through the difficult evolutionary passage from humanity, the creation of yesterday, to the divine superman of tomorrow. Meanwhile, as we transit, we need a guiding light, a support to steer us through. That guide is *Savitri* which is not just a book but a living Presence, embodying the twin powers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in its mantric 'word and sound' body.

Naturally it is quite impossible to speak about *Savitri*. Yet as it is said the Grace can make the dumb speak and the deaf hear. So has been my journey with *Savitri*. The task of speaking on *Savitri* was initially thrust upon me by Professor Mangesh Nadkarni. Though a few disciples had spoken on *Savitri* earlier, the credit of bringing *Savitri* within the reach of an average aspirant undoubtedly goes to Professor Nadkarni whose lectures always drew a wide audience and got many a listener deeply interested in the book. So when he asked me to continue the work I hesitated much despite my deep love for the epic of epics. At his insistence, I accepted temporarily, proviso to the improvement of his health and he resuming his talks. However, destiny had it otherwise and Professor Nadkarni's request to

take one of his forthcoming camps due to his poor health turned out to be a gracious act of passing on the mantle to me. I put the question to the Mother inwardly and it is only after there was sufficient inner indication and her blessings that I could dare to speak on the universal subject that 'none yet understands'.

The rest of the journey with *Savitri* became at once a collective journey intertwined with my personal progress. It has been thus far a beautiful journey carried by her Grace. How else could one speak on something that embodies the very highest vision and revelation of the greatest of seer and yogi of all times? Sri Aurobindo is indeed incomparable, and among all his works, *Savitri* is incomparable to any of his own other writings.

This is the background of these talks given at the conclusion of the weekly 'Savitri Camps' held at the Sri Aurobindo Society Office bi-annually after the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's birthdays on 22nd February and the 15th August, respectively. The book is an outcome of these talks organised and recorded with care and love by the team at Savitri Bhavan headed by Sraddhavan and masterfully edited by Larry Seidlitz.

It is, I feel, a gift of her Grace and a Prasad of her Love that is being shared through these talks, hoping that they would inspire at least a few to delve deeper into the original work that is Sri Aurobindo's body in its own right.

Alok Pandey

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Talks on Savitri — at Savitri Bhavan (top photo) and
at the Beach Office of the Sri Aurobindo Society (bottom)

Savitri's Message to Us

A Talk at Savitri Bhavan on October 25, 2008 (Invocation 30: 20-45)

When Shraddhavan gave me this topic 'The Message of *Savitri*', I wondered what could one speak of as the message of *Savitri*. I realised that just as there is a problem of poverty, this was a problem of plenty, because there are so many messages of *Savitri!* There are even one-line messages which are so powerful that they could change our life if we really were to dwell upon them. They are like a life-time sadhana; for example*, 'All can be done if the god-touch is there'* [3]. I know people who have just picked up one line from *Savitri* that has changed their life. There are so many messages! But what we could do, what I would like to share, is to take up some of the central issues, some broad general messages which are there in *Savitri*, which come as a theme. And then we can have some kind of interaction following the talk.

Earth — a living goddess

The very first thing which comes in *Savitri*, which I think is one of the keys, one of the core issues, is the significance of the Earth. The geographical or astronomical way of looking at Earth is that in this universe it is like a little dot, not even a dot. This little dot seems so inconsequential, so insignificant, and the struggling, striving human beings upon this Earth even more inconsequential. But when we look at *Savitri*, the first thing we get to know about this Earth is that she is a sleeping goddess. She is truly a mother, and she is sleeping, to be woken up by the touch of the Supreme. These are very powerful lines which come in *Savitri*:

> *Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;*
> *Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,*
> *The forge where the Archmason shapes his works.*
> *Thy servitudes on earth are greater, King,*
> *Than all the glorious liberties of heaven. [686]*

This is something so striking!

The hope of Light behind darkness

Sri Aurobindo starts *Savitri* as if by paradox, and it therefore becomes contemporary to all of us, for we truly live in paradoxical times. A hundred years ago Sri Aurobindo wrote in one of his letters: *'One needs to have a calm heart, a settled will, entire self-abnegation and the eyes constantly fixed on the*

beyond to live undiscouraged in times like these which are truly a period of universal decomposition' [CWSA 36: 285]. It is so very true, as much today as when he wrote it. In a way these are times of universal decomposition. Everything is in a ferment. There is a general confusion everywhere. It is like the thick of night. And *Savitri* starts from that thick of night. It is very interesting that towards the end of what can be called his physical existence in this life embodiment Sri Aurobindo was so very keen to complete *Savitri*. And within *Savitri* we have two very interesting short passages — one of just four lines, and the other a few lines — which give us the importance and the significance of the poem. First, about its composition: Sri Aurobindo writes in canto 'The Vision and the Boon' these lines with which we are all familiar:

> *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. [346]*

Savitri is that seed, sown in the Earth's atmosphere, in death's tremendous hour. Truly it must have been a tremendous hour, when on the one side the poisonous fumes of the Second World War were still corrupting the Earth-atmosphere, defiling the human mind. Everything was as if in a state of utter depravity; and on the other side, India's partition with such bloodshed. In that thick of night we have the seed of *Savitri* sown in death's tremendous hour.

Very interestingly, in *Savitri* itself there is a description of *Savitri* — at least I look at it as a description of *Savitri*. It comes, very strangely, in Book 2, Canto 8, after Aswapati has gone through the thick of darkness, descended into Night, encountered the sons of Darkness, seen through the mask of Falsehood, torn through the tablets of the Ignorance. And when he has gone through all that, at the end there emerges something which, I think, describes *Savitri* very beautifully and very well. We could start by reading those lines, because it strikes one as the very core message of *Savitri.* With its birth in the thick of Night, this is the hope that we need to carry in our hearts in times like this, that even in the densest darkness there waits the Dawn.

I think that if we can remember this one thing, that even when everything appears gloomy, everything appears as if we don't know our own self, we don't know what's happening around us, there is *Savitri* to give us hope and to light the way. The passage comes in Book 2, Canto 8 towards the end, when Aswapati has seen through the world of Falsehood entirely, and at the end of it there is something he touches which changes everything.

> *Falsehood gave back to Truth her tortured shape.*
> *Annulled were the tables of the law of Pain,*
> *And in their place grew luminous characters. [232]*

Now comes the description which personally I take to be a description of *Savitri:*

The skilful Penman's unseen finger wrote
His swift intuitive calligraphy;
Earth's forms were made his divine documents,
The wisdom embodied mind could not reveal,
Inconscience chased from the world's voiceless breast;
Transfigured were the fixed schemes of reasoning
Thought.
Arousing consciousness in things inert,
He imposed upon dark atom and dumb mass
The diamond script of the Imperishable,
Inscribed on the dim heart of fallen things
A paean-song of the free Infinite
And the Name, foundation of eternity,
And traced on the awake exultant cells
In the ideographs of the Ineffable
The lyric of the love that waits through Time
And the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss
And the message of the superconscient Fire. [232]

Savitri's message is the message of the superconscient Fire. It is the message of the Love that waits through time. It is the story of the Bliss which is at the root of all creation. Even behind what we see as pain and darkness and the blinding storm there is the Light waiting for its hour. It is drawing nearer each moment even through the thick of darkness.

I think that is one of the most powerful things that comes out of *Savitri*, especially in relation to the Earth. Earth itself is a symbol, and we see that every day we have the darkness and

we have the light — and light is nearest when the darkness is densest. This great truth — that there is dawn waiting behind the darkness, and this Earth itself is a field of a divine experiment, that it is a chosen place, not something that is happening by chance, by accident — gives a meaning and significance to our lives.

The outer mask and the inner human journey

What is that meaning and significance? I suppose this is the second thing which emerges through the pages of *Savitri* — the meaning of the human journey. What is this human journey? Where do we come from?

If you look at the outer view that is given to us by the so-called sciences as we understand it today, we might well conclude that we are born from darkness and go back to darkness. It is a way of looking at things. One can look at every day and say: well, the sun emerges out of darkness and goes back to darkness. But there is another way of looking at things: that the sun never emerges out of darkness and it doesn't go back to darkness — it is we who turn our back to the sun and we who once again turn our face to the sun. This is the human journey: we come from light and we go to light.

This human journey is very beautifully traced out in various passages in very many places. For example, there is this line:

A truth occult has made this mighty world [600]

This world is not built by falsehood, it is not an accident — it is neither a chemical accident, nor a spiritual accident. There is a way of looking at this world where it is seen as a chemical accident: gases came, and electrons, and everything has happened by chance. Even spiritually there has been a misconception that somehow it came into being through a Maya that covered the face of Brahman. Sri Aurobindo would tell us:

But Maya is a veil of the Absolute;
A Truth occult has made this mighty world:
The Eternal's wisdom and self-knowledge act
In ignorant Mind and in the body's steps.
The Inconscient is the Superconscient's sleep. [600]

We also read that '*Earth's forms were made his divine documents'* [232],

Spiritual thought is crammed in Matter's forms, [600]

Everywhere, when we look around, in trees, in flowers, in animals, in human beings, there is something like a spiritual consciousness which off and on we can have a glimpse of — in the sun, in the river, in mud, in the stars, everywhere. If we can learn to read it, we can read every day 'the language of the Infinite.'

Its earthly dialect to God-language change,
In living symbols study Reality
And learn the logic of the Infinite. [76]
...

All here is a mystery of contraries:
Darkness a magic of self-hidden Light, [600]

There is nothing like an original darkness. There is nothing like the colour black. The colour black is simply white turned within itself. Darkness is nothing but light self-absorbed within itself.

Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life. [600]

This is the beauty of *Savitri*. It gives us hope where we can see none. Death is nothing but an instrument; it's a passage. Suffering is nothing but a mask that the rapturous secret Beloved has worn so that the bliss we experience can be even more intense, even more powerful, even more wide, even more lasting. That is why we have to go through suffering and pain. Otherwise, we would be very satisfied with some small and limited happiness, some small and limited perfection. Every time suffering comes, we can remember this one thing: that this is a preparation for a greater Ananda to come. Every time we are confronted with darkness and the dance of death, we can remember that this death and darkness are only a preparation for a greater dawn. Every time we face the pang of pain, we can remember that the divine Artisan is preparing us to bear the strokes of his delight, because his embrace is too intense for this human form to bear. We experience it as pain in our early status of schooling, but as we grow wider, the same embrace is no longer pain, but changes into figures of delight.

Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life.
Although Death walks beside us on Life's road, [600]

Scientists would tell us that death starts the moment we are born, or even before birth, even when the baby is in the womb, because cells are dying. And they would tell us that at the end of the day death has its way. Ultimately, the body dissolves and goes back to death. But here is another vision of things:

Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face: [600]

It conceals a riddle. It is a riddle we are given to solve. All the opposites that we experience in life, which are contrary to our native innate seekings, the opposite of suffering, the opposite of death, all the opposites, are essentially like a riddle. They are like a puzzle we are here to solve. That makes life really fascinating.

Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory, [600]

Death is only a passage between birth and birth. We are told that life is an incident between death and death. But here is a view that death is a passage between life and another life.

A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.

The inconscient world is the spirit's self-made room,
Eternal Night shadow of eternal Day. [601]

It is a complete reversal of view. Night is a shadow of the day. Evil is a shadow of truth, of light.

Night is not our beginning nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we have hid
[601]

In the ancient tradition there is a talk of two mothers: the dark mother and the bright mother, the mother of division and the mother of union and light. The dark mother is the first one: she gives birth to children and she has to look after them, and after a time when they have grown under her care, then they must emerge — they are ready for the light. We have in our everyday experience this emergence, as when a seed which is preparing itself to blossom into a big tree has to be buried inside the earth and for a long time the seed must pass through the darkness, it must be fed with earth's waste and after a time it is ready, when its crust has become thin and it has released itself, then the inner core is ready to emerge into light. Our journey is also in two phases. The first is the state of darkness and ignorance. And in that stage we have to be fed by all the waste of the world: pain, suffering. But a time comes — even this is a preparatory phase — when we are ready and we emerge and can directly expose ourselves to the light and the sun. For

Night is not our beginning, nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we have hid

Safe from too swift a waking to world-pain. [601]

If suddenly we throw the seed into the light of the sun, what happens? We need light for the seed to grow, but if it is thrown directly to the sun, it will just burn up. For a long time the seed has to be put inside the womb of darkness, where by the heat, by the darkness it melts and is ready for the light. It has grown roots and now it will grow upwards.

We came to her from a supernal Light,
By Light we live and to the Light we go. [601]

This is the third very beautiful thing: that we come from the light and we go to the light. This is the human journey.

The cosmic paradox and the goal of creation

Now, this journey is not only the human journey — it is the journey of the whole creation; but in human beings this becomes a very conscious journey. In this journey we are not alone. In this journey there are immense cosmic forces which help and hinder, but the beauty is that though they seem to help and hinder, eventually they all conspire towards a common end. That is the fourth thing we discover in *Savitri* — it is an apparent paradox. There are cosmic powers which in different traditions are called the gods and the titans. They must play their role — the powers of light and the powers of darkness. It is an evolutionary journey; at each stage there are forces which pull us backward and downward, and forces that pull us towards the light and help us, because it is a whole slow process

of marching forward. Therefore, this brings in for us humans an element of choice. There is something we can do even while we are in ignorance — we need to choose. At different stages the choice comes to us and at different stages the choice changes. What is valid today becomes invalid tomorrow. This choice, to leave behind the darkness and move towards the light, this is the human journey. The beauty is that eventually our choices make a difference only in terms of the time and the struggle experienced. They cannot eventually deny, they cannot eventually stifle, they cannot eventually say 'no' to destiny — that is impossible. Through all things, through this conspiracy, through this working of the titans and the gods, through this conspiracy of fate, through all the cosmic powers which restrain us from too swift an opening to the light, we eventually move towards the intended perfection.

This human journey which moves through this kind of a struggle and battle is very beautifully described in Canto 2 in several places, but we'll just pick up some portions. What is behind this human journey?

In this enigma of the dusk of God, [18]

We all are living in the dusk of God. On one side we have an animal consciousness within us which holds us back. On the other side we have the gods inspiring our hearts and our minds, but we don't know which way to go. We feel the call and the urge, but we are still attracted and drawn towards all that we are trying to leave behind. It is a stage where we are half-way

through, and therefore it is a dusk of God. In this dusk, we cannot tell whether it is light or whether it is darkness.

This slow and strange uneasy compromise
Of limiting Nature with a limitless Soul, [18]

This is the problem, the real problem of all of us: that we are a limitless soul. That is why within us there is an urge for the infinite. That is why we by instinct seek boundlessness. That is why we are forever discontent with the little, with the small, with the narrow, with the petty. We are seeking for that Infinity. Yet our nature is limited — it cannot grasp the infinite, it disfigures it and puts its own stamp and terms upon the soul's dreams.

Where all must move between an ordered Chance
And an uncaring blind Necessity,
Too high the fire spiritual dare not blaze. [18]

This is the problem — we want all these beautiful things, but we know that if we aspire with too much intensity, our mortal frames are not able to bear it — we break down. In *Savitri* this comes in several places. For example, when Aswapati asks for the boon for Earth, he is told:

My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.
But too immense my danger and my joy.
...
Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight.
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.
[335]

Later on, when Savitri asks for the boon, even after Death has been annihilated, again she hears the same message. She is told:

How shall earth-nature and man's nature rise
To the celestial levels, yet earth abide? [688]
...
O too compassionate and eager Dawn,
Leave to the circling aeons' tardy pace
And to the working of the inconscient Will,
Leave to its imperfect light the earthly race:
All shall be done by the long act of Time. [690-91]

Also, in this same section, she is told by the godhead:

Heaven's call is rare, rarer the heart that heeds; [689]

We are still too amorous of this darkness, and if Truth descends too soon it might shatter all the norms, all the limits within which human beings must move:

Too high the fire spiritual dare not blaze.
If once it met the intense original Flame,
An answering touch might shatter all measures made
And earth sink down with the weight of the Infinite. [18]

That is why we have restraints upon us. On different levels the gods restrain us, the titans restrain us.

A gaol is this immense material world: [18]

We are in a prison, but we don't realise it. To begin with, our journey starts in a jail. The jail is this immense material

world. The soul is in prison and it is seeking to escape from all sides, through every door. Through the senses it seeks to escape into some original delight. Through the heart it seeks to find universal Love. Through the mind, or parts of the mind, it wants to have a glimpse of infinite Truth. Even through the very pores of our body it wants to have contact with some original Bliss that will deliver it. But:

A gaol is this immense material world:
Across each road stands armed a stone-eyed Law,
At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace. [18]

We want to go through the mind? We want to seek infinite Truth? The sentinel Doubt will come in. It says, 'Well, do you have the key?' And you get into discussing: 'I want the key, I want to experience infinite Truth.' And it will keep on throwing doubts inside the head. After a time you feel: 'No, no, it is better that I remain in the safe limits of the mind. This is too dangerous. I must be objective. I must not lose the balance of my rational analytical thinking. It is too dangerous!' *'At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace'* — they push us back. This is how this jail is created, the jail of consciousness. You want to expand the heart into the wideness of universality? Again, the ego-sense, desires, personal interests, all these things will come and push us back: 'No, no, no, this is very dangerous, don't try this. Live in the safety of the measures made.'

At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.
A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,

An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgment sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God: [18]

What happens when the measures are broken? This is the problem. We may either grow godward in a swift uprising, or suddenly we may open to the immense darkness that was held back in the subconscient chambers. When these measures are broken, then life becomes the arena of a terrible wrestle between the powers of Light and the powers of Darkness.

Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel's circling immobility. [18]

You want to seek the Divine? All right: ego is the price. Oh, that's very painful! Desire is the price. My God, no way! Initially it sounds okay, fine. But as the price is extracted, little by little, it becomes very difficult. This does not come without a price. Sri Aurobindo writes in one of his letters that humanity would want all that the supramental can bring to it, but it is not willing to pay the price. The price is too heavy. We can more easily pay the price of things which are outside us. Here the price is yourself, what is very dear to us. That is why he says, 'Surrender is the way, surrender is the goal.' It is a very difficult price. There is a famous mystic who says: 'What is the price you must pay to sit in the house of Love, the Lord's Love?' If you want to enter there, there is a price, just like when we go on some highways they ask for a toll-tax; everywhere you go there is a price. The mystic says, 'If you want to sit in

the chambers of the Lord's Love and be face to face with the divine Beloved and experience his Delight, then the price is that you have to cut off your head and leave it outside.' It is the symbol of the ego and all its pride — cut off your head, leave it outside, and then you are admitted. Otherwise, stay outside and keep guessing what is inside the secret chambers.

Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel's circling immobility.
A bond is put on the high-climbing mind,
A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life. [18]

This is a slow journey. This is the fourth thing: yes, this human journey is moving towards the Light, but please, don't be impatient. Sri Aurobindo has given us a thousand-year program. It is not a program of 10-15 years, it is not a 'yoga-made-easy', it is not a 14-day course in Nirvana, it is not a virtual reality, where we simply enter, pay a little money, go put on some goggles and start experiencing some higher mental world of our own making! Fortunately, it is not that. It is like… well, a good symbol is the construction of the Matrimandir, or of Savitri Bhavan, or of Auroville: God's creation. When somebody asked Mother: 'Who is building Auroville? Who is behind Auroville?' she said, 'The Supreme Lord.' Imagine, what a joy! The Supreme Lord! Then everything should be easy. You get here and everything should just work out, because the Supreme Lord himself is there! If somebody were to build a place like Savitri Bhavan or the Matrimandir outside,

you would expect that, at the most, within 10-15 years you would see the whole thing come up. But look at this: 40 years, and still there are some little things remaining — it is because the human consciousness has to be ready. It is not just the outer structure — it is the symbol of something inside. The building of Matrimandir should coincide with the building of the inner shrine within us. Then it has a meaning. Otherwise, it is just a beautiful building with nothing inside. That is why it is a long journey. The human consciousness has to be made ready, through pain, through joy, through both of these together.

In another passage in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo says:

O mortal who complainst of death and fate, [454]

You must know this passage. And then he says that

A little bliss is lent thee from above, [451]

You must move through both these things and you must be ready that only a little bliss will be given.

Make of thy daily way a pilgrimage,
For through small joys and griefs thou mov'st towards
God. [451]

When we look at it from one side, it looks as if it is restraining us. From the other side we are ready for only this much. We experience a little joy, a little pain — we are ready for it. Then when we have gone through it, it is not that pain and joy cease: we experience on one side a greater delight, we experience on the other side a greater pain. When we become

wide and one with the universe, we have the universal love and delight on the one side, on the other side we experience the entire darkness and shadow of God. That's what we see in Sri Aurobindo's life: on one side experiencing the delight that could save the world, bringing down the supramental truth; on the other side taking into himself the fumes and poisons of the entire darkness that you could ever imagine on Earth and beyond. That is what happens. Slowly we move through little touches of joy and pain, then a little more. Who would understand the agony of a god?

We hear in *Savitri* that when Savitri comes on Earth, Sri Aurobindo describes her like this:

In her there was the anguish of the gods [6]

Gods are not just very peaceful, peace-loving, content creatures. This is our human notion: gods are only peaceful. Yes, they are peaceful. But they can have anguish — an anguish for perfection, for Light, for Truth, an impatience with which they are born. This journey is a slow one; it takes the form of small steps until we are ready for the full emergence.

The goal

And what is the goal of the journey? This goal is very beautifully expressed: the goal is to become in terms of matter what we originally are in our essential Self. In 'The Secret Knowledge' we read about this journey from life to other life:

He sails through life and death and other life,
He travels on through waking and through sleep. [72]

This journey is always going on, because something within us never sleeps.

'There is one who is awake within our sleep, immortal in mortals is his name.'

A power is on him from her occult force
That ties him to his own creation's fate,
And never can the mighty Traveller rest [72]

If we read this we will feel that rest is a curse and restlessness is a boon — of course, provided that this is a divine discontent and a divine restlessness. But even in the most human restlessness, in the writhing of the worm, there is the emergence, the far-off emergence of the butterfly. That is the beauty, that this restlessness that we experience is given to us as a boon and a curse. If we read some of the legends, it is very interesting that every curse which the rishis gave — you know, in mythology you have some of the rishis giving curses and you wonder, why is this man suddenly giving a curse — has he lost his head? But in every curse a boon is concealed. It actually shortens the way. One very interesting story is the story of one of the kings, after Krishna departs and the dark age, the age of Kali, has just started. The grandson of Arjuna — one of the main protagonists of the great war — Parikshit, inherits the kingdom. The age of Kali has come and darkness is everywhere and dharma is fading away — it stands only on one foot —

faith is spent, devotion has gone, man does not think about surrender: Truth is the only foot on which it stands, and even that is being chased away. And this king, who is so righteous, who comes from such a righteous lineage, suddenly in one of his moments he goes to a sage in a forest and he is feeling thirsty, so he asks for water. The sage is lost in his meditation. The king wants water — he gets really very annoyed. He says: 'What kind of a man are you? You have closed eyes. Who knows what is going on inside your head? You are so insensible!' He picks up a dead snake and puts it around his neck. And the sage's son — he is also a sage to be — when he sees that, he gives a curse: 'After seven days you will die of a bite of this same snake.' Now, the beauty is that this curse turns into a great boon, because this man is confronted with a great existential crisis: 'I will die within seven days. What should I do? Which doctor should I summon? Which person can treat this snake bite?' He knows which snake, he knows the date, he knows the moment. After seven days, by this snake, at this moment he would die. What he does he do? He turns this curse into a boon. He says: 'One day I will have to die. How does it matter whether it is after seven days or seven years, or seventy? Let me find the secret by which I can enjoy immortality despite going through the gates of death.' Eventually, when you look at it, everything turns to good, conspires towards one great end. This is the journey; it goes on and on.

And never can the mystic voyage cease
Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul

And the morns of God have overtaken his night. [72]

...

There is a truth to know, a work to do;
Her play is real; a Mystery he fulfils:
There is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim,
A purpose in her vast and random game.
This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,
This constant will she covered with her sport,
To evoke a Person in the impersonal Void,
With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of trance,
Wake a dumb self in the inconscient depths
And raise a lost Power from its python sleep
That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine. [72-73]

This is the journey and this is the goal of the journey. Towards this goal we move through everything — through the seeming good and the seeming bad. This does not mean that we should not make choices. It does not mean that we should choose the bad instead of the good — man is given that discrimination because it makes the journey shorter. But we must know that whatever the appearances, through both of these we are moving towards that which is our goal.

We are not alone

This is so because we have within this Earth the presence of the One. This is another message which we get from *Savitri*, a very beautiful one: Man is not alone on this journey. There is a divine intervention. It comes from time to time, from age to age. In special moments of crisis, personal or collective, God is nearest to us. This is another beautiful thing, that whenever in our individual life or collective life we are going through an intense crisis, it means that hidden by the strong blinding storm He is there at the heart of it, and therefore there is hope. Not only is He hidden in this matter, He intervenes in the ways and paths of this Earth and guides the chariot of life through strange ways, inexplicable ways, and keeps it on the track. However far we may go, however much we may deviate, eventually, He is the divine Charioteer and He will set the course right. We have these beautiful lines:

> *Yet a spiritual secret aid is there;*
> *While a tardy Evolution's coils wind on*
> *And Nature hews her way through adamant*
> *A divine intervention thrones above.*
> *Alive in a dead rotating universe*
> *We whirl not here upon a casual globe*
> *Abandoned to a task beyond our force; [58-59]*

Sri Aurobindo has already told us that this is not a casual globe, that there is a purpose, there is a journey. And we are all

here for a work. But we are not alone. We are not abandoned children. None of us is alone.

Even through the tangled anarchy called Fate
And through the bitterness of death and fall
An outstretched Hand is felt upon our lives. [59]

As we grow, it comes nearer and nearer to us. How beautifully we find it expressed in Sri Aurobindo's poem 'Krishna'

Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
Life shudders with a strange felicity;
All Nature is a wide enamoured pause
Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.
For this one moment lived the ages past;
The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.
[CWSA 2: 608]

If we can remember just this one thing, that through all this journey, through the thick of it, through the storm, through sin, through sorrow, through tears, through suffering, even when our hands are stained with blood, He is there. That is such a great hope. We have these lines:

It is near us in unnumbered bodies and births;
In its unslackening grasp it keeps for us safe
The one inevitable supreme result
No will can take away and no doom change,
The crown of conscious Immortality, [59]

In the famous story 'Alice in Wonderland' people are running around and at the end of the race Dodo is asked: 'Who has won? Who has come first? Who has won the prize?' He thinks for a while and then he says, 'All win the prize and all have come first.' We are not competing with anybody here. All of us win the prize because that prize is the crown of conscious immortality, and He keeps that safe for us. Whatever be the doom, that is something which nobody can take away.

One who has shaped this world is ever its lord: [59]

However anarchic it may appear, he is the Lord. It has come out of him. He is in it, he holds the world within himself, he has become it.

One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:
Our errors are his steps upon the way; [59]

There is a beautiful prayer of the Mother where she says, *'errors have become stepping stones'* [CWM 1: 308].

Our errors are his steps upon the way;
He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,
He works through the hard breath of battle and toil,
He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,
[59]

What a wonderful hope this is. It is not only in meditation that we find him, it is not only in our puja room we find him. Even when we are left alone, confronting the darkest shadows within ourselves, He is there. He works through all this. His

knowledge overrules our nescience. We are ignorant — no problem, He knows it. We do stupid things? No problem. He will turn it with His hands into steps towards wisdom. We are fools? No problem. His divine wisdom, his divine knowledge will turn this falling into the best step we could take to come closer to the Light.

He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,
His knowledge overrules our nescience;
Whatever the appearance we must bear, [59]

What is the command being given to us? The appearance will be dark, sometimes blinding, we must bear it.

Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
When nothing we can see but drift and bale,
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all. [59]

A little leaf caught up in the storm or in the floods knows not where it's being taken. It is being carried somewhere. The guide knows where it is being taken. There is a guidance in life. In one of Sri Aurobindo's very beautiful letters, which is available in the form of a book, *The Riddle of this World*, one of the fundamental things he says which is so important to remember, is that there is a guidance in life, there is a guidance in this world, there is a wisdom which governs this universe. However random, however chaotic, however full of chance it may appear, this wisdom is leading us through all things towards that predestined goal. This is the message. On the journey the Divine himself is with us.

The role of humanity

At the end of this journey we may ask: What are we to do on this journey? Is there a role that we have to play? *Savitri* gives the message which tells us the vast plan and the whole journey so that we can have hope and know what is to be done, so that we know the goal and we keep faith. What specifically can we do to assist this process; how can we help on this evolutionary path? This is the message which I take as the message for us. Basically, it is part of Savitri's yoga, but as we know Savitri's yoga is a yoga done for men. She is told, *'For man thou seekest, not for thyself alone'* [488]. What she has done is that she has opened the path for men. The way she has walked, we must walk that way. The Mother has opened the path for human beings to follow. What she has done is what we should do. She has taught us surrender, she has taught us to aspire. She has taught us to have faith, she has taught us how to go within. What Sri Aurobindo has done, only he can do. It is as simple as that. It is difficult for human beings to even envisage how they can take even a single step of that giant stride. But what Mother has done is the yoga given to men. In the yoga of Savitri we have the message for men, on how we can best assist this journey. Of course, one thing Sri Aurobindo has told us is to have faith. Even when you are drifting, there is something which is carrying you — through small joys and griefs you are moving towards God. But we can directly help in this process. It is almost like an eight-step program for all of us, and every

year we can say at least one step we will take. The first thing is:

Remember why thou cam'st. [476]

We should never forget why we are here. If we forget that, everything goes berserk. Why are we here? The whole problem of life comes because we keep forgetting why we are here. This is the first step:

Remember why thou cam'st. [476]

Next:

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self, [476]

Step two, it is so simple: Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self. We are not what we believe ourselves to be. When we think 'I am', that is not what we are. We are an eternal portion of the Eternal, we are an immortal portion of the Immortal. We are in the deepest sense the Mother's child, this Jivatman, this inner self, which is a projection of Her put forward for the play.

But since she knows the toil of mind and life
As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,
She puts forth a small portion of herself,
A being no bigger than the thumb of man
Into a hidden region of the heart
To face the pang and to forget the bliss, [526]

How beautiful! This is what we are. We must remember:

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths, [476]

What is it that He wants me to do? What is His purpose within me?

Then mortal nature change to the divine.
Open God's door, enter into his trance. [476]

We have turned our backs to God and that is our problem. We have turned our backs to Light, and therefore we have to do everything by conjecture. Who is behind us? Maybe there is God, maybe not — we don't know. We must *'Open God's door'* with the key of faith, with the master-key of sincerity, with the key of aspiration, with the key of surrender — so many keys She has given us! Any or all of these keys we can use to open his door. And when we open his door we enter into his trance of bliss.

Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light: [476]

We cannot know Truth by any amount of intellectual analysis. We'll move in futile circles. We'll end up at the same point from where we began, because thought is an inferior power. It imitates something or someone of which it is a shadow. It cannot know. If it goes there, it vanishes, like when a shadow enters light — it just vanishes. That is why thought is so scared of entering sometimes, because it would vanish. But in its place something else emerges.

Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:
In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see. [476]

This is the knowledge towards which we can climb, which is not an intellectual knowledge, but the knowledge which can inform the intellect, which is not a knowledge that comes through thought, but a knowledge which can illumine our thoughts. That is the difference.

Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight: [476]

First is thought. As long as we are still relying on intellectual analysis, on the habitual thought to know, we will not know. We have to leave it aside and enter into God's kingdom of knowledge and direct vision. Similarly, what veils from us God, who is everywhere, hid in every form? Sense — this weaves our reality. That is a very interesting way of looking at this world. We don't see reality — we see what the senses weave and present to us and we believe this is reality. The senses weave reality and we have to penetrate deeper. By the power of aspiration we can go deeper into matter — within us, outside us, around us.

Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight: [476]

That is why it is said that the more we are allured and enmeshed by sense-objects, the more difficult it becomes to experience the spiritual reality. This is the fundamental basis behind it, because when the senses present objects to the mind, and the mind gets caught up in that and dwells upon them, the stronger becomes the chain and the more difficult it is to go deeper and experience the Spirit. Many spiritual practices enjoin detachment from sense objects so as not to become

enmeshed with them so that one can see the deeper reality. Then, when the mind is free from sense-objects:

In the enormous emptiness of thy mind
Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,
In the world's contacts meet his single touch;
All things shall fold thee into his embrace. [476]

The first programme is find your soul. The next is to universalise it and discover the same self everywhere in its play.

Remember why thou cam'st:
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,
Then mortal nature change to the divine.
Open God's door, enter into his trance.
. . .
All things shall fold thee into his embrace.
Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God:
[476]

This is the third thing: the mind, the senses, and the emotional being — the vital-emotional being — conquer them, don't let them beat or dance to the tune of the ego — *'let thy heart beat in God.'* If with each beat we could remember the Divine, how beautiful it would be! *'Let thy heart beat in God.'* I think it would be a cure for any of us. I have a suspicion that it should work. But if you suggest it to the cardiologists, they

will send you to the psychiatrists. *'Let thy heart beat in God.'* Actually it is true that the more we dwell upon God, the calmer and quieter everything becomes. And the more we dwell upon the objects of the senses and the desires, the more the heart flutters: hopes, fears, expects — they really quicken the heart-beat. It may really be true physiologically. It is a very practical advice, a one-line cure for all arrythmias:

Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God.

… so that even if it stops, it stops in Him.

Thy nature shall be the engine of his works, [476]

This is the next programme. Our nature is right now the slave of the ego and desire. It is a puppet, a swinging puppet, dancing to the hours — it should become an engine for God's work.

Man is a dynamo for the cosmic work;
Nature does most in him, God the high rest:
Only his soul's acceptance is his own. [542]

This is what Sri Aurobindo writes. We think so much about ourselves. If our nature can become an engine for his works …

Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word: [476]

The creative word, the power of the word to create, can send forth vibrations of the higher consciousness through the agency of speech. Now our speech is not at all used for that. The Word has a power; it can shatter the subconscient. As they say, the rishis of old broke open the caves by the power of the Word

and the darkness which was hidden inside came into the front and was annihilated by the Light. If a word can carry that power it can break open the defences and bring out the Truth concealed.

> *Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word:*
> *Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death.*
>
> *[476]*

Questions and answers

> *Question from the audience: You mentioned that Sri Aurobindo has given a 1000-year programme. Does that mean that if I live 85 years and I work all my life to be a very spiritual person, it would take me 12 incarnations to understand his message? What does it mean?*

Yes, I understand. Let me go step by step. When we say 1000 it is a figurative way of speaking. It is not a prophesy or a prediction. Of course, when Mother was asked, she did say 'Wait for a thousand years.' In one of her talks she did say that. But she was speaking about the supramentalisation of the body, the supramental body, as I have understood it. But otherwise in another place she mentioned that Sri Aurobindo said it would take about 300 years for the consciousness to change into that consciousness. What I meant to say by that figurative term '1000-year programme' was that we should not be impatient. The point that I was trying to convey is that when we are

impatient we are actually delaying the work. It is a long journey. Now this is one part.

Second, there are two ways to look at it. One is that many of us want to achieve everything in one life. It is okay, it is a good thing to have that aspiration. But when this aspiration is under the stress of the vital nature — because that is what we are accustomed to — then we hope violently and we despair violently. There are many people who enter into something like a Sri Aurobindo movement, or any spiritual path, and they enter with a lot of initial enthusiasm because suddenly the whole thing is open. You see, unlike previous ages when the initiate was tested whether he was ready for walking the special path or not, now we can read about it in a book. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have spoken about this. We read about it and say, 'Oh, supramentalisation, this is wonderful!' A lot of us may enter it finding something very marvellous. Yes, it is marvellous, but there is a long journey before we are ready. The whole purpose of mentioning this 1000 years is that we should not lose heart. Instead, we should be prepared and armed with all that is necessary for a long journey. It is to inculcate those attitudes.

It is like we want to climb Mount Everest. Somebody comes back from there and says 'Look at the photo.' 'Oh, wow! How beautiful, breath-taking summits, it is wonderful, lovely!' And then the person says, 'It is a great journey, just carry some camping stuff and ...' and he starts a movement. We set off and are very happy when we reach some of those little slopes of the

Himalayas; we say, 'Really it is wonderful!' But when we start going beyond, the moment we have blinding storms and precipices and all those kinds of things, life and death situations, that is the point when we turn back.

The idea here is that you must be ready to move slowly, steadily, surely, with the right attitude, the right approach. Whether it will take ten incarnations or three, individually how much time — that really is not what is meant here. What would take in the time frame of the gods merely the twinkling of an eye, for the human consciousness, to arrive at that point globally, collectively, may take a thousand years. It may be. Let's hope that it is less, much less. We can probably hasten the process if we follow the programme. But we should not be impatient, that's what is meant.

We don't know how many incarnations. Today we live for 85 years — I'm taking that question very literally — but maybe after two hundred years the human life-span may suddenly increase by two or three hundred years. Once I asked a child in Pondicherry when he was five, 'What do you want?' He said something very strange: — he was a five-year old child — 'I want to live for seven hundred thirty-five years'. He gave a figure, like 732 or 735 years. It was strange, it struck me as something very unusual. Why is he suddenly speaking of that? We don't know: a thousand years may be just three incarnations. Maybe when we come next time humanity may have advanced further and the life-span may have increased by means which are inner as well as outer. We may even find ways

and means of increasing the life-span by inner means. Let's hope so. It may become a little boring, but nevertheless...

Question from the audience: It won't be boring if we are following the path.

Yes, absolutely. It won't be boring at all if you are following the path and progressing. Then it becomes as Sri Aurobindo says in one of the lines in *Savitri:* 'Each day was a spiritual romance' [30]. Wonderful! Do we have another question?

Question from the audience: In an earlier part of Savitri it is mentioned that:

A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule, [20]

Question from the audience: Does this apply only to Savitri, or is it applicable to us too?

These lines come in Canto Two, where Savitri is confronted with this impossible possibility of confronting Death and changing Fate. How can she do it? There Sri Aurobindo says that it is by emergence within our own soul, if we touch that magic key. It is only after that, then suddenly the magic leverage is caught. Now once we catch this magic leverage — the magic leverage of the psychic being, then the next line follows:

A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force. [20]

It is in terms of that, because otherwise, of course, we may pray every day and it is not as one wishes, it is not as simple as that without this magic leverage. These are very beautiful lines so we can just read them:

To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose. [19]

How to change fate? This is the question that she is facing. What fate? *'The wheels of Doom'*. It seems we can change everything, but how do we change death? It says:

To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose.
At the Unseen's knock upon her hidden gates
Her strength made greater by the lightning's touch
Awoke from slumber in her heart's recess.
It bore the stroke of That which kills and saves. [19-20]

This is the background. Something woke up within her heart. She is awake physically, but something wakes up in her heart, because she has to bear the stroke of death.

Across the awful march no eye can see,
Barring its dreadful route no will can change,
She faced the engines of the universe;
A heart stood in the way of the driving wheels:
Its giant workings paused in front of a mind,
Its stark conventions met the flame of a soul. [20]

These wheels can really stop, the moment they reach the flame of the soul. Then these lines follow:

A magic leverage suddenly is caught

That moves the veiled Ineffable's timeless will:
A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule,
One mighty deed can change the course of things;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent. [20]

It is this contact with the soul, the inmost soul, which turns a prayer, our actions, even thought, into a luminous key to open the doors of the highest and deepest possibilities. But this must be found first. Of course, every time we read *Savitri* — I not only believe it, I am sure it is everybody's experience — its very atmosphere is uplifting, so definitely we move ahead, there is no doubt about it. That we lapse back into the place from where we started is of course our problem. But by reading we make it a little easier.

The Journey of Love

The 3rd Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture given by Dr. Alok Pandey at Savitri Bhavan on August 23, 2012 (Invocation 38:4-27)

It is a joy and a privilege to speak on any aspect of *Savitri*. Today the joy and the privilege are in a way doubled, because it is Dr. Nadkarni's Memorial Lecture. I remember when, quite a number of years ago, during one of the Nainital Camps, before I took premature retirement, I was debating with myself whether I should continue speaking at these camps or not. Dr. Nadkarni was also speaking there in the same camp. This debate had been going on in me for some time during those years because I wanted a very clear answer from the Mother about whether I should be doing this. I always feel that this is a very risky territory: this speaking business is not always a good business. Before retiring from the Indian Air Force I thought 'Let me take retirement from this speaking part'. I shared this feeling with him. I was actually just thinking aloud, because I knew this answer had to come from inside — it could not come from anyone outside. But as if foreshadowing the answer that was to come, he said, 'It would be a great loss for

the work.' That was all he said. I was still not sure; frankly, I was not too convinced about it, because I really believe that the Mother's Work carries on in so many ways. Often silence is more powerful than speech. Nevertheless, it has so happened that over the years a closeness developed between me and Dr. Nadkarni. He came to stay in my house when he came to Bangalore and it was really such a joy: what simplicity despite such a great intellect! I was very touched by some precious moments that I spent with him. Then the year that he left us for the lap of the Divine Mother, a few months before, he asked me 'Could you take the November Camp?' I was really nonplussed. I answered him, 'Nadkarni-ji, surely you will be taking it.' he said 'No, no — I am not feeling too well.' I have shared this with some people personally, but I have never before shared it publicly; but since this is Dr. Nadkarni's Memorial Lecture, a few words may be appropriate. I responded 'Well Nadkarni-ji, you will be fine by November. People will come wanting to listen to you.' He said, 'Let us see.' Finally after much hesitation I said, 'All right, they can put my name in the announcement in *All India Magazine*, but I do hope that you will be fine and that you will take the Camp.' He said,

'All right'. Then I felt that to take camps on both *Essays on the Gita* and *Savitri* would be too much for me because of the medical work, so I said 'I will take up *Savitri*.' He said 'All right'. I don't remember the exact date when this conversation

took place — maybe a month or at most two months before he left.

This is a difficult moment for me, but I am sure that everyone will bear with it. That morning I had a call from Meera-di that the end had come. I happened to be the first doctor that reached there. Dr. Nadkarni had already left his body. Right behind me Dilip-da came, and all of us then came together. It was such a swift and sudden event that at one level it seems a Grace that he left the body so painlessly, so swiftly — no suffering, no fuss… It was something remarkable. I have seen many deaths in my practice but this is one of the exceptional departures that I have seen. If any sign is needed that he was indeed an exceptional being, this is one. Here we are on this day remembering him, and what better remembrance than to read *Savitri* — something which he loved, and he loved to sing about it.

Coming to the theme, 'The Journey of Love', when I think about *Savitri*, about what *Savitri* is, I am reminded of some lines from the poem itself, for *Savitri* contains everything within it, including what *Savitri* is. These lines come at the end of Book Two, Canto Eight, when after the Descent into the Night, King Aswapati has torn through the veil of darkness and Night has been cleaved and cut asunder. There these lines emerge:

> *The lyric of the love that waits through Time*
> *And the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss*
> *And the message of the superconscient Fire. [232]*

This is what *Savitri* is, expressed in a single phrase — the lyric of love. But the amazing thing is that when Sri Aurobindo writes about *Savitri* in his 'Author's Note', he uses an interesting adjective, which I have often felt has not received enough attention. He mentions 'conjugal love conquering Death'. Now I believe that the great ones in the past who wrote these beautiful stories — which did really happen — they were not just writing symbolically. There was a realism in all that they wrote. It was not just an ethereal possibility but a very material possibility. That often hits me hard. I cannot say that I have fully understood, grasped the full import of what it means — except that it is possible in a human body, in flesh and blood, that love which is hidden in the heart of creation and works silently can manifest in a human body and in human relationships; it is possible.

This is the Age of Truth and we all know that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through their tapasya, their great sacrifice, have brought down to earth the supramental Truth-Consciousness. Unfortunately, like all terms, the word 'Truth' also evokes a certain sense and meaning in us. We are so accustomed to truth in terms of Science. Science explores Truth. What about the heart? 'Oh, that is mere sentimental emotionalism.' I feel that if there is one civilisational disease which has become chronic, with which human beings have been and continue to be suffering, it is the lack of love. Both as a practitioner of the path of Yoga and as a psychiatrist and a doctor, when I look around me, and having gone around the world, I see that people suffer

because of lack of love. All education caters to knowledge: knowledge, more and more knowledge — knowledge for power, more and more power for mastery. The heart is ignored in the process, it is stifled, and the response of the heart to Truth is lost. We do not even hear its language. It is crushed, kept aside. It is not even spoken of, it is considered bad to speak about it. As people grow up, you are not supposed to cry — it is like that: mentioning love is almost an anathema to a modern civilised person. This is understandable because love is also the first power that has plunged into the creation. Therefore — this may be a very funny way of looking at it, but — it would be the last to emerge: a lot has to be made ready to enable this power to emerge.

I am reminded of an analogy. I am in the habit of reaching airports early, and I feel comfortable that I don't have to wait for a long time to check in. I always thought this is very logical — why would I want to rush at the last minute? But once somebody told me 'No, there is a reason why it is better to go towards the end: if you give your baggage in the beginning, it will come out last.' I started observing it and I saw that it is really true. But old habits die hard, and I still prefer to get there early and receive my baggage last rather than to miss the flight.

Something like that has happened in this creation. We know the great story of when Being plunged into this darkness. The Being plunged. Sri Aurobindo speaks about it. It is very interesting, it was the Being, not some bare Truth. Sri Aurobindo brings Truth, but it is not the truth of the material

scientist: bare, cold, impersonal, heartless, something which can be resolved into a whirling dance of protons and electrons and atomic particles. That is not the Truth that Sri Aurobindo means. That is a truth, one amongst many, not 'The Truth'. Similarly, it is not the truth of the mystic, sitting aloof, detached from all, indifferent to the pain and pangs of this world, sitting on the peaks of some inmost recess, or in some cave, inaccessible to the world, waiting in some trance of the Infinite, to merge and be dissolved in it. It is not the truth of either of these two extremes. Sri Aurobindo brings a Truth that is one with Love.

A truth that is not one with love will be harsh. It is not that kind of truth that Sri Aurobindo wants to establish upon earth. The Mother took particular care to remind us that the Superman … what powers he will have, that is left to the imagination of each of us, but what he will not have has been very very clearly stated... he will not be a cruel being. He will embody in himself the Truth of Love:

A Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-white Love
Caught all into a sole immense embrace;
Existence found its truth on Oneness' breast
And each became the self and space of all. [322-23]

This is the Truth that has plunged into creation.

But to come back to the story — when darkness was there engulfed within darkness, the Gods had to go in, to rescue all the energies that had deviated from their true purpose, had gone out and plunged into the Darkness and assumed that shape and

colour, and were hidden from the Light of Truth. Where are they, where are they? None of the gods is willing to leap into it. It is too dark, it is such an immense task. Then Agni, the representative of the Divine Consciousness and Will, says 'I will go, but I have one condition.' The condition is that, looking at the Divine Mother, Aditi, Agni says 'I see in your heart a most beautiful resplendent Light, shadowless, pure, intense. If you give us that, l will go.' And if Agni goes, all the other gods will follow. Then the Divine Mother poured that Light, a drop of that Light from her fathomless heart of Love and Bliss. That Light, that pure shadowless Light from her heart has plunged into the creation, and since then it has been engaged in the labour of Love. It is that Love which crystallised itself as the psychic essence. That is what we are told. That drop of Light plunged down — and following it went the gods: Agni, Mitra, Varuna, Bhaga, Indra, Soma, the Ashwins, and the Ribhus, the artisans of Immortality. They plunged into the darkness because first there went the spear-point of the flame-white Love from the heart of the Divine Mother. This is the origin of that Love. Beings plunge into this darkness to rescue it.

It is very interesting that when we speak of the Divine, he is not just an impersonal universality. Nowadays there is a tendency to say that every path leads to That Reality. This word 'reality' is a very interesting one and even though there is but One ultimate Reality, it can conjure a host of meanings. There is scientific reality, there is material reality, there is

psychological reality, there is a Reality with a capital 'R'. There is a reality of the Adwaitin, there is a reality of the Buddhist, there are all kinds of reality. But the Reality which Sri Aurobindo speaks of is not just an impersonal universality. It is a Being, a transcendent Being; and that Being has plunged himself into this darkness. This is beautifully brought out in *Savitri* (everything is beautifully brought out in *Savitri*) in 'The Kingdoms of the Little Life':

> *In the enigma of the darkened Vasts,*
> *In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite*
> *When all was plunged in the negating Void,*
> *Non-Being's night could never have been saved*
> *If Being had not plunged into the dark*
> *Carrying with it its triple mystic cross. [140-41]*

When we are told to renounce, to sacrifice, these words have no meaning at a human level. Because what do we really renounce and sacrifice? We leave dirt, mud, mire, and what does the Divine Mother give us in exchange? Pure diamond! So how can we say 'We have left this, we have left that'? Whatever we have left was worth nothing; it was only a useless entanglement — weeds, thorns, all these things. But if there is an unparalleled example of renunciation, it is the renunciation which the Divine makes to assume a human body. When the Mother speaks of the relevance of *Savitri*, one of the things she mentions is *'The experiences of the Divine Mother in her effort to adapt herself to the body she has taken and the ignorance and the falsity of the earth upon which she has incarnated'*

[CWM 13: 24]. We cannot imagine what it means to renounce That and to enter into this mortal body, to live that, to endure that. Just for a being of a higher world to leave aside the Supreme and to be in a human body is a great suffering, because it is like being in a cage, a small little space, a tiny hole. For a being of a higher consciousness when he takes such a body it is a great suffering because he brings with him memories of lost felicities, of power, of a godly estate, and to assume a body is really to enter into misery, even in the best of surroundings. Such people are very uncomfortable with their surroundings, they feel like a stranger. About this descent of the Divine, Sri Aurobindo very beautifully says in the second canto of *Savitri:* 'Repeating the marvel of the first descent' [2]. And every time the Divine renounces his infinity and enters into this creation the Mother says that it is with only one objective: to transform matter. He loses himself completely and identifies with matter. This is the origin of all subsequent descents. In the origin, this is the first descent. The Mother speaks about meeting this Being who has plunged into the Darkness, and she calls him 'the first Avatar'.

If Being had not plunged into the dark
Carrying with it its triple mystic cross.
Invoking in world-time the timeless truth,
Bliss changed to sorrow, knowledge made ignorant,
God's force turned into a child's helplessness
Can bring down heaven by their sacrifice. [141]

This is the first sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Divine himself. He shows the way to us, the path. The return is also through sacrifice. As evolution takes place, at each level, Nature performs the sacrifice normally. It is not we who do the sacrifice; until the human level Nature does the sacrifice. This is the whole story of evolution: matter must sacrifice its peaceful stability and inertia, in order to begin to crawl and run and jump — otherwise it will not. Matter is at ease, at peace, and stable. It must sacrifice that. When life comes everything becomes unstable, at every moment there is a change taking place, death comes with it, suffering comes with it. Matter does not experience these things. That state of the peace of inertia, immobility, must be sacrificed for life to emerge. Again, in living forms we see a progressive sacrifice: the fish must sacrifice its gills, its lovely home in the wonderful ocean to come onto the land; the creatures of the land must sacrifice their vitality, the snake must sacrifice its ability to crawl in order to be able to fly; the bird must sacrifice its wings to be able to run on the plains; and the animal with its sinews and muscles and strength and vitality and force and speed, must sacrifice all that to be able to think in man. This is the law of sacrifice: all evolution is sacrifice: the sacrifice of that which was for that which yet can be. And here we stand at the human stage, with a mighty intellect: if we are willing to really ascend to the intuitive stage, we must be willing to sacrifice this, the rational mind that comes in the way. It is like a hard lid which will not break open unless by some divine Grace we are

hammered. We meet the contradictions of life and they compel us to widen, to look afresh at things.

This is the great sacrifice:

Being became the Void and Conscious-Force
Nescience and walk of a blind Energy
And Ecstasy took the figure of world-pain.
In a mysterious dispensation's law
A Wisdom that prepares its far-off ends
Planned so to start her slow aeonic game. [141]

This is the first act of Love. And always throughout life, if one sees what love really is, to put it in one word — love is sacrifice. There is no other word that is better suited to express love. Mother says in one of her short messages:

They always speak of the rights of love but love's only right is the right of self-giving. [CWM 14: 121]

The moment there is expectation, wanting to receive, to get, it is no longer love, it is something else, it is a cry of the Titan.

I am just flipping through the poem, which is what I love to do. On page 506 we find the voice of the Titan. See what love has become here, while the original love is sacrifice: the sacrifice of the very highest — it is one thing to sacrifice the lower for the higher, but the Divine has sacrificed the highest to enter into this darkened state. How many can do it? To sacrifice all the gains, the inner experiences, the richness of the life of an ascetic, the wish to be an ascetic in some forest. It is a big temptation: when the hostile forces cannot work in any

other way then they try a very nice trick, that trick is there in *Savitri*. Death tells Savitri, 'Fine, I agree that there may be some God, some ultimate divine Self above, but you won't find him in the world. Leave this world, go into some forest and there you meditate and find that Self.' This is one of the tricks. They do this, and it is very very convincing, especially because the Indian mind is so much stamped with asceticism that these thoughts come: 'Nothing else works out, so better go to the forest, to some far-off place and remain aloof. Why be in the world with all these hassles and problems?'

The original sacrifice is the other way round, and Sri Aurobindo speaks about it in several places in *Savitri*. In one place he says, *'*A god come down and greater by the fall*'* [343], he becomes greater. The Divine assumes this body and enters into this darkness because the end result is something greater than what originally existed. He has come down for the sake of that glory.

But meanwhile, what is our stage? For from there we begin, with the voice of the Titan hidden within us. How does he speak, what does he whisper from behind?

> *I have loved, but none has loved me since my birth;*
> *My fruit of works is given to other hands. [506]*

These are the thoughts which the Titan whispers. How sad! And then there are people who will talk about karma — it is 'your karma'. In fact, there are other lines that come above these which express this:

I am shown God's stamp and my own signature
Upon the sorry contract of my fate.
I have loved, but none has loved me since my birth;
My fruit of works is given to other hands.
All that is left me is my evil thoughts,
My sordid quarrel against God and man,
Envy of the riches that I cannot share,
Hate of a happiness that is not mine. [506]

And then it gives the secret: why love has become this disfigured Titan's whisper in our hearts:

I know my fate will ever be the same,
It is my nature's work that cannot change: [506]

Why?

I have loved for mine, not for the beloved's sake,
I have lived for myself and not for others' lives. [506]

This is the problem. As the Divine enters into the arena of this earth all the forces want to capture and claim it as their own. In one of her *Prayers* the Mother laments that all the great asuras who have accepted to play the role of helping the work want to keep some of the Force for themselves [CWM 1: 223, *Prayers and Meditations*, August 16, 1914]. Nobody wants to give back everything to the Divine. It comes from the Divine — everything belongs to the Divine — we want to appropriate it: 'my love', 'my life', 'my knowledge', 'my power', 'my strength'. The moment the 'my' comes, it is deformed, it is disfigured: love becomes a cause of suffering, pain and misery.

The beauty is, that in spite of all this we can still feel this power. There have been ages of Knowledge, there have been ages of Power, but there has not yet been a convincing age of Love. Myths have been created, for example, around a brief time in Brindavan when all was rapture and felicity and everybody danced around God — for a short while; but Brindavan could not last and on earth it was a creation of the mystics, who saw the possibility of such a love. There have been such stories. Christ came to embody that love, but it had to end with a supreme sacrifice; we may add the word 'strategic' — a strategic sacrifice that helped to humanise humanity. There have been moments of love but not something that has endured. There have been ages when there was knowledge, wisdom; there have been ages when there was power — when we read about Atlantis, the Mayan civilisation, the Mahabharata — what tremendous power and knowledge they wielded! But look at what happened to that knowledge and power: we have seen that movie *The Planet of the Apes* — man blew himself up, because what was missing was love. And yet the beauty is that if we look around life and creation, if there is one thing that we are sure to find every day as we walk through life, it is love: the smile of love. We can see it everywhere. That is what Sri Aurobindo reminds us through *Savitri*:

> *Always a heaven-truth broods in life's deeps,*
> *It is always there, and from time to time it blossoms out.*
> *In her obscurest members burns that fire.*
> *A touch of God's rapture in creation's acts,*

A lost remembrance of felicity
Lurks still in the dumb roots of death and birth,
The world's senseless beauty mirrors God's delight.
That rapture's smile is secret everywhere; [139]

Even if we handle matter a little carefully it is amazing how it responds to love. I have had this experience a number of times. With material objects it is amazing that they may respond to knowledge and of course they may respond to power too, when we manipulate the machinery, but they can respond to love. Cars, scooters, objects that are used every day, they can respond to love. If we really treat them with love and care they respond to it. Plants can smile at us, flowers — they can take away our depression, just absorb it in themselves. How beautiful! 'That rapture's smile is secret everywhere'. As the Mother says, in the evening, love in the plant aspires to go up to heaven.

It flows in the wind's breath, in the tree's sap,
Its hued magnificence blooms in leaves and flowers.
[139]

One comes out of the house feeling not too good, and as one walks there is a lovely breeze — it caresses us, and then within minutes we feel so good — it is almost like the Divine Mother's touch.

In beast and in winged bird and thinking man
It made of the heart's rhythm its music's beat; [139]

Bliss, love and beauty are one: they assume three aspects; love is the flower, bliss is the fruit — that's how one can put it.

It forced the unconscious tissues to awake
And ask for happiness and earn the pang
And thrill with pleasure and laughter of brief delight,
And quiver with pain and crave for ecstasy. [139]

When nothing else works in life, love does work, but it has to be persistent. Somebody asked the Mother, 'When you have faith in someone and he lets you down, you are deceived, cheated — what should you do, and what does it mean?' Some of the Mother's answers widen us to limitless horizons! She said 'Your faith was not sufficient.'

Love has a power to change. I remember an incident someone shared with me. His son studied here and had to be taken out of the school. He went into drugs and it was a miserable journey. Towards the end of his brief life — for he developed malignancy and was in a rehab etc. — he was asked by his father, 'You have seen nothing but misery in life, what have you learned from all this?' He wanted that at least his son could say some words that would give the old father's heart some solace, that after all his life was not a complete waste — when you are witnessing your child dying at a young age, in his forties. The boy recounted an incident: 'When I was going out I went to the Mother, and she told me, "My child, remember two things: first — never hide anything from me; second — the Mother always loves you." I don't know about the first, but the second one has sustained me throughout.' And the father was

so relieved. When he was sharing this with me I could sense what a relief it would be to a father to know that with all his brief life, with all the difficulties and problems, a life that can be called a miserable life, still this boy managed to remember one thing: 'The Mother loves me'. I think that if somebody can remember it, even for a few years, it is a great sadhana and yoga. It is a great sadhana to remember just this much: 'The Mother loves me.' We cannot love her; but the same love which has entered into this creation, the divine Love, as it evolves it turns into love for the Divine. The Mother says 'There is only one love — there are no two loves'. In this creation, all lower forms of love turn eventually into love for the Divine.

We have magnificent lines speaking of the evolution of love. This smile, this rapture which we feel in plants, is not the end of the journey. We read here:

A mystic slow transfiguration works. [632]

Where does it work? It works in the depths of Nature, because love is behind everything and it works from within.

All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky [632]

Every day we see hope everywhere, for everything starts from earth and ends in sky.

And Love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space. [632]

It is the same Love which evolves, layer by layer: madness in the heart, rapturous madness, comradeship in the mind, that becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space:

A lonely soul passions for the Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God, [632]

These are two steps and stages. Sri Aurobindo tells us that the psychic being, in the beginning, loves man; it leans towards human beings, even those who are God-lovers, God-seekers. But its highest form is when it begins to love the Divine for the sake of the Divine. That is the highest kind of ecstasy possible to it.

A body is his chamber and his shrine.
Then is our being rescued from separateness;
All is itself, all is new-felt in God: [632]

This love transfigures us.

A Lover leaning from his cloister's door
Gathers the whole world into his single breast.
Then shall the business fail of Night and Death: [632-33]

This will be the Victory of Love — the Mother says this categorically: Only Love has the supreme power of transformation. Nothing else can fully transform. But to embody that Love, a great sacrifice is needed, the kind of sacrifice that I can think of no other example in the history of the earth, except in Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's love, when we look into his eyes! Everybody speaks of him as a thinker, a philosopher — what an absurdity to reduce him so

many notches down! Even to speak of him as a poet and a mystic comes a bit closer to truth; but to know him as the one who truly loved — and loved in what a way! 'His love has paved the mortal's road to heaven' — this is how the Mother expresses his sacrifice. Even though the crowd jeers and mocks, people say 'Oh, it's a failure, it's a failure!' yet he was willing to make that sacrifice, and the Mother too. The Mother reminds us always: 'Two things you must never forget — Sri Aurobindo's Compassion, and the Mother's Love.'

It is really very interesting that the only way to really understand Sri Aurobindo, is, as she says in one of her messages: 'Who can understand Sri Aurobindo? he is vaster than the universe and his teaching is infinite.' There is no end to what he has revealed. 'The only way to understand him, to come a little closer to him, is through love, and to give oneself unreservedly to his work of earth-transformation.' This is the only way that we can come to understand him a little. Again Nolini-da reminds us, when he speaks about Sri Aurobindo's words, he says it is difficult, but the way you can understand is by loving them. We do the reverse: 'Oh my god, I have to read *The Life Divine*!' To start with, the mind begins to play. 'It is going to be so tough, so difficult! Sri Aurobindo's English is so difficult!' The devil has already started his work before the Divine has a chance.

What is the way to read Sri Aurobindo through love? There is a very simple analogy to it. In the Bhagavat, Udhav tells Krishna, 'You are a great trickster, that is well known. These

gopis love you madly, and you are enjoying this love, right? You don't tell them that this is not the real thing, that the real thing is Brahman and Brahman can only be reached by jnana, and jnana can only be had through deep meditation. You don't tell all this. You let them cry and weep, jump and dance … It is not good! You know Brahman, but you are not telling them. It is not right!' Then Krishna answers, 'You know I am very busy with many things, it must have slipped my mind. Udhav, you are a Jnani — why don't you go and tell them about Brahman and disabuse their minds about love for a mere mortal like me? It will do good to you and good to them also.' Udhav replies, 'All right. But they will not listen to me. They are madly in love with you — you send me as your representative.' So Krishna signs a letter saying 'Please listen to him. I am sending him to give a lecture — please arrange for a suitable audience at a certain time in a nice place, and don't trouble him, arrange some nice refreshments …' Krishna has sent a long letter and signed it. Udhav goes, all solemn and grim, meditating all along the way: 'I am going to give some great knowledge ….' In his mind he is turning over all the shastras, the Vedas, the Upanishads, what slokas he will quote, and so on. As he is on his way, some of the gopas and gopis recognise him and call out, 'Oh, Udhav-ji, you are coming from Krishna! have you met him?' 'Yes.' 'Has he sent something for us?' 'Yes, he has given this letter …' But before he can read out the letter, they all jump, each of them wants to see it, to read it — but they cannot read. The letter is torn in pieces. Udhav says, 'You are fools! You have no patience! You can't even wait for

me to read out what is written in the letter.' 'We don't need all that. You just keep quiet. All we want is a touch of Krishna — and now we all have that.' What can he say but 'You people are truly mad fellows, but I have come to give you jnana. Sit in line.' They all sit down quietly, because Krishna has said something. Udhav doesn't say what Krishna had said. He starts teaching them abstract Vedanta. They become restless. They say 'Tell us what Krishna has said.' 'No no no — I shall teach you Pranayama.' The gopis ask him 'What is Pranayama?' He says, 'You have to master your breath and do these movements.' The gopis say, 'You know, we have only one problem …' Udhav says, 'What is your problem — you can't hold your breath?' Then they answer, 'No — we have one breath, one life, and we have dedicated all this to Krishna. Now if you are telling us to practice all this, we shall have to take it back from him!' The end of the story, to cut it short, is that Udhav gets chastened and realises what great heights of realisation one can have just through bhakti.

Sri Aurobindo says it is the crown of all experiences. And in *Savitri* he says it is *'*The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy*'* [6]. It is the key. With Knowledge, God admits us into his study room; his servant he allows a little more inside; but to his lover he says, 'Come with me into my bed and I will reveal to you my dreams for the future.' This is the special privilege of the God-lover.

Udhav comes back to Krishna and says, 'You are truly a trickster!' 'Again you are telling me this?' 'You told me that I

am going to give them some teaching, but I have come back after learning something.' Krishna says, 'Those are my ways. These are my works and my cunning.' That secret smile is everywhere. It is that which is working, that which is evolving, it is that which is leading us on the great journey. When he 'Gathers the whole world into his single breast / Then shall the business fail of Night and Death' [633].

When will Death end, when will Darkness end? How beautiful! Not just with Light, but with Love — why? Because Love alone can join that which is now parted or twain.

Sri Aurobindo says in Book One, Canto Four, 'The Secret Knowledge', 'We must fill the immense lacuna we have made' [56]. What is the lacuna? The gap between Spirit and matter. What power can bridge them, reunite them? That is why it is very interesting that in *Savitri* it is Love versus Death, not Life versus Death. Life and death are two sides of one coin.

What is Death? Death is the power that divides, and the final division that Death creates is between the Divine and the creation. This is the final division. In *Savitri*, until the last he does not give up. He says 'No — you can have Satyavan if you want, but only up above.' But Love is the power that unites. It has gone out to reunite the creation with the Creator, and therefore it carries that capacity in it.

Because the psychic is nothing else but the Mother's love crystallised in the creation, it is the very nature of the psychic to love. It cannot be otherwise. Wherever the psychic blossoms, it loves rightly, beautifully — even in human love.

When the Mother was asked 'If love comes our way, what should we do? We are supposed to love only God', she laughed and said, 'Ah, go through it.' Then she says something very interesting. She says that there are people who reject this. What happens? They become harsh and over a period of time they lose the capacity to love, and sometimes it takes centuries to recover this capacity. Instead, learn to love unselfishly, without expectations. If you go through it deeply enough, at the end you will discover behind the appearances the core of love, which is the same everywhere. Love in whatever form can become a sadhana, if one learns to go behind appearances.

What are the appearances? 'Oh, so and so gets angry, so and so has deceived me, so and so doesn't take care of me, so and so doesn't love me ….' This is the voice of the Titan. But the voice of the sadhak of the Integral Yoga tells us that behind all these appearances there is the Mother's Love. It has come to us in this form and through this everything can become a path, to one who is alert and awake. This is what is meant by being alert and awake: that everything becomes a path.

This is the great journey. *'*Then shall the business fail of Night and Death*'* [633]. On the same page, towards the end:

> *Our lives are God's messengers beneath the stars.*
> *To dwell under death's shadow they have come,*
> *Tempting God's light to earth for the ignorant race,*
> *His love to fill the hollow in men's hearts, [633]*

If there is one thing which runs throughout the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations*, it is love: *'O my sweet Lord, teach me to be the instrument of Thy Love'* [CWM 1: 341].

People speak about Narad's bhakti sutras — I have read them, and you know they pale into insignificance once you have read the *Prayers and Meditations*. If there is one book that is all about bhakti in its highest, purest form, with all the signs in it, it is *Prayers and Meditations*. What a unique gift!

His love to fill the hollow in men's hearts,
His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world. [633]

Everybody has his own image of the Mother — she is this, she is that — but if one were really to make a survey amongst the very few people who are left now (and I am so happy that in this audience we have some of those who have been blessed to have seen the Mother with these mortal eyes and been blessed by her) and asked, if one has to speak of the Mother as the embodiment of one single quality, what is it? What one has experienced and felt is that most of all she was the Mother of Love, an embodiment of Love and Grace. She has said, 'My child, do not treat me like a guru! I come many notches down if you treat me like a guru. I don't want to be the guru of anyone. It is much more natural to me to be the universal Mother for all.' The Mother's love — '*The calm indulgence and maternal breasts*' that is how Sri Aurobindo puts it. When he speaks of the Mother's love in Book One, Canto Five, he says:

Even were caught as through a cunning veil
The smile of love that sanctions the long game,
The calm indulgence and maternal breasts [41]

That is how he could sense that love: as indulgent. Sri Aurobindo says that the Divine Mother wants the soul to turn to her in all its difficulties, so that she can pour out her heart of love on her creatures. This is her love. We are here to embody that love in a miniature way, and the door to that love is the psychic:

His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world. [633]

Then, in these marvellous lines *Savitri* tells Death how important love is, even love disfigured in human life:

Love must not cease to live upon the earth;
For Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent's angel here;
Love is man's lien on the Absolute. [633]

The same thing is revealed to us again in Book Five, 'The Book of Love':

To live, to love are signs of infinite things,
Love is a glory from eternity's spheres.
Abased, disfigured, mocked by baser mights
That steal his name and shape and ecstasy,
He is still the godhead by which all can change. [397]

Even when it is disfigured, even when it is most suffering, with love there is still a possibility of change, even at the

human level. What happens when love enters our heart? We are sweet sixteen, and suddenly everything changes. The beauty of love is that love and anger work in two opposite ways: when anger is there, we see everything in the other person as bad, even the most beautiful things are bad, horrible. We are only critical and it makes us more and more bitter inside. As the Mother says, it makes the consciousness taste bitter to the Divine. And when we complain and grumble, all sorts of adverse forces enter into us. But when we love someone, even the horrible things appear good. Try telling someone 'You are loving the wrong person, there is nothing good and worthwhile in him'. If the person is in love he will never accept what you say. Why? Because love first transforms our consciousness. It is not that the person is wrong in saying that. But the intensity of the love pierces through the veil, cuts through all the surface appearances and for a moment a door opens and we glimpse something of the Presence within the other person. If we can sustain our vision of that Presence and keep our faith, *shraddha*, the person will begin to change. If all the time we keep believing and saying and repeating, 'You are a wonderful person, a wonderful being', the person changes. But if instead we start by saying 'You are a beautiful being' but on the second or third day we want to have the compliment returned to us, and when it doesn't happen, after some time we change our tune: we say instead 'You are a horrible person.' Then we have lost the whole beautiful journey.

But even on a human level, even when love is disfigured,

He is still the godhead by which all can change.
A mystery wakes in our inconscient stuff,
A bliss is born that can remake our life.
Love dwells in us like an unopened flower
Awaiting a rapid moment of the soul, [397-98]

What is that moment of the soul? It is when one suddenly feels 'here is the person'.

The child-god is at play, he seeks himself
In many hearts and minds and living forms:
He lingers for a sign that he can know
And, when it comes, wakes blindly to a voice,
A look, a touch, the meaning of a face.
...
He seizes on some sign of outward charm [398]

It is the god who is at play — how interesting! We think that it is the other person who has the charm. No. He fills everything, he paints everything, colours everything. Suddenly we begin to feel a glow and see beauty in everything. But who is at play? The child-god.

Reads heavenly truths into earth's semblances,
Desires the image for the godhead's sake,
...
Love's adoration like a mystic seer
Through vision looks at the invisible, [398]

This is the capacity of love, and this is what is embodied in so many Indian stories. I must be careful otherwise other stories

will begin to flow about that power. For example, even the gods were changed by Anusuya's love: so powerful was her love that she could turn gods into little helpless babes, just by the power of love. Then Mandodari's love for Ravana is regarded as one of the great loves. She is one of the five great ones. She loved a demon, a titan who opposed the Divine, and yet her love is regarded as one of the highest kinds of love. Why? Because that love had a power for good. She always advised him to stay on the path of the right and the light. And yet, despite everything that he did or did not do, she remained faithful. That love itself has a power. Sri Aurobindo says,

Love's adoration like a mystic seer
Through vision looks at the invisible,
...
All strives to enforce the unity all is.
Too far from the Divine, Love seeks his truth
And Life is blind and the instruments deceive
And Powers are there that labour to debase.
Still can the vision come, the joy arrive.
Rare is the cup fit for love's nectar wine,
As rare the vessel that can hold God's birth; [398]

The path of love is a path of fire. One is reminded of a famous Urdu couplet which says 'It is a stream of fire' and you are not allowed to swim or fly over it: you have to drown in it, burn yourself completely, every bit of ego has to be reduced to ashes, because ego and love cannot stay together. If this applies to human love, how much more must it apply to our love for

the Divine! Kabir says so beautifully: 'This is the abode of Love — not your aunty's place'. If you want to enter, there is a price. What is the price? 'Offer your head'. Keep it at the door, then enter. If you are carrying too much, it does not come. Love is blind, obedient, full of trust; it surrenders unquestioningly. Love gives itself without asking anything in return. This is the highest culmination of human love. Sri Aurobindo says that there are various kinds of bhakti: there is vital bhakti which calculates and bargains — 'I love you God, but what am I going to get in return?' Mental bhakti keeps always reservations, it doubts and doubts and doubts: 'If you are God, you should not fall sick!' Amitabh Bacchan's father had come here to Pondicherry. He had come along with Sumitranandan Pant, the poet who was a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and has written beautiful poems, but he could not have darshan of the Mother because he was told that the Mother had a toothache. In his diary he wrote caustically, ironically: 'Perfect, flawless — and yet has toothache!' Then, not aware of what he was writing, he continues, 'Anyway, strangely, that day I too had toothache. I thought that if not in the light, at least in the difficulties I am one with her.' He did not realise that in the difficulties the Divine had become one with him. As Sri Aurobindo says,

Rare is the cup fit for love's nectar wine,
As rare the vessel that can hold God's birth;
As soul made ready through a thousand years
Is the living mould of a supreme Descent. [398]

I don't feel like stopping, but we must end, so we will end with the Mother's own personality, her human personality. What was her human persona that could embody such a love? Sri Aurobindo describes who she is, even about her humanness. She is divine we know, but even to look at her as a human personality, how could she embody that love? What do we have to do to embody that love? In a way, it is God's example for all of us. That is what Sri Aurobindo says in *Essays on the Gita*, that Sri Krishna insists on God's own example. He elaborates: God's life is an example for us to follow — otherwise it has no meaning or purpose. It is an inspiration and an example for us.

Even her humanity was half divine:
Her spirit opened to the Spirit in all,
Her nature felt all Nature as its own.
Apart, living within, all lives she bore;
Aloof, she carried in herself the world: [8]

Hastily we may say, 'I am doing my own sadhana — don't disturb me!' Then there is the Divine: even when he is shut away in a room, he is carrying within him the pain, the stab, the gunshot wounds of those who are on the borders, fighting the Second World War. That is his example: 'I carry the sorrow of millions in my lonely breast' [CWSA 2: 637].

About Savitri he writes:

The universal Mother's love was hers. [8]
...
All in her pointed to a nobler kind.

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. [14]
...
Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun [15]
...
A wide self-giving was her native act;
A magnanimity as of sea or sky
Enveloped with its greatness all that came
And gave a sense as of a greatened world: [15]

People went to her and they felt suddenly relieved, released into a wide freedom. The Mother tells in the *Agenda* about when Nehru came, people asked her 'What did he say, what happened?' She says, laughingly, 'I gave him a bath of the Lord. This is all that I do when people come to me, I give them a bath of the Lord.' Devan Nair tells in his reminiscences how when he came, he was getting restless: 'I have to meet the Mother — what will I tell her? I am the President of Singapore. What will I tell her?' Then he looked around. He thought 'I will tell her 'Great Lady, you are doing a good job in the Ashram!' All this was in his mind, and he was also slightly nervous. He says 'With all these thoughts in my head I went there. But when I saw her I forgot everything. I just knelt down and put my head on her lap.'

Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun,
Her high passion a blue heaven's equipoise. [15]

There is a beautiful description of how we can relate to her:

As might a soul fly like a hunted bird,
Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms,
And a quiet reach like a remembered breast,
In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose
One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,
Recover the lost habit of happiness,
Feel her bright nature's glorious ambience,
And preen joy in her warmth and colour's rule. [15]

It is the essence of sadhana. A group of young people had come and asked an elderly lady in the Ashram — she is no more — 'how do you do sadhana here?' She said, 'I don't know anything about that. Every morning we go to the Samadhi and tell all that is going on inside us to Mother. And whatever happens, if we are unwell, if we are depressed, we again go and tell her. When we are happy we go and tell her. And the surprising thing is, within a few moments after we have told her, we feel completely free and released.'

Mona-da says in one of his talks, as revealed to him by the Mother; speaking about the Samadhi, She says: 'One cannot pass near that circle without being bathed in that supramental Light.' It is so charged with those vibrations. They sacrificed their physical bodies, but brought down to earth the supramental consciousness; and the Samadhi, the Ashram, vibrates with those vibrations. Even now, even if there were a hundred thousand battles fought on its body, that is the Light

of Truth and the Love of the Unnameable, the Unutterable, the Only One.

I close with just four lines from the end. Of course, Savitri embodied that Love in the human body and this is the far destiny of mankind, one day we shall all embody that love. And that love does not cancel out earthly love. It is not just about the human soul turning to the Divine. It is about embodying that love in all relations. Our human relations are basically a distorted reflection of the divine relationships, and it is possible to embody them here. We can embody that other sense of the sloka '*Acharya devo bhava, pitra devo bhava, mata deva bhava*'.

One sense is that the acharya is like a god, our father is like a god, treat him like a god. This is what the acharyas say. But children don't agree, they say there is another meaning: 'Acharya — be like a god! Father, be like a god! — with infinite patience. Mother, be like a god: infinite love ….' This is what one day will come about when all of us will be centred around her, harmoniously and beautifully.

Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not our earth: [719]

Our love has grown greater by that mighty touch. The Divine does not cancel out human love, the Divine purifies it, transforms it. Otherwise there would be no creation — everybody would be loving the Divine in their own hearts. He uses human love as a material to transfigure it. He uses human knowledge as a material to pour wisdom into it. He uses the struggling and stumbling human will, when we offer it, to

transmute it into the omnipotent's force. He uses the human heart, its failings, its strivings, its stumblings and errors, to pour out the pure love and delight and the beatitude that can change our life and remake our world. This is Savitri and this is the sadhana of Savitri and this is what we have to live, this is the hope for the future and this is what will be one day.

To close, let us go to page 724, at the end. When Savitri is asked, 'What have you done? Conquered Death, brought back Satyavan? What did you do?' Savitri does not speak big things. She is not into drama: 'Oh, you don't know what I did? I sat in meditation and saw death, I dialogued and debated with it, and finally I burnt it, roasted it alive.' She does not say any of those things. But they notice the transfiguration in her. 'What sadhana have you done Savitri? We notice a marvellous change in your face. It is glowing as with the light of a thousand suns, and we see Satyavan — and today all these auspicious things have happened: Dyumatsena's eye-sight has returned, and all the rapid marvels of the day.' They ask Satyavan:

What gleaming marvel of the earth or skies
Stands silently by human Satyavan
To mark a brilliance in the dusk of eve? [723]

He had already told them: *'Lay all on her; she is the cause of all'* [723]. They turn to her: 'You tell us. Who are you? What have you done?' She replies, telling what this sadhana is in four lines. With that we will close:

"Awakened to the meaning of my heart

That to feel love and oneness is to live [724]

As long as we are divided and separate we are not even alive.

And this the magic of our golden change,
Is all the truth I know or seek, O sage." [724]

I will read it again:

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

The Book of Yoga

A talk at Savitri Bhavan on August 22, 2017 (Invocation 48:6-30, 41-43)

Long back a very instructive story used to do the rounds in the Ashram. According to the tale, when newcomers come to the Ashram they ask 'Who are the yogis doing sadhana here?' Somehow, we have a penchant for meeting yogis. It is more important to engage in yoga than to meet yogis, but nevertheless the story goes that when this question was put to an old-time member of the Ashram, he replied, 'Only two people are doing yoga here.' 'Who are those two?' 'Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.' 'What about the others?' 'Well, they are receiving the fruits of their yoga.' Of course, this was not part of the story but it stands as a corollary.

This statement continues to be true even though nowadays there are many integral yogis, even integral yoga gurus. But the statement stands true. It is an eternal truth, a truth which is hinted at in the Bible, a truth which is brought out forcefully in the Gita, and a truth which is revealed to us in great perfection of detail in *Savitri:* that it is the Divine who does the yoga. No one else does yoga. From time to time, from age to age,

whenever there are crucial junctures, critical moments in the evolutionary history of yoga or life upon earth — which are two ways of seeing the same thing — the Divine who has been doing the yoga secretly, hidden behind the earthly appearances, comes down in the front so to say, to intervene openly and carry the yoga still further. Indeed, what we call yoga is, when seen from the Divine 'perspective', a progressive manifestation of the Spirit concealed in matter. Yoga is merely a means through which the individual can consciously participate and thereby collaborate in the process.

We may ask 'Why does the Divine need to do yoga?' This question was once put to the Mother. In the 1960s a lady came to take leave of the Mother when she was returning home, and said, 'I hope you are keeping well.' She had heard that the Mother was unwell and felt that she should give her good wishes. The Mother replied, 'No, it's not that, it's the yoga.' Then, with the effervescence of an ignorant child: 'Yoga! But you shouldn't be doing yoga! You shouldn't be....' The Mother only laughed and touched her cheek; but she has related that it was Sri Aurobindo who came and replied: 'Little children don't know what they are talking about.'

This is the truth: that the Divine does the yoga. It is not man or anyone else who does the yoga. In *Savitri* also we see this great truth brought out. Very often people turn to *Savitri* because they want to know what they should do. I think it is beautifully summarised by Satyavan, the soul in man which

alone knows this simplest and yet most profound truth, in Book Twelve:

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

But there is a whole background to this. One of the great beauties of *Savitri* is that it is the story of the Divine Mother. There are different ways of approaching it, but personally I find it very fascinating because it is the story of the Divine Mother. Sri Aurobindo tells us about her origin, her source, and how she has been bringing out various things in the course of the earth's evolution by the power of yoga. The Divine does the yoga for earth. The earth is a spiritual formation meant for this purpose. To be born on earth means by default programming that we cannot really be satisfied unless we engage with yoga. Of course, some people are wary of the term, so they use the word 'education' instead. But education is nothing but one of the means that humanity uses for yoga. It is simply conscious evolution. We are trying to evolve, to grow. No wonder that one book by the Mother is appropriately titled *On Education*. It is a collection of essays which she says are meant for those who are lone wayfarers on the path of yoga, perhaps without knowing it. The yoga is going on but we are not consciously aware of it. Humanity has been created as one of the means by which this yoga can become a conscious and concentrated process.

In *Savitri* too we see this great truth. There are two yogis in *Savitri:* one is the Lord who becomes Aswapati and the second is the Divine Mother who incarnates as Savitri. Although they

are engaged in much the same thing there is a difference. Aswapati is a forerunner of the human race. He begins his experience from a very high starting point. The starting point of Aswapati's yoga is summarised in about one page, where Sri Aurobindo describes the whole development possible for the psychic spark to a fully developed psychic being, from the state of a worm and then to higher and higher forms until it is able to escape across the border line of Ignorance to stand on the frontiers of Supernature. Then he says:

Across our nature's border line we escape
Into Supernature's arc of living light.
This now was witnessed in that son of Force;
In him that high transition laid its base. [24]

We are not told what Aswapati did to bring about this great change. We are shown that he begins to receive powers and experiences which are new to earth, he develops new faculties and there is the birth of new possibilities of thought and sense and feeling and action. When the Mother speaks about 'The Yoga of the King' (which is the yoga of Aswapati in two parts and then 'The Secret Knowledge'), she says that these are experiences of the new consciousness, which the higher being will find coming about in him very naturally.

We have also seen in Sri Aurobindo's own life that it is as if he was suddenly drawn into yoga. And what a yoga! Three days for silencing of the mind, then suddenly in the jail '*Vasudevam sarvam iti*', and then he starts experiencing contact with God, the cosmic consciousness and all kinds of

realisations that come to him very naturally. We see something very similar in the case of Aswapati, whose experiences are indeed Sri Aurobindo's own: we are taken on a journey through his inner world and at some points the possibilities shown are completely mind-blowing: we can't help asking, 'Is this really possible?' And quite naturally another question comes to us, 'But how can we do it, how can we realise this state?' Aswapati himself asks the same question: 'I am experiencing these things, but how can other human beings experience them, how can earth receive these gifts?' That is what we see him asking when he stands at the doors of the Eternal where he has the vision of the Divine Mother. His yoga has not been undertaken for his personal salvation but for the good of the earth. He also knows that it is not possible for man to engage in the Herculean labour, the tremendous and constant tapasya needed for the full emergence of these possibilities. So he asks for and on behalf of man to grant this boon for earth and humanity.

Boons indeed! For every time the Divine comes, he brings certain gifts. He brings these gifts to earth because earth is his chosen daughter and it is a tradition in India that when fathers visit their children they should bring gifts. So he brings gifts. Sri Aurobindo has brought many gifts — one of them is the revelation of this yoga in *Savitri*. Aswapati asks the same question: 'Can humanity in general ascend to this level that I have been given glimpses of? Can humanity as a whole be freed from ignorance and error, falsehood and sin? Can human beings escape completely from this zone of unconsciousness in

which they are labouring and struggling?' Seeking an answer to this question he climbs to the very apex of creation, right up to the topmost level of the manifestation, looking for that key: what can he give to earth and men? He knows that not everyone can engage in this kind of tapasya, otherwise it would have been very simple. We see this in Sri Aurobindo's words again and again, and when he was asked about the Mother's coming he has very candidly said that before she came he could help himself but he could not help others. He could realise, he was realising already. But it is very strange and very interesting that he said, 'I could not help others.' In the poem Aswapati too sees this great truth: that only if the Divine Mother herself comes down can these possibilities be manifested on earth. Why? Because she can take up the yoga of earth. What is Aswapati experiencing? Our future possibilities. He is a being of the future. In a certain sense he realises some of those possibilities already, but there is a big gap. He is the forerunner but he is running far ahead of the rest of the creation. The rest have to catch up. So he stops. He stops at the threshold of his own ultimate realisation because he wants all the rest to catch up, as we see in these lines from *Savitri:*

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart: [649]

He realises that only the Divine Mother can really fulfil this yoga of transformation. Only if she comes down and takes up this yoga will it be possible.

We may wonder 'Why the Divine Mother? After all, isn't it the same Divine? Why couldn't Sri Aurobindo do it? Why does the Divine Mother have to come down?' There are many ways of looking at it, but I have a very simple way to understand it. It is because only the Divine Mother can completely identify herself with her children, with the creation, with all the chaos and confusion. Only the Eternal Feminine can really take up the burden of the whole yoga. She is the one who has gone out in the very beginning. The same story is being repeated again and again, since creation fell into chaos and there came a cry from all the energies which had deviated, turned away from their purpose by declaring their individual freedom. Nowadays also we have yoga for freedom, but true freedom can only come through union with the Divine; any other freedom is either illusory or an asuric illusion. Trying to be free from the Lord, those beings turned away from him and fell into darkness; then hearing their cry the Divine Mother plunged into the darkness and since then incessantly she has been engaged in this yoga.

What power of hers makes this yoga possible? We are told and we can see it, we can experience it, we can know it, enter into touch with it: it is the power of Love, the divine Love which has entered into matter and is constantly at work there. No other power can labour for aeons like that. It is really a most thankless work if you look at it. Only Love can labour like that to pull creation out of its inertia, its darkness, its unconsciousness and bring it to its present state of 'seeking

ignorance' [321, 618]. Only Love will take it further to manifest the divine life upon earth.

At first the Divine Mother tells Aswapati that she cannot give him the boon that he really wants — a divine life upon earth for all men — because the earth is not ready and man is not ready. And I fancy how Sri Aurobindo would have told the Divine Mother, 'You have to make it ready, you have to fulfil his aspiration.' Even as he did indeed ask her to stay while he was preparing to go behind the veil for the work, 'You will have to fulfil our yoga of transformation.' And so She comes, impelled by divine Love. This is the mystery and the secret of her birth, to do the yoga for man, nay to fulfil it, to take it to its grand fulfilment.

We know that when the Mother came to Pondicherry, for a long time she would not meet anybody. She lived just like everyone else. She showed the disciples the way of modesty, how to be before the Master, the way of humility, of seeking. Once Amrita-da asked Sri Aurobindo, 'Isn't Mother a great yogi?' Sri Aurobindo said 'Yes.' Then Amrita said 'But she doesn't give meditations.' Sri Aurobindo replied 'Yes, just now she doesn't; but one day, impelled by the divine love, she will come out and that will indeed be a great day.' We see that the Divine Mother steps into the forefront of the quest. Many Avatars have come, every millennium or two there has been a divine Advent, and always the Divine Mother has been quietly coming and remaining in the background. Now for the first time she comes into the forefront and takes up the human play.

That is what we see revealed in 'The Book of Yoga': the yoga undertaken by the Divine Mother. Although it is shown to us primarily as the yoga which she has followed, it is also the path that she has opened to humanity.

Savitri sets out on the path

If we see the path which Sri Aurobindo took — stilling the brain, silencing the mind, rejecting all thoughts — and some people also read the *Record of Yoga* and want to practice it, going straight into the yoga of the cells — really speaking, if we ask ourselves honestly, is it simple? But we have another record, the record of the Mother's yoga, fortunately kept for us in the form of her *Prayers and Meditations*. When we see that path, we may feel 'Yes, this is something we can follow: a path full of love, surrender, faith; a path which starts by just being who we are, a path of simple gratitude, of thanksgiving; a path which is like a hymn of adoration climbing to the Divine; a path where every event and circumstance can take us closer to the Divine'. In a certain sense everything eventually takes us towards him because there is no other way. We are all on a journey where we can go slower or faster, but we are all moving towards one and the same destination. This is the great truth of the Vedanta: we may take a twisted journey or we may take a straight route, but we are all going towards that one goal. It cannot be otherwise. In the Mother's yoga we see a path which is more tangible, one which a human being, if he likes, can take. That is what we see revealed in 'The Book of Yoga'.

It is the path taken by the Divine Mother to fulfil the yoga of the earth, yet it is a path that leaves a trail which we as human beings can follow.

Very interestingly, this book opens with a canto where we see the Divine experiencing human suffering. We may wonder why the Book of Yoga starts like this, with a canto titled 'The Joy of Union; the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death and the Heart's Grief and Pain'. Where is the yoga in this? We should remember the Gita, which starts with Arjuna's *vishaad*, his state of dejection encountered by the possibility of death of his loved ones. Very appropriately, very beautifully, the Mother's yoga starts from human suffering too. I love this canto for the simple fact that it reveals to us the Divine becoming human. Here in the first canto of The Book of Yoga we see the Divine Mother becoming completely human. Her heart is torn by grief. She is moved by the passion of love. She wants to be close to somebody whom she loves. We are shown all these movements which are characteristically human, the joy and the grief which she experiences. Her yoga begins from here because that is what we all experience in life: a little joy and a little grief — although we always feel that there is more grief than joy because joy is and should be our natural state, so when suffering comes we spontaneously feel 'Oh, it should not be!' Grief, pain and suffering strike us as an anomaly.

What we see in the first canto of 'The Book of Yoga' is a description of the Divine Mother becoming human. Often people say that Sri Aurobindo is a human being who has

become divine; but what I see and understand is very different: the Divine Mother is born as an Avatar just as Sri Aurobindo is, but there comes a time when she completely veils her divinity and starts the whole process as a human being, because she has to do the yoga for earth and man. Like Sri Aurobindo she too brings the new consciousness with her. But here we have these lines where Savitri is experiencing the grief that human beings undergo:

Thus in the silent chamber of her soul
Cloistering her love to live with secret grief
She dwelt like a dumb priest with hidden gods [472]

Just like us, the priest in us, the psychic being, does not know: it is still asleep. The gods which the great Upanishad says are dwelling hidden within the human body are all asleep. It is a moment of utter darkness which we all experience. That is where yoga begins:

Unappeased by the wordless offering of her days,
Lifting to them her sorrow like frankincense,
Her life the altar, herself the sacrifice. [473]

What marvellous lines! After all, if we have nothing else to offer, there is always something which we can give: if nothing else our state of consciousness is always there with us to give her, offering her our sorrow like frankincense. Only yesterday I was reminded of John Milton's line where he says, 'Lord, I come to you with only one talent called death, there is nothing else I can give you.' And then he hears the reply, assuring him

that ‘They also serve who only stand and wait.’ The path of yoga begins from there: when we find ourselves in a state of darkness where ‘nothing we can see but drift and bale’ [59]; and Savitri shows us the way.

Very often we question fate and wonder why life is the way it is. And we should wonder after all! It is not good to be satisfied with things as they are, because in humanity dissatisfaction is one of the forms taken by the urge towards yoga. If we are too satisfied we remain like a clod, a lump of earth. And very often we do just accept life as it is: ‘Things are the way they are; we have no control over it.’ Savitri too goes through this process. But then, even as she sits brooding by the side of her ‘doomed husband’, she hears a command, a voice from her own higher Self. The voice commands her, ‘You have not come on earth to nurse grief and pain. You are here to vanquish time and death.’ What a strong command! We are again reminded of the Gita when Arjuna is stricken with sorrow at the ghastly prospect and he is told ‘Are you here for grief, for depression, for despair? Pick up your bow; fight the great battle of life!’ Savitri too is told that here is a great battle of life: ‘Pick up the bow, be ready, vanquish time and death’, and she is given the programme, a very interesting one.

In our few moments of silent concentration at the beginning of this gathering we were blessed to hear four lines from the poem read by the Mother. Those four lines alone provide a complete programme of yoga. I think that if we can practice even just half of one of those lines it will take us a long way.

At least these lines are very important to me personally. So many things come and distract us, take us away from the straight path; at times when we are disoriented and do not know how to navigate through the journey of this life, half a line of *Savitri* can come and save us. Like that, Savitri hears a Voice from above telling her:

... Remember why thou cam'st: [476]

These words are like a mantra. If we can inscribe them in our hearts — '*Remember why thou cam'st*' — nothing else is required: just to remember why we have come. Have I come for this? Have I come to enjoy these things? Have I come just to fulfil my ambition? Have I come just for the lure of money and to fulfil my family obligations and this and that? Those things are there in life, but is that why I am here? Have I come only for that?

... Remember why thou cam'st:
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self, [476]

As the Mother says, the only tragedy in life is to die without realising your soul. But most people, Sri Aurobindo tells us, do not recognise it as a tragedy. They are pretty cool about it. In fact, the rationalists, the new elite who don't believe in the soul, take great pride in not believing in it. We can leave them at their point, wherever they are. They will still benefit, because the yoga is done for everyone.

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths, [476]

Many moments of silence are given to us, plenty of them, but how often we pass them in contemplating our own life, its pettiness, its miseries, its sorrows, its sufferings — how to come out of it? Here we are shown such a beautiful way to spend time in silence:

In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths, [476]

'What does the Divine want of me?' The Mother says that this is a question we must raise every day. 'What does the Divine intend for me and in me?' What my parents intend for me, what society expects of me, what my religion proscribes or prescribes for me, what everybody expects from me is a different story altogether. 'What does God want from me? Is there a divine purpose for me?' To spend time on that is one of the ways that we can get in touch with our soul. And the next thing is:

Then mortal nature change to the divine. [476]

This is the key, the first key. The first key is that whenever we have a free moment, we should engage in discovering this hidden soul and finding God's meaning in our depths. And in fact there are plenty of such free moments — it is up to us to use them wisely. Look at these lines:

Open God's door, enter into his trance. [476]

But how to open the door? We try, we analyse, we think, we rationalise — that is not the way. There is another way:

Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light: [476]

If we think that we can open the door by any kind of analysis, we are mistaken; we cannot, because analysis doesn't have the key. In fact the more we quieten the analysing mind, the more the door opens. Because the greatest truth, as Savitri will reveal to us, is that He is everywhere. Only we are not looking that way, we are choosing the wrong key. The Mother tells us that the key is given to us, but we have grown up not believing in this key: we believe in everything else instead. We always think that our key is with somebody else; or if it is with us it is in our brain power. But now we are told:

Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light: [476]

She is not asking us to become irrational creatures. She is simply saying 'Know the relative value of thought, know its place. Put it in its place, and practice inner quietude.'

In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see. [476]

When Sri Aurobindo was asked how to quieten the mind and the brain, he said 'You can do it in other ways but the simplest way is to call the Silence from above, to call the Mother's Grace, Her Force, Her Peace. That will do it for us.' If we try the other way, rejecting thoughts and trying to fight with them, some people who are predisposed by nature may succeed, but for most it will be a very difficult process. And there is something else:

Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight: [476]

We are taught from childhood that what we see is real, what we hear is real; we are told to believe in what we see — and now we also have this new thing: to believe in what we hear. Nowadays, Information Technology has caught hold of this falsehood, so all the time we keep hearing everything from WhatsApp to news channels, none of which is the real truth. The senses also have to be quietened. The more we quieten them the more we will engage with yoga.

Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight: [476]

God is present everywhere, but we can't see him, we can't hear him, because the senses are weaving a dance of vibrations around us. We call it 'form and name'. It is nothing but a dance of vibrations. Our senses cut up this integral reality into bits and pieces and present it to us in a certain way and we are glued to that and believe it to be Reality. The thing to do is to disengage from it. If we do so, we are promised that:

Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul, [476]

How beautiful this is! If only, as I said, we could practice one line:

'Know him in every voice …': it is there in the babble of a child if we can hear it, Sri Aurobindo says.

We have this strange conditioning of the mind. In one of his aphorisms Sri Aurobindo says, 'I went to a place full of holy men and I got bored there. Then God took me to a prison and he made it his trysting ground.' [When I was asleep in the

Ignorance, I came to a place of meditation full of holy men and I found their company wearisome and the place a prison; when I awoke, God took me to a prison and turned it into a place of meditation and His trysting-ground. (*Thoughts and Aphorisms,* no. 47, in CWSA 12: 428)]. If we are open and receptive, the Divine will speak to us in countless ways including, very often, through those who criticise us. Unfortunately, we think that our critics are our greatest enemies, but actually they do a very good job. In fact, they do a double job: one, they chip our ego; and second, they increase their own and take our burden onto themselves. Guru Nanak, the great mystic, once said that one who criticises us is always a great friend of ours. Why? Because he cleanses us of our sins and himself goes into the hell where we would have gone. God can speak to us in many ways. When we look at a flower, when we look at a river, we can decipher that language. There is a message there — in a tree, in people, in everything. We can discover it if we are quiet within, if we are not full of preconceived ideas and notions and conditioning.

Often when people ask, 'How to hear God's voice?' they are expecting a thunder inside: 'God has given me this command!' But even when he gives us a command he is so sweet. When I hear the Mother's voice I feel there is a difference between reading her words and hearing them, because when we read we add something of our own. For instance today I was reading Sri Aurobindo's words: 'Do not imagine that Truth and Falsehood can live together.' Reading those words we may imagine a

stern judge thundering out this warning to us. But that is not how Sri Aurobindo would speak those words. He would say them with all the beauty and charm and sweetness of the Divine, gently awakening us, reminding us of something which we have perhaps forgotten, as we might tell our beloved child, 'Child, you have forgotten something, you know what? Do not think that these two can go together' — which is very different from when we hear it with that thunder added from our side. How beautiful was Sri Aurobindo's voice! Those who have heard his voice are the most fortunate of the fortunate. It was so soft, so gentlemanly, almost like the sound of a sweet gurgling stream flowing by.

God's voice can speak to us through anyone. There is a story about the famous yogi Dattatreya. Somebody asked him, 'How many masters have you had?' He replied 'I have had twenty-four Masters.' 'Twenty-four Masters? Who were they all?' He gave the names of many people including a harlot. He said 'The Master spoke to me through her. She taught me something.' One who is vigilant — this is one sense of the word vigilant — can hear in many ways the divine voice which whispers inside.

In the world's contacts meet his single touch;
All things shall fold thee into his embrace. [476]

Today we experienced a wonderful embrace as we entered Savitri Bhavan, such a lovely welcome of grace. We could have said, 'Oh my God it's raining!' But the other response is, 'Wow! What a welcome shower!' It is a divine embrace, the divine touch. Everything can fold us into his embrace.

Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God:
Thy nature shall be the engine of his works,
Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word:
Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death.
[476]

This is the program given to Savitri. This is the program given to all of us.

Then Savitri embarks on her wonderful journey. We are also told that she undertakes this journey for man, for the whole of humanity. She asks, 'Why should I make this effort?' and she is told '*For man thou seekest ... Man, human, follows in God's human steps*' [488].

Therefore she undertakes the journey. But what I find exceptionally beautiful is the state in which she undertakes the journey.

What should be the state of a seeker? We have been told that we should sit in a particular way: some people say cross-legged, others prescribe sitting in an easy chair; or they say 'Take a light cushion, and the back should be bolt upright, maybe ninety degrees. God is happier to see you sitting upright!' Or 'Probably he likes us to be little more relaxed; he doesn't like us to be so tense.' But what is the real inner state of a true seeker? Savitri responds to the command that she has been given. What is her state? It is described in just a few lines:

Obedient to a high command she sat:
Time, life and death were passing incidents
Obstructing with their transient view her sight,

Her sight that must break through and liberate the god
Imprisoned in the visionless mortal man. [487]

Marvellous lines! Powerful lines! Time and all the play of time and all the news and all the information, life and death, all are nothing but 'passing incidents'. If we can take that attitude, what does it matter? Some people ask 'Oh, how many years must one practice yoga? Maybe many lives, maybe a thousand years, maybe ten thousand years!' But what does it matter? If this is the thing to be done, then this is the thing to be done. If it takes ten thousand years then we shall have ten thousand years of service to the Lord, ten thousand years of the joy of the journey.

At one Auroville International meeting in South Africa when somebody said, 'Oh, Auroville is a very difficult place: this difficulty! that problem!' I was very happy to hear someone from Auroville remark very beautifully 'Well, it is difficult and that's why it's worth living in.' I loved that statement. What is the use of doing easy things? Why should we want to do only things which are easy and simple? Man's manhood lies in engaging with things which are challenging. That is what we are meant for. We are programmed for that. We cannot live without self-transcendence. That is why whatever we may have, we want more — because ultimately we are on a journey towards self-transcendence. We cannot be satisfied with anything less than the divinisation of matter. So let us embark on that journey. What does it matter — life, death, another life? In one of his poems, Sri Aurobindo says: 'I

have a thirst and the thirst means that there is water somewhere. But old nature sits phantom on the way. The past returns. So many obstacles are in the way. But have I not a hundred lives before me? I shall not faint, O God.' He says 'I'll continue'.

I will not faint, O God. There is this thirst,
And thirst supposes water somewhere. Yes,
But in this life we may not ever find;
Old nature sits a phantom by the way,
Old passions may forbid, old doubts return.
Then are there other lives here or beyond
To satisfy us. I will persist, O Lord.
[CWSA 2: 512, 'Meditations of Mandavya']

This is the spirit; this is the attitude with which Savitri starts her search.

Dangers of the path

But the journey is not easy. It is a real adventure undertaken in real time. Plenty of obstacles lie in wait to block the way. The first obstacle comes from material nature. It has an iron grip. Very often people say 'I can't meditate.' You ask them, 'Why? What happens when you meditate?' 'Well, I tried; but I couldn't, so I stopped.' 'How long did you try?' 'Two months.' Material nature! — It has an iron grip. Sri Aurobindo says that at least twelve years are needed — after that perhaps one can think about genuine experiences. Two months, three months, one year, two years — it is nothing when we look at the

landscape of eternity. Let us sit and sit and sit and sit and sit and push against the closed door.

Mother says that we need to push against the bronze door. That is what Savitri does. Material nature says: 'Back, creature of earth. That is what Savitri hears — all the powers, the elemental energies, saying 'Go back, go back!' But she persists by the force of her will. 'I will, I will, I will. The more you obstruct the more I will.' Then one day the door opens and she enters into an inner world. There too she has to face another kind of struggle, another kind of force, another kind of energy. It is a long journey. Another serious difficulty comes. She lands up, as all of us do when we try to enter into the inner worlds, in a zone which Sri Aurobindo cautions us against: the intermediate zone. That world asks you 'What do you want? Yoga? I will create it for you.' It can create every experience possible including calm, including ananda. Of course, these are imitative experiences, not the real ones. The problem is that we don't know how to recognise the real stuff. It is like going into a shop wanting to buy some gold jewellery or a diamond without knowing what a real diamond looks like: the person comes and tells us, 'This is a diamond. Please take it', and we are very happy. But if somebody who is a bit intelligent and has some common sense comes, he may ask 'But your neighbour is selling it for twenty thousand. How come you are giving it to me for one thousand rupees?' And the reply comes 'That is the speciality of our shop!' Be very careful. Now-a-days there are fake diamonds around. Just two days back I was

reading someone claiming that 'Sri Aurobindo has gone away. I am now carrying on the legacy of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. Come here and I'll make you into a superman! Through me your yoga chakras will open and you will be able to fly in the air and get supernatural powers.'

To start with, yoga is not meant for this. Savitri is not undertaking yoga to become a superman or a supramental being. She is undertaking the yoga for earth and men. Sri Aurobindo makes it very clear: as long as there is any personal desire, even the desire for personal Mukti or salvation let alone ambition for occult powers, we cannot touch the Absolute. We have to get rid of all desires including the desire for salvation or Mukti, including the desire for personal transformation, which again is an egoistic impulse masquerading as the will for yoga. Yoga can be either to serve the Divine, to love the Divine which is the simpler way, or to live in the Divine, live by the Divine, for the Divine; and the Divine is doing it for the sake of earth. The need of transformation is only so that in our entire being we become what the Divine wants us to become. It is not a stamp of any personal greatness but a deep spiritual necessity of creation, to become what it inwardly is.

When Savitri enters the inner worlds, a powerful life-force comes and offers her a lot of impressive experiences. That description comes on page 493. Then Sri Aurobindo warns us about this zone where the power of life meets Savitri offering its gifts:

Its puissance dangerous and absolute

Could mingle poison with the wine of God.
On these high shining backs falsehood could ride;
Truth lay with delight in error's passionate arms
Gliding downstream in a blithe gilded barge:
Here in Life's nether realms all contraries meet;
Truth stares and does her works with bandaged eyes
And Ignorance is Wisdom's patron here: [494]

Caution, caution! Be cautious about over-enthusiasm: 'I want yoga in one year, two years.' Mother would say, 'My child, be patient!' This is the secret. A great edifice has to be built up, an edifice of calm, peace, equanimity, a strong and stable floor of devotion, humility and surrender. The new creation doesn't hang in a vacuum.

Those galloping hooves in their enthusiast speed
Could bear to a dangerous intermediate zone
Where Death walks wearing a robe of deathless Life.
[494]

This is another of the great dangers.

Then comes the third one, and that comes from the mind. The mind is the big difficulty of those who read a lot, and especially those who not only read, but give talks. It's a big danger, in the sense that one can easily confuse mental understanding with the real thing: 'Yes, I have read it. I have understood everything. Therefore I have already arrived.' There is a big difference. To arrive takes a very long time. Reading may give us a kind of road map and that is good, but

it is not indispensable, and by itself it does not take us to the goal. Only two things are indispensable for yoga as far as knowledge is concerned: that there is a soul within and a Grace above.

Often people ask 'How to engage with this yoga? Sri Aurobindo is so difficult.' Who is asking us to read Sri Aurobindo and engage with yoga? He does not tell us that we must read his books in order to do yoga. He simply says 'Open to the Mother.' That is the real issue: we may not be able to do that even though it sounds the simplest of things. The mind will step in with its doubts and surround us with all kinds of questioning ignorance mistaken for knowledge.

Mind brings another kind of false certitude. There is a lot of humour in *Savitri*. Here Sri Aurobindo with his characteristic sense of humour points out how the mind can pick up or make up a belief system and how we can get trapped in them, in dogmas gleaned from writings here and there, and then we believe we are engaged in yoga. We have these lines:

Even meditation mused on a narrow seat; [497]

Very often we would like someone to tell us the way of meditation in Integral Yoga. The absurdity is that there are indeed people teaching the way of meditation in Integral Yoga. But by its very nature Integral Yoga is integral. Sri Aurobindo warns us against meditating on a narrow seat and taking this or that limited aspect of God as the whole.

Even meditation mused on a narrow seat;

And worship turned to an exclusive God,
To the Universal in a chapel prayed
Whose doors were shut against the universe;
Or kneeled to the bodiless Impersonal
A mind shut to the cry and fire of love:
A rational religion dried the heart. [497]

We are not supposed to become irrational. Yoga is done by keeping the rational mind intact. The rational mind has a place in dealing with infrarational urges, in dealing with our vital impulses — there it has tremendous power. But if we start using it to deal with the Divine and what is beyond, then it is like a tiny hammer striking against a mountain and believing that by doing so it can pierce a hole through it. In this section Sri Aurobindo shows us different kinds of beings of the mental world who come and call Savitri, but she refuses all of them.

Then again comes one of the *mahavakyas*, the great phrases that *Savitri* offers us in abundance. Savitri sees some gods emerging from her inmost being. And then Sri Aurobindo points out something which we need to remember always:

In contrary sense she faced life's riddling truth:
They carrying the light to suffering men
Hurried with eager feet to the outer world;
Her eyes were turned towards the eternal source. [501]

If we have not understood this passage, we may tend to rush eagerly to help everyone. Helping humanity: it is one of the greatest *sattvic* illusions. Who can help? You think that you can

teach yoga? Who can teach? We have to live in the consciousness of Oneness where there is nothing but the Divine. But that road is long. Mother tells us that first we have to go from a state of scattered wideness which is pulled in every direction by all kinds of forces of ignorance, through a narrow passage, touch the very core and then spread into the universal consciousness. Otherwise it's not possible. Savitri keeps her eyes turned towards her eternal source.

Then Savitri following the great winding road
Came where it dwindled into a narrow path
Trod only by rare wounded pilgrim feet. [501-02]

This is the image of going through the pilgrim cave of Amarnath, you know. At the end, even in our Ashram, ultimately you are alone. You have to leave behind the chappals and everything else: all our identities. We are alone. We may have gone there together holding hands, but in front of the Divine we are alone. And that is why when we go to Mother's room we feel that it's such a narrow passage. I feel it is a very symbolic thing, this very narrow passage. Though you may have come with the world, now leave it behind. You are face to face with the Divine Mother, on a road *'Trod only by rare wounded pilgrim feet'*. None reaches the goal who has not passed through this fire with feet on burning stones. *'None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell'* [227]. This is a path that is *'Trod only by rare wounded pilgrim feet.'* There at last:

One felt the silent nearness of the soul. [502]

The finding of the soul

Now Savitri meets the three Madonnas, Powers which have emerged from her soul. They are the threefold Soul-powers. I am not going into the different ways of explaining them as sattva, rajas, tamas, the Prakriti or the godhead behind them or their relations to Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati. A simpler way is to look at them as the feminine counterparts of the three Purushas — the mental, vital and physical Purusha or beings put forth by the soul as godheads for the corresponding planes. In Savitri, who is the incarnate Divine Mother, these three Powers are found in their divine fullness. However, let us keep our busy minds aside and just know that the inner truth presents itself to us as Wisdom, as Force and Might, or as Love, the Power that endures this whole journey of life. This makes it simple. The Divine is both name and nameless. I love these words — Madonna of Light, Madonna of Might, Mother of grief Divine — They are so wonderful. We don't have to bring in any other names because these names are complete in themselves. If Sri Aurobindo has given these names there is a reason behind it: perhaps it is simply that he wanted to go beyond traditions and bring in a new dimension. Let's live with that new dimension — these three Madonnas.

We may stop short with one or the other aspect of the Divine. We may be satisfied with wisdom and knowledge entering into our minds and informing our higher chambers; or we may stop short simply with love in the heart and bhakti and

self-giving. Or we may be satisfied with the power which simply trusts the Divine and helps people endure life or battles against all that stands in the way of the divine consummation. One may stop with identification with any one of these Soul-powers and become a *vibhuti*. But we know that this is an Integral Yoga; all of them must come together and something still greater must be found. Each of these Madonnas awakens something within us: the power of knowledge, the power of the might and strength of God, hope — all these awaken in us as we take the turn towards yoga. They are godheads and they begin to emerge. They are helpful Powers in our journey and yet we have to strive to go beyond, for the Supreme Godhead is our goal. We have to remember what Savitri tells the Madonna of Light:

> *Even if thou rain down intuition's rays,*
> *The Mind of man will think it earth's own gleam,*
> *His spirit by spiritual ego sink,*
> *Or his soul dream shut in sainthood's brilliant cell*
> *Where only a bright shadow of God can come. [520-21]*

We are not here to become saints and yogis and all the old stuff, but for something entirely new. When someone wrote a poem on Sri Aurobindo — 'Hail the last rishi Sri Aurobindo!' Dilip Kumar Roy sent it to Sri Aurobindo saying, 'I don't know whether to rejoice or feel sad about it. I rejoice because he has called you a great rishi but I feel sad because he says you are the last one.' And Sri Aurobindo with his sense of humour replied, 'Well he's right. Maybe he has caught a glimpse that

after this there will be superman. We don't need rishis after that.' This yoga is not about becoming a saint or a sage or a rishi or any of these terms: they all belong to the old world. There is something new to aim for. Not *'sainthood's brilliant cell' [521]!* That narrow place receives reflected light and believes it to be its own. And how many have gone down the path of spiritual ego or ended up forming yet another cult!

Let us leave all that behind and follow Savitri as she passes further towards the soul's mystic cave, and Sri Aurobindo describes the wonderful state as one draws near the soul. It is *'a night of God' [522].* Everything that we believe we know, including the pride of knowledge, everything is taken away. We are new-born at each moment. Look at the Divine Mother who has so many experiences: when she comes before Sri Aurobindo what is her prayer? She says, 'I am like a new born child'. This is the state which the soul spontaneously brings into us: a profound humility. However much we may know, still we will remain as if we know nothing, because all knowledge belongs to the Divine and there is so much more that, as the mystic poet Kabir says, 'If we were to make ink out of the seven oceans and if we were to cut all the trees and turn them all into pens, and were to use the entire surface of the earth as paper, still we would not be able to put into writing the glory of these two words — Hari gun likha na jai*! Hari* — the Divine. Such is the greatness of the Infinite. How much can one book or many books or any amount of wisdom capture of

Him? Nothing! The soul-touch brings one into that state before the Divine.

I think that may be the reason why many temples have low ceilings and people find it very uncomfortable: it is a lesson in humility. There is a tale about someone who complained to the Mother saying 'The ceiling is very low' — he wanted to get it changed. But she said 'Very good, it will teach him humility. Every time he passes through, it will teach humility.'

Sri Aurobindo with his characteristic humour says that although the Divine is everywhere he has hidden himself deep within. Why? To avoid 'the profaning touch of thought'. He knows that human beings will go to temples, to churches and mosques. They will listen to hundreds of speakers but they will not look within. So that is where he has hidden the soul.

Nevertheless, Savitri finds her soul and then we have the wonderful description of the psychic being and the central being. She discovers her psychic being and then fuses with her central being, the *jivatman* which stands above. Here towards the end we are told again that this is the first victory to be won because this is the first touch of immortality. To discover the soul is to discover our immortal being; without it we cannot really think about conquering death. This is the first thing to be done and this is what Savitri discovers. As the soul steps forward, all the centres spontaneously open towards the light and the might and the right of the Divine and they blossom. We have a long description of that wonderful experience, but we will not dwell on that just now. Then we find these lines:

In the slow process of the evolving spirit,
In the brief stade between a death and birth
A first perfection's stage is reached at last; [531]

This is the first perfection — the psychic transformation — where all is governed by the soul. This itself is a great thing in the yoga but it can come in the simplest of ways by turning to the Divine Mother.

Out of the wood and stone of our nature's stuff
A temple is shaped where the high gods could live. [531]

Now we can understand why those gods were sleeping: because there was no proper place for them. But now the lamp has been lit and we have prepared a nice place for them. The temple has been cleaned, so now the gods awake and occupy their respective places. They say, 'Yes, now the temple has been lit.'

Even if the struggling world is left outside
One man's perfection still can save the world. [531]

Thus has come about the first marriage between heaven and earth — the first perfection and an indispensable stage in yoga. Sri Aurobindo devotes almost five cantos to it and the remaining two cantos are almost like a summing up, because once the soul steps forward the rest becomes relatively easy and there is a rapid efflorescence.

The way to Nirvana and the Absolute

However, the emergence of the soul is not the final perfection. For the final perfection the ego must be slain. As long as the ego remains it becomes our instrumental personality and we still somewhere outwardly identify with it; or if we are not identified with it we know it is there and the soul acts through it. The ego must disappear. That is the next command which Savitri receives. But first she hears the Voice of Night which proclaims that a supramental transformation and change of earth is not possible. It insists 'Man is a creature of mud and I am its ruler. You can go off into high heavens in the transcendent sphere but don't think about transformation.' But then Savitri hears the Voice of Light which chases away the darkness and says, 'It is possible', and shows her the way forward. This way is shown on page 538.

When Nature who is now unconscious God [538]

So beautiful! Nature is divine but it is still unconscious. When it grows fully conscious and transparent before the Divine it will spontaneously transmute itself.

When Nature who is now unconscious God
Translucent grows to the Eternal's light,
Her seeing his sight, her walk his steps of power
And life is filled with a spiritual joy
And Matter is the spirit's willing bride. [538]

This is what it is meant to be. When Huta showed Mother a card depicting Shiva and Shakti together, Mother said, 'It is a

symbol of the Spirit identifying with material nature.' That is the symbol. It has been foreseen and we see this same symbol in the whole story of Shiva and Sati. Sati — material nature — must purify herself before she is ready to meet Shiva. She must burn in fire and completely annul herself; then she is reborn as Parvati: the purified earth-nature which is born on the high peaks of Himalayas. Then she can unite permanently with Shiva. It is the same for us: we have to burn this earth-nature in purifying fire, and this fire is very exacting; it leaves nothing, nothing, nothing untouched by the purifying Flame:

Consent to be nothing and none, dissolve Time's work,
[538]

This reminds me of a story when Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry, leaving the scene of Indian politics. People were asking him, 'Why aren't you coming back? What are you doing there?' Sri Aurobindo would hardly reply. Then some people who were active in politics in those days came here to meet him and asked, 'Sir, what are you doing here in Pondicherry?' Sri Aurobindo kept quiet for a while and then said, 'Well, nothing.' (*Laughter*)

We are just waiting for someone to ask us so that we can tell them: 'Don't you know we are engaged in a special yoga. Do you know about it? I'll tell you about it. You know, it is a very difficult yoga. I am among the elite, called and specially chosen by the Divine.' But what do we know really? It is His play and He is delighting in this play.

Consent to be nothing and none, dissolve Time's work.
Cast off thy mind, step back from form and name.
Annul thyself that only God may be. [538]

This is the great command. Annul yourself completely. 'Annul thyself that only God may be.' What a vastness! What a liberating truth! What a profound engagement! And it can only come when nothing else remains in our thoughts and feelings except the Divine. Nothing of ourselves. What is our past? What is happening in the present? What will happen to us in the future? What have we been and what we shall be? Everything we abandon completely at Her Feet. As the Mother puts it: 'As Thou willest! As Thou willest! Whether Thou givest to me joy or suffering! Whether Thou givest to me pleasure or pain! Everything comes from you, returns to you.'

Savitri goes through that and then she is projected, drawn into, the Absolute; for when there is nothing, when all Time's work is undone, then we experience that great longed-for Nirvana. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga we don't seek it but it comes. And what kind of a Nirvana? Because there is a mental nirvana, a vital nirvana, a physical nirvana; they are just first touches. Savitri experiences the Nirvana where one enters into the very Absolute, where all creation appears as nothing but a transient storm passing before our eyes.

In one of her prayers the Mother says that earthly realisations take too important a place and that at some point we have to get rid of all this: 'Oh, what may happen? A Third World War? What will happen to humanity then?' We identify

with humanity, therefore we egoistically want to know. Who knows? The Divine may say, 'I have plan B'. What is plan B? If humanity goes away — Dolphins! Round the corner! All problems of food, all problems of buildings and pollution — everything will be solved in one stroke. Global warming, this, that.... You know we had a talk yesterday about global warming: in 15 or 20 years the whole earth, everything, will be drowned in water. Will evolution stop? No. Will transformation stop? No. Sri Aurobindo said *'The present civilisation must surely change, but whether by a destruction or a new construction on the basis of a greater truth, is the issue. The Mother has left the question hanging and I can only do the same' [CWSA 35: 221].* He says, *'It is not this which has to be saved; it is the world that has to be saved, and that will surely be done'. [CWSA 35: 221].* We should not worry. As Teilhard de Chardin has put it, 'We are not human beings having a spiritual experience but spiritual beings having a human experience.' Once we know that, it doesn't matter. We'll colonise somewhere or the other — wherever He wants, wherever the Divine sends us; if in the heart of a dolphin, why not? We should not worry about it.

Savitri enters that state of the Absolute where there is nothing. Then she waits for the command. It is the same state which Aswapati reached by his tapasya when he came to the door of the Unknowable, where he could either merge and completely abolish himself — rare yogis are known to do that, to throw themselves into the Unknowable — or bring out from

the frontier of the form and the formless a new Force, a new Power to manifest upon earth. Now, as we all know, it is history. What was hidden in the Unknowable? The supramental consciousness and the supramental truth.

And what does that state do? It makes her being vast. We become vast when the ego is gone. This is one of the things we experience — vastness! Vastness is not the wideness of the waste paper basket where everything from the most beautiful poem to the most mundane things are jumbled together. Vastness is the vastness of Space where countless stars hang, each in its right place. That is how the Vedic rishis put it: *satyam ritam brihatam*. Vastness alone is not true enough. There must be a truth which arranges things hierarchically to live by the law of truth.

Repeatedly Mother tells us that when mental rules, mental measures, social norms fall away, what helps us to walk the path? Normally human beings are governed by their desires, or by duty, principle, social and religious norms. When those are gone what can guide us? The law of Truth. That is what Yajnavalkya is aspiring for: Hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitam mukham [Isha Upanishad v.15: *'The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight.'* [CWSA 17: 9]. The Law of Truth begins to manifest. And in that vastness we have this beautiful experience.

And one small thing: after that experience and realisation, we shall find that every experience is uplifted as it were by the

divine touch. Sri Aurobindo once again brings out the human side of Savitri: either she is sitting with Satyavan or she is engaged in her everyday activities: the broom, the jar, the well. None of these experiences should dislocate us. Yogis of a certain kind withdraw from world. But the age is coming when yogis would be like Janaka, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, like Ajatashatru, engaged in every activity of life. That is what we have in Auroville, in the Ashram.

This is a great lesson. Being a yogi doesn't mean wearing a particular dress or following a certain practice and henceforth calling oneself Swami so-and-so-ananda. Thank God Sri Aurobindo doesn't do that. We have come from Ananda and belong to Ananda; we don't need to put it after our names; it is our name and our surname, we don't need to qualify it further. As to 'Swami', that's a debatable thing. It implies self-mastery. And that implies having a cosmic spirit — for there is not just one kind of self-mastery. As we grow as a representative of the race and enlarge into cosmic consciousness the greater the difficulties and new challenges we have to face and every time they have to be mastered by the same process. Savitri experiences this profound truth on the last two pages of Book Seven.

We have come to the end of The Book of Yoga — the greatest formula of God. We have its echo, some glimpse of it, in the *Ishopanishad,* where it says 'Yastu sarvani bhutani atmanya-vanupasyati: *the one self which has become all*

things'. We have this great formula. But after all this process, Savitri's experience is described:

Mind was a single innumerable look
Upon himself and all that he became.
Life was his drama and the Vast a stage,
The universe was his body, God its soul. [556]

Every day we see God. Every day He changes his dress. Every three months he changes his dress completely. Sometimes his dress is green, sometimes it's brown, sometimes it's white. If we go to Siberia or the mountains he wears a white dress because he likes that. When it's a barren desert he wears a golden-brown dress. It's God's dress. Sometimes at night he wears a dark dress which is full of stars shining like his mala. The universe is his body.

All was one single immense reality,
All its innumerable phenomenon.
Her spirit saw the world as living God; [556]

Not just a divine Presence hidden within, *nityo nityanam chetanas chetananam*, but something dynamic, active, living, that is forever bringing out new things, changing, taking things into itself. It is living God: not just a Presence which is inert and inactive like Shiva lying under Kali's feet, but a living and dynamic God.

It saw the One and knew that all was He. [565]

This 'all' is literally all and everything: from tree and flower and plant, Savitri discovers everything to be nothing else but

the one Being, the one Infinite, and she herself is identified with all that. We have these lovely lines:

She was a subconscient life of tree and flower,
The outbreak of the honied buds of spring;
She burned in the passion and splendour of the rose,
She was the red heart of the passion-flower,
The dream-white of the lotus in its pool. [557]

If people ask us 'Where is God?', after reading these lines we can say that he is everywhere. Only our eyes are not attuned to see him everywhere because they are imprisoned by the ego and the mind and the senses.

Out of subconscient life she climbed to mind, [557]

From identification with 'tree and flower' we go further and further.

She was thought and the passion of the world's heart,
She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
She was the climbing of his soul to God. [557]

It is She who carries on the journey. More than our journey it is the journey of the Eternal within us, it is the journey of the Divine Mother within us. That's why there is hope. It means that those who despair and say 'Oh, I am no good!' are relying on their own ego. I may be no good by my own egoistic standards or by the standards that others set for me, but if the Divine has called me, surely he knows whom he has called. He knows what nutcases we are. He knows all the twists and turns

of our nature, and he knows what he is going to do with this material because it is nothing but the Divine himself. He knows himself and that is why there is hope for us.

She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
She was the climbing of his soul to God.
The cosmos flowered in her, she was its bed.
She was Time and the dreams of God in Time; [557]

This is why she knows all the pralayas which have taken place. She is Mahakali who changes Time. But who is this *'godhead hid in the heart of man'*? Gauri, the Mother, the Divine Mother, waiting for her moment to come. And when Kali, Time, has cleared the way, then she will step out for the new creation.

She was Time and the dreams of God in Time;
She was Space and the wideness of his days. [557]

But who is She? Who can ever know?

From this she rose where Time and Space were not;
[557]

Here we see the Divine Mother in her triple identity, as the individual, the universal and the transcendent — and if we may say so, something beyond all the three.

From this she rose where Time and Space were not;
The superconscient was her native air,
Infinity was her movement's natural space;
Eternity looked out from her on Time. [557]

And yet — this is the marvel of marvels — this Eternity, this Infinity has chosen to wear a human form, a limited face. All that we can do from our side is to have gratitude in our hearts towards that.

Very often people ask 'What has Sri Aurobindo done?' It's a weird question but you have to tackle all kinds of questions. My take on it is that Sri Aurobindo has given many gifts to the world, right from his revolutionary days: gifts to India; gifts in the form of great idea-currents released into the world; the thoughts and knowledge that came through the *Arya*; the gift of Integral Yoga which is a path in its own right; the gift of a space — the Ashram — where we can all engage in yoga; the gift of Auroville where people from all over the world can come; and here is another marvellous gift — some 300 people can sit in this hall and share something on Mother and Sri Aurobindo. And above all the gift of *Savitri*: I believe that if Sri Aurobindo had given nothing else and done nothing more, *Savitri* alone would have been more than enough. What he has given us is far, far more than we can assimilate. *Savitri* alone is sufficient unto itself. Just reading *Savitri* can take us to the highest realisations of the yoga of transformation. How can it do that? Some people say, 'Ah! This is a holy sentiment!' But no, it is a very ancient knowledge. The tantric yogis would invoke a deity through yantra, mantra and puja, but particularly mantra. By the mantra, the sound-body, they would bring the deity near. Sri Aurobindo knows that the Divine Mother cannot come just like that, She is beyond all this. But he too created a

mantra and wherever this mantra is chanted or read, in whatever way — it doesn't matter — she comes there because this mantra is nothing else but her body, her sound-body, her word-body. That's what *Savitri* is — a living, eternal Presence in the human heart.

Satyavan and Savitri

Concluding session of the Savitri Study Camp 26, February 2020

We read these magical lines:

Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born. [702]

The 'golden tower' is of course the supramental consciousness coming all the way down to earth, and the 'flame-child' is the new creation, still in its infancy.

What are the signs of the Supermind?

People often ask, now that the Supermind has come, what are the signs?

What could the ape see when the first prototype not-even-humans — humanoids — walked upon the earth? Perhaps that 'this is a strange cruel fellow that doesn't look like an animal, doesn't look like us, but still there are a lot of similarities'. He must have wondered who this fellow is, that's all. 'Strangeness.' Maybe in the ape world he would have been declared mad! The ape wouldn't have known what is going on inside, and what is going to take place in the future.

Such is the gap between the ape and human beings; and the Mother said that the gap between the supramental being and the human is much greater than the gap between the animal and humanity. It's quite likely, she says, that for a long time, it will go unnoticed. But slowly a silent revolution has begun in the consciousness of earth, in children who are going to come more and more. They are children of the new age, they are *'massive barrier-breakers'* [344]. The age of institutions is over. All the old ways of thinking — they are gone. There is hardly any room for narrowness, rigidity. Children live in a very wide psychological space.

All this is happening spontaneously; it's not somebody's doing. In fact, people don't want this to happen, because it's very unsettling. The coming of man has upset the animal world. The coming of superman is upsetting the human world: its fixed measures, its comfort zones, its way of life — it's all gone. Almost all gone.

I have seen people where they... you know, earlier in India, marriages used to take place with somebody on the *godi*, with all the horns and all that, blowing them. Now many people say, 'This looks so strange. Really people get married like this?' Because really there is nothing which corresponds to an inner truth. There is a growing truth inside human beings. It looks, actually, outrightly foolish, all this show.

Many things are like that. Standard classroom education, in a fixed format — all that is gone. The formats of the mind are gone; this is what we see outwardly. Inwardly we see the cry

for unity, for more harmony, for more knowledge, for greater adventures... all this is coming up in human beings. There is a cry for greater harmony, not just based on outward associations. These are the challenges. A new way of being is coming up upon earth.

First there will be a few prototypes who will embody this consciousness. Often people ask, 'Can you name any supramental being, a superhuman being, as an example?' Well, the first one is of course Mother and Sri Aurobindo. If we look at their lives we can see this. There are some very beautiful lines which describe this. One thing which we notice about the passages that we read about the way of being of the supramental being is Truth and Delight. These two things are very prominent.

That is where he will discover the law of his being, he will be beyond the social standards and yardsticks. First this truth will emerge as a subjective way of being: 'I'll do according to what I feel is right.' Now this is a new change; it is not based on any social, legal, custom, tradition — that's gone. Naturally this is a dangerous passage to start with, but slowly this 'I' will change, deepen, the ego's self will soften, and there will be this great discovery of what is the law of Truth.

Relations of friendship

Earlier people would deal with different people based on common interest, based on whether they are related or not,

blood-relation, custom, tradition, but now it's no longer like that. A new way of relating with others is coming up, which is known as 'friends'. It is very interesting that in most of the relations — between parent and child, husband and wife, and other different relations — the word that is being picked up to describe them is 'friendship', as if it is the law of the future. With friends it's very beautiful: we don't expect anything from the other and at the same time there's a deep bonding. We don't need to be together in one geographical space, and yet the relation can be there. It's a deep understanding. It's not based on any fear. And that is the relation that is developing even towards the Divine.

Things are going to change. The basic difference is that the mind is a divided consciousness — that is why it has been regarded as a 'fall' or the 'original sin'. We have fallen. Because of the ego-sense we have lost the wideness and the instinctive oneness of animal kind. Now we have to regain it again in the intuitive consciousness; we have to develop this sense of unity. In the higher hemisphere, the beings have a sense of unity. Does that mean that there will be no difference? There may be. The example that Sri Aurobindo gives in *The Life Divine* is very beautiful. He says that differences will be like between the different gods. Each god is one aspect of the Divine, but at another level (in the Puranas) you see that each god is the highest. Each god is the highest. How can each god be the highest? Agni is the highest in his own way; Vayu is the highest in his own way; Varuna is the highest in his own way.

If you read the Puranas, the impression is that, whichever god is being discussed, 'this god is the highest'; it can be pretty confusing. But what this means is that each god is a prayer of the oneness which is behind, but the oneness is held back and one aspect is put forward. Agni holds within himself Varuna and Mitra and Bhaga and Soma and all the others, and puts forward the Agni aspect. Varuna holds within himself the Agni, the Vaya, Bhag, Som, Aryaman, and all of them inside, and puts forward the Varuna aspect. This is how creation will be: manifold! There are many millions of gods, and yet each god is connected with the Supreme.

This is how the creation will be: a rich play of difference and yet on the basis of oneness. This oneness will not blur differentiations. It's not that everybody will wear the same dress — that would be a very boring world, and one would want to run away from that. It will not be a regimented world, everybody doing the same thing at the same time every day. The Divine doesn't like that. He laughs in differentiation, in differences, everything — but on the basis of unity, because it is infinite. This is one thing that we find prominently.

The second thing is that the creation will be based on Truth and Harmony. This Truth means, again, that there will be varied relations, but with each one there will be the unfolding of the law of Truth, nothing else. You can't fix a supramental action. We like to fix it by the mind; that is why the supramental personality is described as an 'impersonal universality'. We like to see people acting in the same way

always. That's a fixed personality — mind works like that. But the supramental being will not be like that. We see this in Savitri in how she responds even toward the contrary arguments of Death with the Truth.

The third very important thing is that the supramental being will see the One, the Divine, God, in everything — in every creature, in every event, in every circumstance, in every happening. Even what appears to our outer eyes as disaster, it will see the way of working of the Divine. It will see wisdom operating even in something which looks like a catastrophe, even there it will see the wisdom is at work. It will put the mind at ease, at rest; there will be this self-existent peace at all times. This worry, anxiety, fear ('What is going to happen?' 'What may happen?') — that will go away because one will see that this is how the Divine is working towards his own greater plan, towards his great unfolding.

From light to greater light

The experience of the supramental being will run from point to point of light to greater light. It will not be from light towards ignorance, where suddenly doubt comes, and we don't know whether God is there or not — 'Is it true? Is it right?' — no. It will start from a point of light and move towards greater light, wider light, vaster light. It will be that kind of growth, from freedom to greater freedom. There will be a fundamental freedom of the soul. It will know that 'regardless of Nature, I am free within' — this is the Jivanmukta state. Then,

progressively, the parts of the nature will get liberated and unite with the Divine. It will run from freedom to greater freedom, and most importantly, from delight to greater delight.

This is the new creation which is being promised to us. There are those souls which are destined for this, have become ready, or have been picked up — and there is the Divine Mother, who is carrying all of us together towards this new creation. Obviously, in the beginning it'll be only a few. That is what Sri Aurobindo has written very categorically: it is those who have turned, those who have opened, who are ready to pay the price — and it is a big price for changing from man the mental being to the supramental being. It's not money that's needed; you can't buy it with ten thousand dollars or say 'let me do a two-week course'. You can't; it's impossible. What is the price? The price is ego. That is difficult. Especially as it sticks in the mind: 'me, my view, my idea, my opinions, people should behave as I want them to behave.' That's all gone, the children are breaking it. That is the price that we have to pay, and if we are ready to pay the price, then we are ready for that delight.

Who is Satyavan?

We'll quickly go through these lines on page 702:

> *"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, [702]

Always we have walked together: the soul within, Satyavan, and luminous Savitri, the Divine Mother. We don't remember it; but she knows it. That is the only difference. This dual power.

In a hedged creation shut from limitless self, [702]

This 'hedged creation' is the lower creation.

Bringing down God to the insentient globe,
Lifting earth-beings to immortality. [702]

Now comes a description of who is Satyavan. We know Satyavan is the soul of man entangled in the forest of ignorance but aspiring towards light. This is the hallmark of humanity. If there is no aspiration, no seeking, then it's very difficult to say it is humanity. We can say it's a 'semblance of humanity'. The body is human; but the hallmark of humanity is that there's a seeking, and it expresses itself at first in a very vague way: as dissatisfaction with what is. That is what the Mother says: if you are very satisfied with life as it is, with the world as it is, it's all right, go back, be happy. One is not ready for the new creation.

This doesn't mean that one has to start looking for dissatisfaction — it's not about complaining. Everything is wonderful; life is beautiful outwardly, everything is wonderful. But still there is something that seeks for something greater, higher, more beautiful. That is the hallmark of an aspiration

which is awakened in man. This is Satyavan. A few lines below it says:

He is my soul that climbs from nescient Night [702]

Satyavan can really never be happy until he has found the Divine Mother, who will lead him to his home. He cannot be happy. He is looking for that, looking for her, in countless forms, in countless ways.

Through life and mind and supernature's Vast
To the supernal light of Timelessness
And my eternity hid in moving Time
And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space.
[702-03]

Out of the limits he's growing towards the limitless Vast. That's the story of Matsya-avatara: every time you put it in water, it grows bigger and bigger. The consciousness is expanding and it no more limits. Human consciousness is growing in such a way that it does not want to accept limits. Fifty years back it was very happy with limits. If a child moved out of the village to a new town nearby, it was a big event! And if he went abroad, then he was as good as dead. When he came back, there was a ceremony. I think some of us are aware of it, isn't it so? 'Take a bath in the Ganges water — you are corrupted, you're spoiled.'

Now, everybody is restless. Because something in the mind has to burst. It is going here, there, everywhere. People are already planning for a trip to Mars, and they have paid up for a

few days in a satellite, the Space Station. Already some people have signed up with Elon Musk. Millions of dollars they have already paid in advance. But it's not about outer space, it's about inner space, the inner impulse.

It climbs to the greatness it has left behind
And to the beauty and joy from which it fell, [703]

This is the great Fall, and we have to climb back to that light, to that beauty. Supermind is beauty, Supermind is love, Supermind is harmony. Supermind is Ananda. It is not just Truth, but all these based on Truth. Its unity is not formed on any external association, compromise, adjustment, law — none of those things — but on a spontaneous discovery of the Divine within.

To the closeness and sweetness of all things divine,
To light without bounds and life illimitable,
Taste of the depths of the Ineffable's bliss,
Touch of the immortal and the infinite. [703]

This too we have read before — how to the supramental being even the touch of hell will be to her his kiss. Even the close touch of hell. Because you see the Divine in everything. Even that will be the kiss of the Lord, so where will be scope for sorrow? It is in the depths, in the heights, everywhere.

He is my soul that gropes out of the beast
To reach humanity's heights of lucent thought
And the vicinity of Truth's sublime. [703]

This is Satyavan, struggling out of the beast, growing through man towards superhuman heights with thought as the ladder — he climbs on the ladder of thought.

He is the godhead growing in human lives [703]

This is the godhead. We are worshipping all the gods outside, in all the temples. But the real godhead inside remains unworshipped, unseen, unfound. At one place Sri Aurobindo says it is God's last refuge from the profaning touch of the world. Where has he hidden himself? He saw everywhere human beings go to the mountains, here, there, everywhere — they go to God and fill him with all the desires, with money. I went to a temple where they had some soft drinks outside. What is it for? They said, 'You can offer it to the deity.' People were buying the soft drinks, 10 rupees or whatever (I didn't buy it of course) — buy it and give it to the deity. Around the deity there were a lot of soft drinks! Obviously, the drinks had been circulating. Somebody, who was revolted, asked me, 'What is this?' I said, 'No, see, this is socialism. Don't look at it as a very deep spiritual thing. It is Indian socialism: the soft drink is picked up from here, going there, going back to the stall. In between, some people are drinking it. Money is coming. What is the problem?' (*Laughs*)

This will go away. None of this is needed. The real godhead is here — he has taken refuge. Because it is here that thought's profaning touch will not reach. We have to leave it outside, then step inside.

Everywhere else, whenever we go to a place — even the Ashram — 'Ah... (looking around)... What is this? What is that?' Feel for awhile, the place. 'What is the philosophy? This book, that book...' The human mind is all the time active. If it rested from that for just a few moments, if one just keeps one's head at the Samadhi, I tell you more light will enter inside. But the human mind is like that.

He is the godhead growing in human lives
And in the body of earth-being's forms: [703]

Earth is a being, a goddess! And she is building forms — for whom? For the Lord to inhabit.

What do we do? We don't care for making the temple here; we build temples outside to satisfy our desires. All the gods are satisfying our desires, and the priests are having a happy time. If our desire is fulfilled, it is thanks to the god; if it is not fulfilled, it is karma, or, 'sometime, it will happen.' Not realising that when the desire is not fulfilled, that is when God has picked you up and started acting. (Of course the Divine Mother does both.)

He is the soul of man climbing to God
In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance. [703]

The new strategy

Who is Savitri?

O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power, [703]

We can take Savitri as the Divine Mother, the embodiment. We can take *Savitri* the book as *'my spirit's power'*. And we can take Savitri as the divine energy, the divine will in the race.

That's why in the whole tantra yoga, the whole kundalini, it is the divine energy, the Divine Shakti. Sri Aurobindo said that the energy in the kundalini is the Divine Mother's. It is held at the base, in matter, where this fellow is tied — the psychic essence — and she climbs upward, right up to the Siddhidatri, the giver of all perfection, through Maharatri, the darkness of the infinite, through Kali and Gauri, all these. We can look at it in many ways. It's not just in one incarnation she has come, light to light, birth to birth — the Divine Mother has never left the earth since its inception; and she continues to be here now, if I may say so, in her supramental form, her highest form.

We do not have to awaken her from within from matter's base like in the old kundalini yoga. That's gone; that's old yoga. Now she's here! We just give ourselves to her, and she pours her shakti from above, streaming down, right to the base. This is the new strategy.

We have this:

O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word, [703]

The first drop of creation: '*You are That*.' Mother also says each line of *Savitri* is the perfect word, *Om*.

The face of Truth upon the roads of Time
Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God. [703]

Mother says, ‘all souls who aspire are directly under my care.’ Mark the word ‘directly’ — it changes everything. Indirectly, as the universal Mother, she is with all. But directly, all those who aspire, she says, ‘Now this is mine. Death dare not come near. They are mine, they will come to me; when I want, they will come back into the world, in forms that I decide and choose.’

She builds the forms of the *vibhutis*, her *vibhutis*. It is there in *The Mother*. They are directly under her care. But also, Sri Aurobindo has said and the Mother has said, just reading *Savitri* is enough to take us to the highest realisations of the yoga of transformation without the need of a living guru. How beautifully it corresponds.

Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God. [703]

There’s not one route — there are many routes, a million routes!

While the dim light from the veiled Spirit’s peak
Falls upon Matter’s stark inconscient sleep
As if a pale moonbeam on a dense glade, [703]

The moonbeam, we know, is the spiritual mind, as it’s coming upon earth.

And Mind in a half-light moves amid half-truths
And the human heart knows only human love [703]

This is one of the marvellous lines! ‘The human heart knows only human love.’ In fact, when it is face-to-face with divine

Love, Mother says it finds it remote, cold, austere, inaccessible. That's what people wrote to Sri Aurobindo, not realising that he is someone who has sacrificed his own realisation for the sake of us earthlings. What kind of love must be there in his heart! In his poem 'Seer deep-hearted', Sri Aurobindo says:

Seer deep-hearted, divine king of the secrecies,
Occult fountain of love sprung from the heart of God,
...
Vast thy soul was a tide washing the coasts of heaven.
[CWSA 2: 677]

He is the fount of love. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, we have turned them into philosophers, which Sri Aurobindo never wanted to be. That is our problem. We think: 'philosopher' is very good; 'lover' is like a crazy fellow. God is the lover of mankind. That is how he describes it in his poem 'Who': the eternal lover of mankind.

The Master of man and his infinite Lover,
He is close to our hearts, had we vision to see;
[CWSA 2: 203]

The human heart does not know that love; that is what will be revealed to us.

And life is a stumbling and imperfect force [703]

It tries to hold this, loses it; tries to hold it, loses it, because it doesn't know that by renouncing, you enjoy. It doesn't know, so it's always trying to grab. Therefore it loses it, because how

much can you possess in two hands? It's like the story of the monkey, putting his hand to take out *channa*, and his hand got stuck in the pot. He is not letting go of the thing in his hand, and at the same time he wants the hand to come out. It doesn't work like that. Let go of that; let the hand come out. There are better ways of having the *channa!*

And the body counts out its precarious days, [703]

This is our life. 'How old are you?'…

You shall be born into man's dubious hours
In forms that hide the soul's divinity [703]

This can be understood in many ways. People say, 'Oh, the Divine Mother will come again.' — yes, of course. When has she ever not come? It also means the divine soul reproducing herself in countless bodies. It can mean many things.

That's how Sri Aurobindo puts it in *The Life Divine:* the divine soul reproduces itself in many bodies, in unnumbered bodies and births. Where is the limit?

In forms that hide the soul's divinity
And show through veils of the earth's doubting air
My glory breaking as through clouds a sun,
Or burning like a rare and inward fire,
And with my nameless influence fill men's lives. [703]

What will she do? In these forms, she will come and give us a mantra? No, those are old ways. That path is not needed. What she will do is influence us. Sri Aurobindo says repeatedly

in the letters: it all depends on whether you can open to the Influence or not ('influence' with a capital 'I'). That's why he says one must come repeatedly to the Ashram, to open to that Influence.

What was she doing when people came to her? She says, 'I just give them a bath of the Lord.' That's it. When we go to the Samadhi, we take a bath of the Lord. When we think of her and meditate on her, wherever we are, we have a bath of the Lord. When we gaze at her photograph, she gives us a nice bath, with all the ideal ingredients to scrub off the dirt of the centuries and previous lives.

Yet shall they look up as to peaks of God
And feel God like a circumambient air
And rest on God as on a motionless base. [703]

In the energy of motion, in the circumambient air which is driving them, they feel the presence of the Divine Shakti flowing through their breath, their heartbeat, their speech, their acts, and everything. At the same time, when they rest, where do they rest? In her breast, in her lap.

Somebody asked, 'What is the routine of a sadhak?' He was expecting to learn what does he do when he gets up, when he prays, how much he meditates… What is the routine of the sadhak? He wakes up and breathes Mother's air, is driven by her Force, sleeps in her lap. This is it. Nothing else. All else are outward things.

Yet shall there glow on mind like a horned moon

The Spirit's crescent splendour in pale skies [703]

Why is he qualifying with the word 'yet'? Because as of now, the human heart knows only human love. The human mind knows only ignorance. The human life is always a stumbling and struggling thing. But in spite of everything, 'yet', this glow will come; people will begin to feel this crescent moon, this *chandrashekara*, waxing and waning.

The moon is the sign of the spiritual mind. Our human mind will begin to glimpse the spiritual mind — and that is what is happening. That is why we see suddenly there is this spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst in humanity. Unfortunately, like any thirst, if you are very thirsty sometimes you are given Coca Cola. Please — it will only increase the thirst and create diabetes. But if you have no option, you take it.

This is what is happening, because there is an increased thirst, an increased hunger, a lot of shops, a lot of markets have opened — spiritual shops. 'Guidance in three days.' 'Crash-course in seven days.' 'Nirvana in 14 days.' 'What do I need to do?' 'Ten-thousand, two-thousand, five-thousand'... there are rates. If somebody is selling the Koh-i-Noor diamond for a price, be careful. Nobody can buy the Koh-i-Noor. It's either stolen, which is the wrong way of doing it, or it's given as a gift. Nobody can buy the Koh-i-Noor. No human being can.

It's very interesting: the Koh-i-Noor never belonged to anyone. Yes, Ranjit Singh — but he also got it from somewhere. Nobody really knows. Then the Mughal prince

again came back, then the British came. It doesn't 'belong' to anyone.

It is like that. It is something which will grow upon men.

Yet shall they look up as to peaks of God [703]

In spite of being bound to matter, they will start looking up. This is what man is created for, unlike the animals who cannot look up — it is very difficult for them. They can only look to the sides. (Except the jackal which looks up to the moon — I think that's just in movies. I don't know whether he really looks up to the moon.) But they can't, generally, animals can't do it. Human beings can look up. They can even lie like this (gesture) and look up. It's given to man.

Yet shall they look up as to peaks of God
And feel God like a circumambient air
And rest on God as on a motionless base.
Yet shall there glow on mind like a horned moon
The Spirit's crescent splendour in pale skies
And light man's life upon his Godward road. [703-04]

This light will grow, and the road will open before man: the supramental path, the road to the new creation. It is done, it is fixed, and none can reverse it.

We can doubt it. We can stay on the shore. We can think and calculate; that's up to us. Or we can simply plunge with this certitude which is the sign of heroism. Take the plunge, slay the ego, and swim in the upward current of the supramental life.

Approaching Book Two of *Savitri*

Talk at Savitri Bhavan on August 22, 2009 (Invocation 31:10-32)

On March 1, 2009 Dr. Alok Pandey continued the tradition started by our late revered friend Dr. M.V. Nadkarni by concluding his post-Darshan Savitri Study Camp at the Sri Aurobindo Society Beach Office in Pondicherry with a closing session held at Savitri Bhavan. The Study Camp had dealt with Book One, as well as embarking on the early cantos of Book Two. In the closing session Dr. Pandey gave an overview of all these cantos, as well as a look at the next one, Book Two, Canto Three: 'The Glory and the Fall of Life'.

Savitri, as we all know, is not an intellectual poetry. Our intellect is so much dependent on the data of the senses, but here there is no data of the senses and the sense-mind. It is the result of a seeing from very high planes of consciousness. It is not just a seeing, but an action, the result of an identification with the creative Consciousness. It is Knowledge and Power of the highest kind. What the senses can't tell us, all that, Sri Aurobindo describes and brings it so close to us. These are not images, but facts of inner experience. Very often there is a

tendency to interpret these descriptions as images, but the truth is just the other way round: if we look at it from the other angle, we would say that it is this physical world that is a world of images, shadows and reflections from a Reality that exists elsewhere in the Beyond. But the images that we see here are not perfect images; they are 'broken reflexes of an indivisible unity'. Today as we were sitting in the Dining Room, someone read out a line that mentions 'seas of self'. It is quite natural for the human mind to think that Sri Aurobindo is using these words metaphorically: we have seas on earth and in a similar image he is describing 'seas of self'. But the reality is the other way round. Seas of self exist, and our physical seas are nothing but a broken reflection of that. This physical world is an image and a symbol, trying to translate a deeper reality and truth. This is the first thing that we learn from *Savitri*.

The Book of Beginnings, which we just finished studying in our Camp, is in a way a summary, a seed of everything else that is to come in the poem. The first canto gives us the backdrop — not just the physical backdrop but the psychological and, still deeper, the spiritual backdrop — not only of this story, but of the great epic of the creation itself. It reminds us that Her touch is on every atom. There is a touch of benediction. The Mother has said in one of her Prayers that a kiss of benediction is laid upon the struggling atom. This is the first thing that Sri Aurobindo tells us, as a backdrop.

In the second canto Sri Aurobindo tells us about 'The Issue'. This is not just a story but a divine Event — an event of

universal significance, a great drama that takes place in everybody's life. In us too, Satyavan is lost in the forest of Ignorance. In us too, Savitri struggles to liberate him from the clutches of darkness, from the forest of human life. In us too, Aswapati labours with his power of tapasya, to bring that love, that glory, that grace, closer to us. In us too there is Dyumatsena, blind, fallen, forfeiting his kingdom; and this becomes not just a story of Savitri and Satyavan in far remote times, but the story of man, the story of creation. It is our own story, and as long as there is even one blind soul struggling in ignorance, Savitri would remain relevant, and not just relevant — it will be a power to redeem us.

In Canto Three, Sri Aurobindo tells us how this Lord of Tapasya, Aswapati, this power, uplifts the human soul from a state of ignorance to a state of Light and Knowledge — and all the major experiences of the way. This ignorance is the result of a sense-bound mind, it is the result of ego, the great division. As the mind begins to be free from the clutch of the senses, from all that we see and hear and touch and believe to be real, as it begins to be liberated, the whole range of experience broadens. A new kind of knowledge, a wide world-knowledge, a new God-knowledge, begins to pour down in streams of inspiration, flashes of revelatory sight, as intuition. The human mind begins to change into something else than what it is right now, so heavily dependent upon the outside. It begins to awaken to the inside, and this inside illumines the outside with new lines, new colours, new views, new patterns, new

meanings, new significance — even new ways of feeling. This is the first change, as the human soul draws out of a state of ignorance.

But for Aswapati this is not enough. He goes deeper into the heart of even these higher states. He discovers 'The Secret Knowledge', the Knowledge of the Triune Reality, the triple status of the one Divine, and the three poises in which the one Purusha plays with the one Prakriti: bound; witness and free; and master and king. All this Aswapati discovers, which completes one line of yoga, the Vedantic yoga, the yoga of the soul's liberation and its utter unity with God.

Realisation of the impersonal universal, or the transcendent Divine, is one line of approach. It is enough if one wants only to come out of this circle of ignorance, and be lost in the coils of the Infinite, not to return. But Aswapati goes further. He must discover the Power that is at work in this cosmos. In Canto Five, 'The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness', Aswapati realises and becomes one with that great Power which has emerged out of the heart of the Supreme. This transcendent Power is at work in the blind atom, in the dumb mass, lost as mechanical Prakriti. It is at work in the countless worlds which have been fashioned out of the very substance of the Great Being. It is lying hushed in the heart of the Supreme. It is He who has brought this transcendent Power out of that hush, out of his own heart, and Space and Time are born: *'Space is himself, and Time is only he'* [67]. This is the great secret. It is such a hope and such a joy to know that He is all

this that exists, and He is also all that does not yet exist. This is the beauty of this creation.

In Book Two, which we just started, Sri Aurobindo reveals to us the secret of this creation. In the Gita it is spoken of as the Aswattha tree, the creation, whose roots are above and the branches are below. The scientific view is just the reverse, quite naturally, because we are in the ignorance and we see the roots below in matter and the soul flowering out of the mind. Very naturally we think soul is nothing but a glandular secretion in the human mind. This is a very homogenous and a very sympathetic crowd I would say, but if we were to speak about all this in certain other kinds of crowds people might say, 'Oh, it is nothing but neurons babbling.' If it is just a matter of babbling neurons then one could question the veracity of anything at all — including any theory or any hypothesis. But that apart, here in *Savitri* it is made clear that the whole story of creation begins from above; and not only does Brahman become Time and Space — he enters into it.

There is a double descent which Sri Aurobindo speaks of. The first descent is the descent of the Shakti, the holocaust of the Supreme Mother, who has consented to enter into this world of ignorance and darkness and death, chosen to pass through the gates of this birth which is a death, for thus alone could creation be redeemed. She becomes all these countless energies and fills the bodies of the Purusha with forces and energies that play in many worlds. This is the first descent. The whole process starts in the supramental Gnosis, where out of

Himself four typal Truth-Forms emerge. Following the Vaishnava tradition, Sri Aurobindo speaks of these four Truth-Forms as the four personalities of the one Ishwara: Mahavira, Balram, Pradyumn and Aniruddh. Mahavira is the personality which represents Knowledge and Truth and Light; Balram, the Strength and Force; Pradyumn, the aspect of Love and Beauty and Harmony; and Aniruddh, the power that organises this whole creation, its many rhythms, and holds them together and enters into its processes in detail. As a counterpart there are the four great Mahashaktis: Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, and Mahasaraswati. Thus far they are One even in their differentiation. But as the creation leans towards the Overmind, Sri Aurobindo tells us that the first division begins to appear. It is an appearance, there is not yet the real division, but each power does its own work, though holding back all the rest behind. But just one more step and we have the world of the formateurs, what are called in the Indian tradition Prajapatis and Dhyanamurtis. The Mother has spoken of them as formateurs. She speaks of these four great Beings as the Being of Light and Truth, the Being of Bliss, the Being of Life and the Being of Consciousness; and she tells how they become just their opposites. This is the fourfold Being who is One. As creation descends, these formateurs — though they look like creators they are not creators — they are supposed to receive a Truth from above and reflect it and project it onto this Earth. Each picks up one aspect and goes on projecting that. His power is the power from above. But like all middlemen they

are not very nice: they hold back a lot of things, and the distortion begins to appear from there. I suspect that the malady or disease of middlemen started there! Mother has spoken about it, saying that they hold back something. Even in the return the same thing applies. She speaks of how each of the great Beings that chooses to be a representative or an intermediary in the work, how each holds back something, not just in the transmission but in the return.

One way or the other, each time the creation descends one level, something is held back, something becomes broken, something becomes distorted — maybe just a little. As it enters the level of what we now call the embodied mind, there is a fragmentation, a real division. At the level of the mind we are always fighting, because it is my opinion versus your opinion, my idea versus your idea. Everything has become divided here.

As this mind descends into the plane of life, somewhere on the borders where mind is subservient to life, we have the birth of the great Asuras, not in the original sense of the Vedic Asuras who are asu-ra, which is different, but in the original Vedic sense of the word which means representing the Force aspect of the Divine. This is the sense in which Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Asuras in the Durga Stotra, the Asuras who put their mind at the service of the life-force — this is their hallmark. They can be very brilliant minds, so we should not be too much carried away by human brilliance. There are great intellectuals who are great Asuras, because they use their brilliance of mind only to serve the interests of the life-force,

and for aggrandising the ego. They may be very capable people like Ravana, who was very good in playing music and had read the scriptures, but all their knowledge is at the service of the ego and the life-force.

Still further down, somewhere in the mid-worlds of life we have those beings who have no consciousness of good or bad. They exist only for the expansion of the empire of joy and love: the Gandharvas, the Kinnaras, the great celestial musicians. Many of the heavens and hells are located in these vital worlds. Much of our art, our painting and poetry, is inspired from these vital worlds, and also many illnesses.

As the consciousness descends further, the energy becomes more and more turbulent and we have the lower vital worlds with their denizens: the Djinns, the *Pisachas*, the bloodsucking vampires who suck away energy whenever they enter any atmosphere. They feed on the vital force of others. Wherever there is an accident these fellows are around, because they like to create accidents and they enjoy them. They love drama of a very low kind, and because of these denizens, these dark obscure forms, there is in human consciousness a love for tragedy, even an attraction for it. They push us towards failure, towards fall, sometimes on a seemingly heavenly road.

Still further on we have the plane which we read about yesterday, a plane where perfect forms exist, forms of beauty, and its little beings, the fairies, the gnomes, the imps, the elves, the dwarfish creatures. They can be very nice and sweet and helpful. They are like little physical gods who govern one or

the other aspect of material creation. In the Indian tradition, they are even said to preside over some organs and illnesses. There are traditions in which if one prayed to these deities one could get rid of some illnesses — it used to be there.

Still further we have this atomic void, the Inconscient from which the world is being pulled out. This is the great descent. Into all these worlds the one Being has entered. So it is not a single descent but a double descent.

There is a third descent also, which is more relevant to us. The Infinite, within himself, has many many seeds or seedlings. He holds the *jivatmans*, the individual atman, the *jiva*, which is above time and space. These individual *jivatmans* are like so many centres of his Unity. Each projects a little ray into this creation, and through a process of evolution becomes the psychic being. The *jivatman* stands outside time and space, but projects something of itself, which would become first the psychic consciousness and then the psychic being which will play with creation and become a link between all the infinities of the Divine and this manifold play, the multiplicity of this material creation: therefore, the immense importance of the psychic being in Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

There is a fourth descent, which is new. We are here for that: the descent of the new consciousness, of the supramental Light and Truth and Power, for which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their Grace have prepared this earth. We read those beautiful lines which describe this descent which Aswapati experiences. We can read those lines, and then proceed on to 'The Glory and

Fall of Life'. This descent happens to Aswapati as his soul, after rising out of a state of ignorance, and having discovered the Secret Knowledge, yet aspires to bring down a greater world which he knows to exist. He wants to bring the superhuman form into this world here.

In a divine retreat from mortal thought,
In a prodigious gesture of soul-sight,
His being towered into pathless heights,
Naked of its vesture of humanity. [80]

The human consciousness cannot reach there. Aswapati is now climbing to levels where no mortal consciousness has ever gone — not even dared:

As thus it rose, to meet him bare and pure
A strong Descent leaped down. A Might, a Flame,
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany: [80-81]

What Sri Aurobindo has brought down is not easy for the human consciousness to bear. Even one like Aswapati, Sri Aurobindo himself, as he is rising, who has been prepared with so much tapasya, who carries within himself an aspiration that would call the very highest worlds down, even he, when he meets this descent — and what a descent it is — it is

stupendous, something worth living for, something worth dying for, a thousand times being reborn for:

... A Might, a Flame,
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany:
His nature shuddered in the Unknown's grasp. [81]

It is not easy to receive the clasp of God. Every shred of ego is torn out. The Mother says in one of her passages 'My child, you are so small, so small, so small — how will you receive the Supermind?' One of the conditions put for receiving the Supermind is to be completely free from the ego, and being equal in all conditions and circumstances: equal to heat and cold, to the touches of pleasant and unpleasant, to ill-repute and good repute, ill-fortune and good fortune, to this or that way of thinking and way of life. If we look at it, we would feel that maybe for another hundred years we have to prepare ourselves for this. All these schools which have sprung up all over the world, which are capitalising on the Supermind in spiritual supermarkets, selling cakes of transformation — for how many dollars or rupees I don't know — they are everywhere: with some nice music and some virtual reality we are made to experience something of the Supermind. Thank God, the Supermind doesn't come down like that. Mother says, 'My child, don't pull. Mostly you will end up pulling a vital being

and think you are playing with God. If at all that violent ecstasy comes down, you will suffer a breakdown. First play football, go to the Playground, go to the Gymnasium, don't be all the time meditating: prepare the body and brain and nerve.'

When we look at life from that view, we see that all the events of life and circumstances are such a beautiful preparation. When something good happens it is a preparation, when something bad happens it is a greater preparation. That is why the Mother says, 'When you ask for a prayer and I say yes, it is a Grace; when I say no it is a greater Grace.' As Sri Aurobindo says*, 'Heaven's wiser love rejects the mortal's prayer'* [456]. For her rejections are not rejections but only postponements. She never rejects, she postpones — and each postponement is a preparation for us. Many times people revolt, they say, 'Oh, they think I am not fit?! I am fit. God is not fit! He is not fit enough to accept me, who is so great, so beautiful, so intelligent! What does he know? He is losing some very precious person.' Vanity, vanity, vanity — the sole cause of so much ill in this world! If only we could look at it like this and see that we are not ready. A thousand lives are nothing, if we have to be ready to experience even a touch of this:

... A Might, a Flame,
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes, [81]

Even with the eyes of the immortals we cannot see it.

A violent Ecstasy, ... [81]

… the clasp of Mahakali, cutting off our head and wearing it in her garland — that is surrender and sacrifice.

... a Sweetness dire, [81]

Not a weak sweetness, but a sweetness whose burden is difficult to bear. There is a line in *Savitri* where Sri Aurobindo speaks of *'Bearing the burden of universal love,' [695]* — it is so difficult! Here he says:

... a Sweetness dire,
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany:
His nature shuddered in the Unknown's grasp.
In a moment shorter than death, longer than Time, [81]

What words can describe this? The power comes from a plane where all human sense of time is lost.

By a Power more ruthless than Love, happier than
Heaven [81]

Can love be ruthless? Yes, divine Love can be ruthless. When God takes to loving us, he tears away every covering of ego, strips us naked of all defence. What is the 'Hour of God'? When God gives us a clasp. That is why in 'The Hour of God' Sri Aurobindo says,

In the hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it.

All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow.

[CWSA 12: 146]

That touch makes us defenceless. It is love, but we don't experience it as love. We say, 'Oh, Divine — you are so cruel, so torturing!' In the exhibition we read about the Chaldean legend — the flowers of divine Love. What a sacrifice! To receive a drop of that Love one has to be ready to lose one's life.

By a Power more ruthless than Love, happier than
Heaven,
Taken sovereignly into eternal arms,
Haled and coerced by a stark absolute bliss,
In a whirlwind circuit of delight and force
Hurried into unimaginable depths,
Upborne into immeasurable heights,
It was torn out from its mortality
And underwent a new and bourneless change. [81]

What happens with this transformation? In a few lines Sri Aurobindo summarises it:

An omniscient knowing without sight or thought [81]

At the level of our humanity we know things either by thought or by sight. It may be a higher sight — we might see a vision, or revelation takes the form of a thought. But here the knowing is by identity, how I know myself.

An omniscient knowing without sight or thought,
An indecipherable Omnipotence, [81]

How does it act, how does it work? It can use any instruments, all instruments, dispense with everything and yet it is omnipotent.

A mystic Form that could contain the worlds,
Yet make one human breast its passionate shrine,
Drew him out of his seeking loneliness
Into the magnitudes of God's embrace. [81]

This is the great transformation that Aswapati has experienced. He is given now the charge of this creation:

This bizarre kingdom passed into his charge. [86]

All its powers and forces and energies and beings he must set right. This transformation which he is experiencing individually must be for all. This is what he will ask subsequently, saying 'How can I be satisfied with my lonely mortal days — I who have looked upon thee and have experienced this? I want it for the entire humanity.' And Savitri will say, *'My spirit's liberty I ask for all'* [649]. Aswapati must prepare the field; but he must first see the field, with all its possibilities and problems.

We have finished Book Two, Cantos One and Two, and now we should read a little bit of Canto Three as it is a continuation — 'The Glory and the Fall of Life'. This high transformation is envisaged, a practical omniscience and a practical omnipotence, for man: an ecstasy, a sweetness, a love, a joy

without limits. But now when Aswapati turns his gaze to the field of human life, what does he see? What is this human life for which he wants to bring down that power?

He crossed the limits of embodied Mind [116]

When we are in embodied mind we don't look at it like this, but he crosses beyond and looks at the fields of life.

And entered wide obscure disputed fields [116]

Much like our patta-transfer problems these are disputed fields; what belongs to whom we don't know.

Where all was doubt and change and nothing sure, [116]

Now he is seeing to where he has to bring this light, this consciousness.

A world of search and toil without repose.
We can recognise ourselves in it.
As one who meets the face of the Unknown,
A questioner with none to give reply,
Attracted to a problem never solved,
Always uncertain of the ground he trod,
Always drawn on to an inconstant goal
He travelled through a land peopled by doubts
In shifting confines on a quaking base. [116]

When we look at our own life, where is the certitude? We feel 'This is definite' but the next moment it changes. In the morning we take a resolution, in the evening we break it. One day we are convinced of something, another day we are

unconvinced; a third day we are filled with doubts about everything, from ourselves to all that is around us, to God. The fourth day something happens and we are all joy and happiness again. This is human life — everything shifting, everything floating. Much further on in *Savitri* we read:

Always he builds, but finds no constant ground,
Always he journeys, but nowhere arrives; [337]

This is our human life. All the time we journey but we arrive nowhere.

What is the law of life here? We all start with great dreams and sometimes these dreams are nourished, sometimes they are thwarted, but at the end of it what happens? *'A huge inconsequence was her action's law'* [117]. At the end we realise, 'This is not what we really wanted.' We were actually looking for something else. We go on and on, we build and rebuild, and destroy and rebuild. At the end we discover:

A huge inconsequence was her action's law,
As if all possibility must be drained,
And anguish and bliss were pastimes of the heart. [117]

We are not satisfied with only bliss. We want a little anguish. Our hearts are not happy with only peace, we are not happy only sitting in the Ashram. We want to chat, and not only have pleasant, beautiful thoughts. We must also discuss about problems — in other people, not our own of course! That is left to others to discover our problems, so we discuss somebody else's problems, somebody else will discuss our problems, and

that is our pastime, a universal pastime. Sri Aurobindo knows everything.

In a gallop of thunder-hooved vicissitudes
She swept through the race-fields of Circumstance, [117]

We are shaped by 'Circumstance' in this ignorance. This is not the truth of our life, of our deeper soul, but outwardly this is how it is. We keep complaining of circumstances: 'Oh, this is good, this is bad, what can I do?' And all our life we only complain, complain and complain. The Mother would tell us, 'My child, never complain or grumble. When you complain, all kinds of forces enter into you.' Of course, it is understood, adverse forces, wrong forces. 'Never complain.' She says, 'What do circumstances matter? What matters is the attitude we have towards them.' But in our ordinary consciousness, our life is swept through the race fields of circumstance. We are shaped by circumstances. If we are in surroundings which are pleasant then we say, 'Oh, I am so happy, I am so lucky, God is so kind.' If the circumstances are not very nice to our ego we say 'God is very unkind'. We have that famous aphorism of Sri Aurobindo;

Sir Philip Sidney said of the criminal led out to be hanged, "There, but for the grace of God, goes Sir Philip Sidney." [CWSA 12: 426]

He was a great statesman and writer. When seeing a criminal his heart is full of compassion. The criminal is going to the

gallows, and he says 'But for the grace of God, I could have been there.'

And then Sri Aurobindo says,

> *Wiser, had he said, "There, by the grace of God, goes Sir Philip Sidney." [CWSA 12: 426]*

Even when you go to the gallows it is a grace of God. That is the consciousness we can enter. Describing the way we are, Sri Aurobindo says:

> *Or, swaying, she tossed between her heights and deeps,*
> *Uplifted or broken on Time's inconstant wheel. [117]*

We are caught like a fly on the wheel of time. There is a giant wheel, I think it is everywhere but we have seen it in India during festivals, and you go in it. As you are moving upwards, there is 'Aah!' from everybody. As you are going down, you feel you are going to fall.

This is human life. We don't even realise that somebody else is calling the shots. We are happy about it, like a fly mounted on the wheel of circumstance.

> *Amid a tedious crawl of drab desires*
> *She writhed, a worm mid worms in Nature's mud, [117]*

A crawl of desires — from this object to that object to a third object.

We are reminded of the great *mahavakya* in *The Life Divine*:

> *The ascent to the divine Life is the human journey, the Work of works, the acceptable Sacrifice. This alone is*

man's real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe.

[CWSA 21-22: 42]

But the greatness in us is there still, that he will tell us.

Then, Titan-statured, took all earth for food, [117]

It doesn't matter whether it is a dinosaur size or the size of a worm — it is still that life crawling for drab desires.

Ambitioned the seas for robe, for crown the stars
And shouting strode from peak to giant peak,
Clamouring for worlds to conquer and to rule.
Then, wantonly enamoured of Sorrow's face,
She plunged into the anguish of the depths
And, wallowing, clung to her own misery. [117]

Life is not satisfied with anything. Too much happiness it cannot bear — it must feel sad. Not only feel sad — it clings to its misery. This is the problem: when we are depressed it's not just that we are depressed — we enjoy our depression: 'Ah, it is so nice, I am depressed. After all, I can be depressed also; I am human!' Otherwise we feel 'Only happy, only happy — something is wrong with us.' Even sometimes doctors will doubt, you know: 'Always happy? Are you OK?' We must have sometimes a pulled face, some tears … then it's OK. We

love this depression. Sitting in one room, the Lord knew everything, better than us.

In dolorous converse with her squandered self
She wrote the account of all that she had lost, [117]

What do we think during those moments of misery? 'I lost this, I lost that, my life is useless, meaningless.' It is nothing but a play of life.

Nothing is lost because nothing was gained. To begin with, the idea itself was false: 'I gained it, I have it, I possess it!' All belongs to God. When we live with that consciousness, what is gained and what is lost? But life feels like that.

Or sat with grief as with an ancient friend. [117]

We must have a glass of beer in hand, and grief must sit on one side and depression on the other, and we must recount to each other our tales of woe — and feel happy that my grief is a little less than yours.

And sometimes there is a competition there: if I am less unhappy, I am not happy about it: 'Oh, what do you say? Your unhappiness is nothing — I'll tell you what I have gone through in life.' There is a great competition. Some people will make a show of their guilt, 'I have confessed so many sins.' — 'Oh, only so many? You don't know how many sins I have committed and confessed.' This is human life.

A romp of violent raptures soon was spent, [117]

Clubs, parties, all this … violent raptures; thrills of the flesh, spent too soon.

Or she lingered tied to an inadequate joy [117]

Half happy, half sad.

Missing the turns of fate, missing life's goal. [117]

And why? When we were clinging on to these inadequate things, so many times God came and knocked at the door, 'Come, come, come with me, come …' There is a beautiful poem of Sri Aurobindo, 'The Dream Boat', in which he describes this state:

Who was it that came to me in a boat made of
dream-fire
With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?
Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur.
"Do you come now? Is the heart's fire ready?"
[CWSA 2: 576]

The great God is asking, 'Do you come now? Is your heart's fire ready?' And then he describes the human state, like an accountant he is measuring.

Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered,
It recalled all that the life's joy cherished,
Imaged the felicity it must leave lost for ever,
And the boat passed and the gold god vanished.
[CWSA 2: 576]

Then what happens? Once one has felt the touch of God's love, no love can satisfy. Once one has felt the touch of God's joy, no earthly joy can satisfy. Once one has felt the touch of God, the world appears hollow within the breast. So he says:

Now within the hollowness of the world's breast inhabits
—
For the love died and the old joy ended —
Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,
And the gold god and the dream boat come not.
[CWSA 2: 576]

Here he says:

Missing the turns of fate, missing life's goal. [117]

Then:

A scene was planned for all her numberless moods
Where each could be the law and way of life
But none could offer a pure felicity. [117]

It is amazing: when we live in the life-world and are driven by the vital we don't even realise it. It can be really amazing. Just a few days back I received a mail from a student — a very bright student, very open to something beautiful — just about 19, a psychology student. She writes, 'Da, there is this girl whom I am very fond of, and I tell her, "Why do you spend your life drinking and doing all this? There is a better way to live." But now I begin to feel …' She doesn't realise how in company there are interchanges and how they can affect us.

'I have begun to feel maybe I too should drink, before I can tell her with certainty.' As if, by that standard, every doctor must experience heart-attack! And for me the situation would be very difficult, being a psychiatrist, I must experience every malady of the mind. This is perverse logic, but life gives this logic. Who knows? We have already gone through it in the past, we don't have to go through everything in every life. We don't have to taste mire and say 'Oh, it's very bad in taste.' But human life is like that, the vital moves us like that.

A spirit of her self and aim unsure,

The vital is never sure.

Tired soon of too much joy and happiness
She needs the spur of pleasure and of pain
And the native taste of suffering and unrest: [118]

We are restless because of peace. Earlier Sri Aurobindo describes why this spirit is pulled back from the unwilling gulfs:

The restless nether members tire of peace; [34]

We don't want peace; we want restlessness.

She strains for an end that never can she win.
A perverse savour haunts her thirsting lips: [118]

Only human beings can be so stupid as to like the taste of tobacco and alcohol. Animals won't take it. Mother tells the story of when a monkey was given alcohol: it immediately threw it away, because it tastes so horrible. And tobacco is so

horrible in smell and everything. But human beings have some perverse savour. What kind of life we have drawn into ourselves!

A perverse savour haunts her thirsting lips. [118]

People walk for miles to find a glass of drink and a cigarette.

For the grief she weeps which came from her own choice [118]

One chooses, then one suffers and one weeps. This is human life. We choose, we suffer, we weep. But sometimes we do worse things, like blaming someone else. Here he is saying:

For the grief she weeps which came from her own choice,
For the pleasure yearns that racked with wounds her breast; [118]

How many wounds the human consciousness endures through all the things that it tastes, and yet we want more: 'Maybe this time, maybe this one, maybe this is going to be really good.' Where is that perfection in the human scheme? And yet we seek for the pleasure 'that racked with wounds her breast.'

Aspiring to heaven she turns her steps towards hell. [118]

There are people who have visited Pondicherry. You ask them, 'What did you do? Did you go to the Ashram?' 'Ashram? Is there an Ashram there also?' 'So what did you do?' 'We

went to Rendezvous.' 'What else did you do? You didn't go to the Dining Room?' 'Dining Room? What Dining Room?' 'What did you do?' 'We had nice wine, Pondicherry is famous for wines.' We come so close, and then we go so far.

Something in the person's soul, I really believe, brought them so close, 'Aspiring to heaven' and the steps turn towards hell, and one goes back and says 'Pondicherry is a lovely place.' 'Why?' 'Because the wine is so good.' What about the Divine? That's not what we want.

Chance she has chosen and danger for playfellows;[118]

God's protection we don't want. Mother says somewhere, to someone very close to her: 'My child, you are really going out of my protection again and again.' We don't want that. We want to have some danger, some fun.

Fate's dreadful swing she has taken for cradle and seat.
[118]

One can envisage all the fast-running motor-cycles … 'cradle and seat'. Sri Aurobindo in his description is so perfect that one can see the whole thing. Some people go with such a speed, and if they don't knock themselves down, they end up knocking someone else.

In the Ashram recently we had at least four or five fractures, thanks to this. Fate's dreadful swing she has taken for cradle and seat. Yet …

Now here comes the hope. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo has examined in great detail the question: Can such

a life be transformed? He says 'Yes, because in its heart there is still something beautiful and divine.' That is the hope of life.

Yet pure and bright from the Timeless was her birth,
[118]

That is why. When we live in the world of life or by the world of life something in us still feels, a little bit of that memory still lingers in our heart, that joy we have left behind, that carefree laughter of the gods, the sense of an absolute power. What drives the reckless youth, so self-confident and self-assured, but the memory in life? — 'Nothing can happen to me. I am all-capable.' Here Sri Aurobindo describes that.

Yet pure and bright from the Timeless was her birth,
A lost world-rapture lingers in her eyes, [118]

That is why, when we see those adolescents where the life-force is at its peak, they don't worry about anything — '*careless of suffering, heedless of sin and fall*' [117].

Her moods are faces of the Infinite:
Beauty and happiness are her native right,
And endless Bliss is her eternal home. [118]

Life, fallen on earth; life waking in the little reed, the grass we trample with our foot, writhing in the worm, crawling in its insect flights; life flying in the wings of the birds; life reaching out to vast vistas of thought, to unconquered horizons; life that goes beyond Man into domains that our embodied mind and cabined sight cannot see. All this is not a curse, it is a fall from the great heights.

In the Isha Upanishad there is a very beautiful description of this life. Where is its home? These waters which flow down: *matariswar dhadhati* — it is held in the bosom of the One. Life is one of the aspects of the Divine, which comes from its home of Bliss, and even in its worm-like food, even in pleasure and pain, it carries some memory of that original Delight. That is why human beings seek delight naturally.

It is one thing that we do not find because we are in ignorance, or our hearts clutch at forfeited bliss, but life in us keeps seeking, because that is what it has come from. So this is the great description.

We are reaching closing-time, but we can read a little more, because we should not end with this sad state of affairs. Sri Aurobindo will show us life's 'antique face of joy'. He has shown us the mask it has worn. Life here has worn this mask of pain, of suffering, of perverse pleasure, of thrills of the flesh, of momentary beauty, but there is a deeper truth of life, the endless Bliss which is her home.

This now revealed its antique face of joy, Now Aswapati sees life as it is in its own home, not as it is found here.

A sudden disclosure to the heart of grief
Tempting it to endure and long and hope.
Even in changing worlds bereft of peace,
In an air racked with sorrow and with fear
And while his feet trod on a soil unsafe,
He saw the image of a happier state. [118]

That is why, in spite of everything, in spite of sorrow, suffering, failure, fall, disaster, tragedy, something in us yet hopes — because, deep within, life carries the memory of a happier state. This Aswapati sees.

As far as heaven, as near as thought and hope,
Glimmered the kingdom of a griefless life. [118]

What is this kingdom? What a description he gives:

Too high and glad for mortal lids to seize
But near and real to the longing heart
And to the body's passionate thought and sense
Are the hidden kingdoms of beatitude. [119]

If we plunge deep inside we can feel some touch of that beatitude.

In some close unattained realm which yet we feel,
Immune from the harsh clutch of Death and Time,
Escaping the search of sorrow and desire,
In bright enchanted safe peripheries
For ever wallowing in bliss they lie. [119]

There are kingdoms, there are beatitudes, in which one can always wallow in bliss, not in suffering and sorrow.

In dream and trance and muse before our eyes,
Across a subtle vision's inner field,
Wide rapturous landscapes fleeting from the sight,
The figures of the perfect kingdom pass
And behind them leave a shining memory's trail.

Imagined scenes or great eternal worlds,
Dream-caught or sensed, they touch our hearts with their depths;
They wake up the heart to a beauty, to a joy
Unreal-seeming, yet more real than life, [120]

When they touch us, our hearts wake up to a glad communion with our own deeper states.

Happier than happiness, truer than things true, [120]

And now comes one of Sri Aurobindo's ironical punches:

If dreams these were or captured images,
Dream's truth made false earth's vain realities. [120]

Someone asked Sri Aurobindo 'I feel love for the Divine inside, and I feel happiness inside when I turn to you. Is it all real or is it imagination?' Sri Aurobindo says, 'These feelings are spiritual feelings, they are real experiences.' They are subjective. Experiences are not only seeing visions. These subjective states when we feel the nearness of God's embrace — we feel it with an inmost heart. And Sri Aurobindo says here, Let them say if they are dreams or imaginations:

If dreams these were or captured images,
Dream's truth made false earth's vain realities.
In a swift eternal moment fixed there live
Or ever recalled come back to longing eyes [120]

Once we have touched that state we can call it back, so it is not just imagination. And what are these worlds?

Calm heavens of imperishable Light,
Illumined continents of violet peace,
Oceans and rivers of the mirth of God
And griefless countries under purple suns. [120]

And on that happy note we will close.

The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life

Talk at Savitri Bhavan on August 22, 2009 (Invocation 32:30-53)

The Mother has spoken of *Savitri* as a supreme revelation; as such it belongs to the class of poems known as 'revelatory' and by its very nature it is a poem which cannot exactly be understood by the intellectual mind which has neither the data nor the capacity. But revelations themselves mount from hill to hill, as the ancient seers saw. There is a plane of Revelation in which things are revealed as symbols, and as one climbs higher one sees the inner lines of forces which lie behind the symbols. Still further, the symbol is illumined by an inner meaning and sense, and then one can discover the Idea-Force or the Real Idea that has built the world. Sri Aurobindo goes beyond these and brings us a little taste of all that is closed and sealed to our outward gaze. It is not just a revelation poured in the body of words and sound-symbols: it has a creative power in it and by the mere fact of reading, Sri Aurobindo gives us some kind of a contact with whatever he is describing. We see this in many of his works. One example is when we read *The Synthesis of*

Yoga: when we read the section 'The Yoga of Divine Works', it is as if a flame of sacrifice burns through the chapters, inducing one to lead a life of consecration. When we read through 'The Yoga of Knowledge', we feel as if we are climbing a steep mountain, and Sri Aurobindo holds our hand and carries us from one plateau to another. Again, when we read 'The Yoga of Divine Love', throughout the chapters a strange sweetness, an unearthly ethereal sweetness and joy seems to fill our being, as if the divine Companion were walking by our side. All this, and much more, is poured into *Savitri*.

In this series of revelations we are presently being shown the subtle worlds. Sri Aurobindo is taking us hand in hand, sometimes carrying us, through these worlds which have been known in both the Indian and the European mysticism. In the Vedas there is a description of these worlds, and so also in European mysticism, often under the name of occultism. The modern mind, the rational and scientific mind, often rejects them, partly because it lacks the data to verify their existence. Our corporeal senses are unable to put us in contact with them because they can only tell us about gross-physical things. Sri Aurobindo raises this question: 'Why don't we know about these hidden worlds?' and he gives a very beautiful answer, one that appeals to both common-sense and logic. He says that we do not know about these worlds, just as we do not know what is going on in our neighbour's mind — but that does not mean that in the neighbour's mind nothing is going on. There are

things going on in his mind, thoughts and feelings arise, but we are unaware of them. Of course, Sri Aurobindo is very generous: frankly, we are not even aware of what is going on in our own minds, what to speak of hidden worlds based on the crude sense-data? The only way that one can understand is to start by taking them on faith and then move on. We need not stay only with faith. Religion has stayed with faith; religion both in the east and the west speaks of these hidden worlds, but there one has to just accept their existence by faith. In yoga one moves on, starting with faith, one moves from experience to experience. As the inner senses are liberated, as the inner consciousness is liberated through the action of Grace, these worlds and their contacts begin to become not only possible, but real, palpable, concrete — as a mystic would say, more concrete than this earthly reality. That is why the yogis speak of us having not just one body but many bodies.

In what we have been reading recently, Sri Aurobindo is taking us on a tour of one of these bodies, the vital body, through the vital world which corresponds to the vital body of the Cosmos. In this process he is taking us from level to level. Sri Aurobindo has described the heights and the depths of these worlds — their forces, their energies and how they have influenced the earth scene, what has been their characteristic role, their action, the principle that works in them, even their beings. But as he has himself has written, we should not believe that when Sri Aurobindo speaks of 'The Little Life' and 'The Greater Life', 'The Paradise of the Life-Gods' and 'The

Descent into Night', that these are the only Life-worlds. Each of these worlds divides into several sub-worlds, in fact, it is quite possible that if one entered the Life-world one would end up discovering thousands of Worlds of Life alone. That is why mystic literature has often spoken of not just one, two, three, but of many, many worlds. But they are built upon a certain plan. That plan, Sri Aurobindo reveals to us, consists of three lower worlds of matter, life and mind, and three higher worlds: the Sat-lok, the Tapo-lok, the Ananda-lok, and these are linked through the Supramental world. While Sri Aurobindo describes this, he also reveals to us the mystery of these three lower 'fallen' worlds. These worlds have originated from the One and therefore each world picks up one aspect of the One Infinite, and that becomes its predominant principle and everything else is subordinated to that. Therefore, these are called typal worlds.

There are only two planes where one can discover the complete Truth: one revealed completely above in the Supreme; the other below, concealed in the depths of matter. All energies, all powers, all forces find their entry into this Earth, and through the evolutionary process they are being revealed step by step. All other worlds are typal worlds. In the world of life, the dominant principle is desire, and forms there are subservient to desire — meaning thereby that what one desires assumes a form; that is almost like an instant action of the energy of this world — unlike the world of matter. One might think, 'Oh, it is so nice: whatever one desires, that immediately creates a form.' But as Sri Aurobindo would

reveal to us, this is not what we are really seeking. And yet, this world has its own place in this great and perilous and beautiful and dangerous and charming journey.

In traditional yoga as we have known it over the last thousand years, one does not speak of these worlds. The reason is that if Moksha, Nirvana, or simply Self-Realisation of the *adwaitin* kind is the goal, then there is no need to speak about them. All that one does is to dismiss the whole affair as the complex Lila of the world which none can understand. In a sense it is true, and if the goal is simply to escape from the lines of Nature, then one should just find the shortest route, through any door, it does not matter — any door or any window will do. One need not understand the whole affair. But as Sri Aurobindo says, we are not out to escape from the world, we are here for a divine Conquest of this world; and therefore it is important to understand these worlds not only in their action upon us, but also in their own cosmic movement. Not only for Yoga, it is important also in ordinary life, because so much happens within us which is the result of a subtle transaction, as Sri Aurobindo says, 'an inner commerce' with these worlds. Because we are unaware of that, *'They bring the incoherencies of Fate'* [162], as described in a beautiful line. We don't understand because we don't see what is really happening inside us. Therefore, to understand about these worlds is important both from a pragmatic standpoint, from the point of view of our earthly life, and also from the viewpoint of the ancient yogis and mystics who were very much concerned with

an integral knowledge. They sought this knowledge, they revealed it in the language and the symbols which were pertinent to that time. Many things they hid because they thought that this knowledge can have another side, it can be subject to misuse. But we are fortunate and privileged that Sri Aurobindo is revealing this knowledge to us in a language that we can receive.

We are reading in 'The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life'. In the Life-worlds the reigning principle is desire, and the objects sought are joy and power and intensity of movement. It tries to capture the experience of the extremes. This is the joy of life: it tries to capture the many moods of the Infinite. That is why we see that before life emerged on earth there was a purely material existence which we can more or less categorise in a few elements at the most. The scientists say that there seem to be about 108 elements. From the gross point of view we can say we have plains and rivers and mountains and seas — only a few things. But the moment life enters into matter we see that the whole world is filled with infinity. That is the beauty of life: it tries to recapture the many moods of Infinity. As Sri Aurobindo has said, it is a child who has strayed away from its heavenly home but it remembers what it was like when it was a little baby and therefore it tries to re-create and capture that mood of Infinity. In its own native world it can do that with much greater freedom, but even here life tries to do it. That is the principle of that world, unlike our world where the principle is rigidity of form and inertia. In that world there

is a much greater plasticity and freedom of movement. That world, because it is untouched by the mental world, does not care about what we call virtue and vice. It seeks the hazard of extremes, intensity of movement and the rapture of that movement for its own sake. Sri Aurobindo says,

This was transition-line and starting-point,
A first immigration into heavenliness, [184]

For all who cross into that brilliant sphere: These are the kinsmen of our earthly race;

This region borders on our mortal state. [184]

As we enter into this zone of Greater Life, the drab pull of the earth, the sense of mortality begins to fade behind, and we begin to breathe a freer and a vaster air. This is the first immigration line, not the last: there will be many borderlines and many checkpoints that Sri Aurobindo will reveal to us, but this is the first immigration, where we begin to feel an unearthly sense and force moving us.

On the next page we read these lines about how these worlds are concerned essentially with power and joy and the expansion and the intensity. This power and joy, this sense of expansion and intensity can be used either by the forces of evil on the lower side, or the forces of good. Sri Aurobindo says that in this yoga this world too must be conquered and placed at the feet of the Divine for his use.

Whether for Heaven or Hell they must wage war:
Warriors of Good, they serve a shining cause

Or are Evil's soldiers in the pay of Sin.
For evil and good an equal tenure keep
Wherever Knowledge is Ignorance's twin.
All powers of Life towards their godhead tend [185]

In these worlds Knowledge walks hand in hand with Ignorance. That is why these worlds are called 'fallen worlds'. The worlds of mind try to re-create the total knowledge, but they do it by piecing things together. The worlds of life try to recreate the original consciousness, its power, its joy, but again they do it by capturing the many moods — but each mood is unique in its own right; it is not harmonised and unified with all the others, as in the One Divine. In the One Divine all these moods are harmonised and unified: sweetness is one with strength; but here sweetness touches its own absolute, strength its own absolute. These are worlds where each power and potentiality tries to touch its own absolute, but isolated from the rest. Lower down on the same page we read,

Her worshippers proclaim her sacred right.
A red-tiaraed Falsehood they revere,
Worship the shadow of a crooked God,
Admit the black Idea that twists the brain
Or lie with the harlot Power that slays the soul.
A mastering virtue statuesques the pose,
Or a Titan passion goads to a proud unrest:
At Wisdom's altar they are kings and priests
Or their life a sacrifice to an idol of Power. [185]

Many myths and legends, especially the epics, are built around this world. The whole heroic age of mankind is about these worlds, where each being expresses a tendency or quality and tries to reach its own peak. We have many stories which have tried to symbolically express this world. One which comes to mind is about King Shibi, who in generosity goes to a point where he says, 'Take my entire flesh, but I want to save this little dove because he has taken refuge with me.' When it comes to nobility and sacrifice they can go to any extent, when it comes to war, and even laying down one's life for the sake of something one is convinced about, they can go to any extent. This is the greater life; it is not a life of our daily cares and worries, our little wants and hopes, our little anxieties and fears, but a life where there is a larger movement.

A charm and greatness locked in every hour
Awakes the joy which sleeps in all things made.
A mighty victory or a mighty fall, [186]

As Sri Aurobindo writes in *Essays on the Gita*, when Arjuna asks 'What should I do? Should I fight or not fight?' immediately, the very first answer of Sri Krishna uplifts him beyond his little thinking, his limited way of looking at little things. Immediately he is reminded of a greater plane from which he is born. Sri Aurobindo puts it very beautifully, he says that Sri Krishna gives the answer of a hero to a hero: 'Either conquer mightily, or fall nobly. Either way the gates of heaven are open to you. Either conquer and enjoy this kingdom, or die

fighting a great battle. Both are worthwhile.' In this Kingdom of the Greater Life we have this kind of approach.

A mighty victory or a mighty fall,
A throne in heaven or a pit in hell, [186]

It is not afraid of going down, even into the pit of hell if that be necessary.

The dual Energy they have justified
And marked their souls with her tremendous seal:
Whatever Fate may do to them they have earned; [186]

Sri Aurobindo brings us into touch with these worlds, he gives us a little taste of this world, he inspires us to climb to this greater life.

Whatever Fate may do to them they have earned; [186]

Not like little weaklings who are always afraid of what Fate may bring.

Something they have done, something they have been,
they live.
There Matter is soul's result and not its cause.
In a contrary balance to earth's truth of things
The gross weighs less, the subtle counts for more;
On inner values hangs the outer plan. [186]

Our life hangs on outer values. If somebody meets with a tragic fate, one says 'Oh, it was very unfortunate.' In that world, that is not the value. One may live a hundred years, two hundred years, but a worthless life, from the point of view of

the greater life, is meaningless; but an Abhimanyu, dying at the age of 16 fighting a valiant battle and falling nobly, is what counts. Beings of this world feel and think like that, because that is the characteristic energy of that world. This will explain many things that appear contradictory to our eyes. For example, that of all the people during the Second World War, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, looking for a great instrument, picked Winston Churchill. If one looks at things from the purely outer point of view, he is neither a very devoutly religious man, so far as we know; he has certain habits and tendencies which many people would not regard as very virtuous, and yet he had a tremendous life-energy — and it is this that was important. In fact, in one place Sri Aurobindo says that this abundant life-energy often flows into wrong channels and people call it vice. There is the story of Hanuman who has tremendous life-energy; as a child he is always plucking people's beards and troubling everyone, disturbing the class so that often the teachers have to tell him 'You stay outside because others cannot study in your presence'. He is born with that, he is moved by a sense of largeness; he cannot be confined to a small classroom. That would explain many things which we don't understand about today's children, who are born with a larger Prana because the touch of the Supermind is releasing a greater life inside them. Therefore, unlike their parents, our generation, which was more concerned about what job they will get and whatnot, they just live life with the carefree laughter of the gods. They are born with this, and only after

reading Sri Aurobindo we begin to understand the touch of these worlds. This is the passage that humanity is going through.

In this world and in the beings of these worlds simultaneously the walls and the boundaries are not so rigid as in our material world. When we are totally entranced in gross matter then we understand nothing about what is happening in another person's heart and mind. In fact, we are so deeply into ignorance that even if somebody says one sentence, we understand it in a completely different way, because ego gives its own twist and meaning — a cause of much misunderstanding in the world. But let us see how the beings of this world interact with each other. We have these lines on the same page:

In the communion of two meeting minds
Thought looked at thought and had no need of speech;
[186]

One understands others in this world because there is an interpenetration of substance. This is a world that is much more free, fluid; the forms of this plane are much more fluid. That is why this image of fixed forms, fixed gods, came much later. In these worlds the same gods and goddesses, or the same Titan kings, can appear in different forms, because the form here is plastic to the touch of the energy of this world.

Emotion clasped emotion in two hearts, [186]

This is why, when human beings are moved by some touch of these worlds, spontaneously one begins to feel, 'Yes, yes, I feel exactly as you feel.' Of course, we must understand that this world is also a world of Ignorance, but at that point of time the touch of this world generates this experience.

They felt each other's thrill in the flesh and nerves
Or melted each in each and grew immense
As when two houses burn and fire joins fire:
Hate grappled hate and love broke in on love,
Will wrestled with will on mind's invisible ground;
Others' sensations passing through like waves
Left quivering the subtle body's frame,
Their anger rushed galloping in brute attack,
A charge of trampling hooves on shaken soil;
One felt another's grief invade the breast,
Another's joy exulting ran through the blood:
Hearts could draw close through distance, voices near
That spoke upon the shore of alien seas. [186-87]

That is why in yoga, it is bound to happen that after some time, all the energies that are locked in matter begin to get liberated, and one passes through this zone. That is a point where one becomes acutely sensitive to everything that is happening in the environment. Often, if such a person were to mingle in a crowd and feel uneasy, people might wonder and think that yoga is supposed to make you more stable, but it is making you more unstable. The reason is this, that one enters into this zone — it is just a passage, of course; again and again

Sri Aurobindo will tell us that this is not the resting ground and one should not rest in that state. That is why it is very important to have a spiritual realism and a solid grounding even in matter, otherwise normally we are shut in matter's wall and it is very safe. That is why two kinds of people are not affected: those who are like sages, who have reached the transcendent heights; and those who are like stone — totally like matter, so they are not affected. But there is an intermediate range where one becomes more and more subtle, the consciousness becomes more and more refined, and as the Mother puts it, this sensitivity which develops at a stage of yoga is actually the sign of an evolution of consciousness; but then one has to pass beyond. But right now Sri Aurobindo is describing that point where

> *One felt another's grief invade the breast,*
> *Another's joy exulting ran through the blood:*
> *Hearts could draw close through distance, voices near*
> *That spoke upon the shore of alien seas.*
> *There beat a throb of living interchange:*
> *Being felt being even when afar*
> *And consciousness replied to consciousness. [187]*

We expect that when this world comes — of course, this is not the New World but only a passage, when much of humanity has evolved to this point — we won't need telecommunication and mobiles; and probably this was the kind of development at one stage that was actually happening, because one could directly make a reply of consciousness to consciousness. One

doesn't need to speak for half an hour to communicate something. Often speaking half an hour leads to more and more confusion. In this intense state, the more we speak the more we confuse, the more we misunderstand. Sri Aurobindo is giving us a key, a master-key: if we try to understand and to feel things from this Greater Life-plane, things could be simpler.

And consciousness replied to consciousness.
And yet …

There is a 'yet' —

And yet the ultimate oneness was not there. [187]

This is still a world of Ignorance, a world of division.

There was a separateness of soul from soul:
An inner wall of silence could be built,
An armour of conscious might protect and shield; [187]

Sri Aurobindo is telling us now the secret of how to protect ourselves when we are in this phase of extreme sensitivity which sometimes comes as our consciousness becomes refined, subtle, and begins to enter and receive some touch of these worlds; he says we can build an armour of silence and safety.

An inner wall of silence could be built,
An armour of conscious might protect and shield;
The being could be closed in and solitary;
One could remain apart in self, alone. [187]

Now we can skip a few pages. Aswapati goes through these worlds and sees their many moods, myriad energies, countless facades. Many forms appeared to his eyes, each claiming its right of admittance and entry. He passes through this. We come to page 191:

A witness overmastered by his scene, [191]

This inner world is captivating, and many souls can get trapped in this world. In Yoga these are known as the mid-worlds. They are dangerous worlds because their charm can be so alluring, they can manufacture almost anything. One desires to see Krishna, and Krishna is there in front of your eyes. It is so difficult — unless one has the right inner discrimination or a conscious surrender to the Divine, one can easily get misled.

There is a little story I heard about someone who wanted to give talks on *The Life Divine* — it is another dangerous profession, to give talks! He asked the Mother for permission and the Mother would not reply. He waited for some time and then suddenly he had a revelation: he saw Krishna before him and Krishna said 'Yes, yes, of course you can!' — or something to that effect: 'You can go ahead and give talks.' So he wrote to Mother, 'I have already received Sri Krishna's *adesh*, so I am going to give the talks.' The Mother wired to him: 'It is not Krishna you have seen, but a hostile force assuming the form of Krishna.' Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could know all this, sitting there in Pondicherry. But the person did not understand, did not get the message, and went on to

give one talk, another talk, a few talks, till finally he had to keep quiet and learn all that he was speaking about.

This is the kind of risk we face in these worlds and we have all, I am sure, encountered people — certainly I have seen quite a few — who keep having visions by the dozen from morning to evening: every possible god they have seen, and yet it does not seem to make any change at all in their life, except sometimes to puff up the vanity, because these are the worlds where Desire rules. That is why it is so necessary to purify. It is very good if for a long time one does not see the Divine because that means that the Divine has taken our consecration seriously. Otherwise, one may get caught in these vital worlds without any purification and one starts seeing things and one can easily get lost.

Therefore, he allows this Desire; as we shall see later, it changes into an anguish and at its height it becomes a sob of suffering and yearning, as we find in the instance of some mystics like Mira. Those are the peaks of the 'Kingdoms of the Greater Life'. And then he says, 'Now, child-soul, you are ready to graduate into adulthood.' But as we enter into Yoga and from the third day, the fourth day we start seeing things, we must be doubly careful, triply careful. Here Sri Aurobindo describes,

> *A witness overmastered by his scene,*
> *He admired her splendid front of pomp and play*
> *And the marvels of her rich and delicate craft, [191]*

If they create a Krishna in front of you, you can't disbelieve that it is the real Krishna, because every detail is there, even the fluting can be heard. These worlds can create that kind of thing.

And thrilled to the insistence of her cry;
Impassioned he bore the sorceries of her might, [191]

One of the precautions that Sri Aurobindo recommends is 'Do not take the *bhoga*, the enjoyment, of the experience.' Do not start enjoying: 'Ah, I saw this, I heard that …' and worst of all, start narrating it to everyone. One learns it with much pain sometimes that these are not things to be spoken of. Just wait. The rishis knew how to wait and let revelation mount upon revelation. That is why this one word, this beautiful word, pregnant with so many meanings, comes in the Upanishads: Who sees the Atman? '*tam atmastham yenu pasyanti dhira*' — '*dhira*': one who knows how to wait, who is patient, persevering, who is stable — all those shades of meaning are captured in this one word — not one who is impatient and over-eager, because these worlds give that feeling; they make us want to achieve the divine in haste, and therefore we get caught in them.

Impassioned he bore the sorceries of her might,
Felt laid on him her abrupt mysterious will,
Her hands that knead fate in their violent grasp,
Her touch that moves, her powers that seize and drive.
[191]

But Aswapati is not just any ordinary aspirant, so he casts his glance deep, to see what is lying at the heart of this world, and he discovers something interesting:

But this too he saw, her soul that wept within, [191]

Because it tried and tried and tried, but could not recapture the Infinite: it could only create forms after forms.

But this too he saw, her soul that wept within,
Her seekings vain that clutch at fleeing truth,
Her hopes whose sombre gaze mates with despair,
The passion that possessed her longing limbs,
The trouble and rapture of her yearning breasts,
Her mind that toils unsatisfied with its fruits,
Her heart that captures not the one Beloved. [191]

All else is there. We shall see that also in 'The Kingdoms of the Greater Mind' everything is there — all thoughts, formulas, theorems — yet the One is missing. That is why there is so much emphasis on the idea that until one has found the One who is infinite, one should not rest. The ancient yogis always almost used it as a dictum, and a great mystic has said that knowing Him all else can be known. The Upanishads also speak of it, and another mystic said, '*ekai jane sab jane, sab janat ek na hoi*', 'It is by the One that one can know the rest, the many.' In Sri Aurobindo's yoga also, and here in Aswapati's yoga, we see that he has first discovered the One, he had completed the Vedantic yoga, and then he discovers all the planes of the cosmic consciousness in this book, 'The

Traveller of the Worlds'. These worlds have not to be explored as one ordinarily enters into the new age techniques and all kinds of prana stuff where one picks up some vital energy and plays with it. These are very dangerous things, especially for one who is going into yoga, for sometimes they can end up aggrandising the ego and instead of a demi-god one can become an instrument of a titanic will.

Always he met a veiled and seeking Force,
An exiled goddess building mimic heavens, [191]

As he moved upward, each plane said 'Here is heaven' but as he went, something was always still missing. These are the kinds of heavens which Viswamitra once built for Trishanku when he could not get into the real heaven. Viswamitra had tremendous power; he said 'Don't worry, I'll build a heaven for you.' With the power of his tapasya he could build such a heaven. There are many such heavens which are annexes of the real worlds, some of them created by our own thoughts and feelings; and it is so easy to get locked there. It is only the sincerity of aspiration that can save us from all this. That is why Mother says that sincerity is the key to the divine doors. If this is missing, if one is doing yoga only for power and joy and some kind of gifts, like becoming a yogi or a great man, then one gets into these worlds and one is very happy. One can travel all around the world, earn millions of dollars, and one's name appear on big posters, but at the end of it one misses the One Beloved. Sri Aurobindo is warning us that this can be a resting place but it is not the ultimate goal.

A Sphinx whose eyes look up to a hidden Sun. [191]

This is the catch. If one wants to expose these worlds there is one single test: one can ask, 'Have you really found the One who hides himself behind these million forms and names?' If not, the journey is not complete. This is the story of the Sphinx. Ultimately the question of the Sphinx is, 'Have you found the One? Have you found the one Self who changes appearances? He is one thing in the morning, another in the noon, another at night. If you have found Him, fine, you can pass through my gates to the consciousness of Immortality.' This zone one must cross, because the Sphinx guards it. If not, then the Sphinx ultimately devours and finishes you. It is a Sphinx who looks up to eternity.

We find the same truth expressed here where Sri Aurobindo reveals:

In her mazes of approach and of retreat [193]

The more one enters into it, it is like with some of those auto and taxi drivers — of course now, thankfully, things are better but sometimes it was amazing — if somebody by chance got down at the Auroville Information Centre and said, 'I want to go to Matrimandir' — it is walking distance — those old-time autorikshaw fellows would say 'Yes, I will take you' and if you did not know the way he would take you all around Auroville, all around Pondicherry, and he would keep saying, 'It is just coming sir, it is just coming.' Then you realise what is happening. Ultimately he brings you after one hour. Of course,

he at least brings you, but in these worlds the goal keeps retreating and keeps retreating.

In her mazes of approach and of retreat
To every side she draws him and repels,
But drawn too near escapes from his embrace; [193]

That is why Sri Aurobindo says that in this yoga the first step is to bring out the psychic: it alone has the soul-discrimination. All other parts do not. If this yoga is done by the power of the mind or the vital, this is what happens. He says in one of his letters that one can luxuriate in experiences, one can have illuminations in the mind, one can luxuriate in siddhis of the vital and even have astounding remarkable siddhis in the physical, and yet if the secret soul, the inmost soul, the psychic being does not come forward, nothing genuine has been done. That is the safety; otherwise, if one is caught in this world …

All ways she leads him but no way is sure.
Allured by the many-toned marvel of her chant,
Attracted by the witchcraft of her moods [193]

In Odysseus' travels this world is depicted through the song of the Sirens — it is so attractive, so alluring. If you hear it, you are captivated, you are helplessly drawn to it. Odysseus is very smart. He tells his sailors, 'You guys put molten wax in your ears and keep rowing. I'll keep my ears open — but you must tie me to the mast. Even if I beg and cry and give orders — don't untie me.' Sure enough as they pass the isle, he hears the song of the Sirens and he wants to go — they are so attractive

and charming. He shouts and begs and cries and accuses them that they are not obeying his orders. Some feel pity and melt, but this is the place where sometimes it is good to be firm. And here we have a description:

Allured by the many-toned marvel of her chant,
Attracted by the witchcraft of her moods
And moved by her casual touch to joy and grief,
He loses himself in her but wins her not.
A fugitive paradise smiles at him from her eyes: [193]

A paradise that comes and disappears, comes and disappears, because it is not held by the One.

He dreams of her beauty made for ever his,
He dreams of his mastery her limbs shall bear,
He dreams of the magic of her breasts of bliss.
In her illumined script, her fanciful
Translation of God's pure original text, [193]

Here comes Sri Aurobindo's subtle sense of humour. It tells you, 'You want to understand God's script? I'll tell you.' It mimics even intuition. We see in the yoga of Savitri that this world can even mimic the stress of intuition.

He thinks to read the Scripture wonderful,
Hieratic key to unknown beatitudes.
But the Word of Life is hidden in its script,
The chant of Life has lost its divine note.
Unseen, a captive in a house of sound,
The spirit lost in the splendour of a dream

Listens to a thousand-voiced illusion's ode. [193]

This world captures the soul! Each world is given its own way of dealing with the soul. In each world, there is nature dealing with the soul. In matter, the soul is held captive in its obscurity, its rigidity and inertia: the soul in matter is completely asleep. In this world, the soul is held captive to its many moods, and it is forever listening to that thousand-voiced illusion's ode and it must wake up. In the worlds of mind, the soul is held captive by the many many ideas. But here Sri Aurobindo is describing for us the relation between soul and nature in this world. It is only in the highest worlds that the soul is free and Nature obeys it.

A delicate weft of sorcery steals the heart
Or a fiery magic tints her tones and hues,
Yet they but wake a thrill of transient grace;
A vagrant march struck by the wanderer Time,
They call to a brief unsatisfied delight
Or wallow in ravishments of mind and sense,
But miss the luminous answer of the soul. [193]

When one takes to Sri Aurobindo's yoga expecting marvellous miraculous experiences, but year after year one is made to do hard labour, to dig into mud so that the base can be strong — if at that time someone comes and says, 'What are you doing here? Fifteen years, what have you experienced?' you may reply 'I don't know. Somehow I just have faith in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother'.

'Oh, come, come: next door there is a very nice path — in a few days you will get all this new creation stuff.' 'Is it so?' 'Yes, transformation is very easy' — and we are led into that and sure enough within a week we start experiencing all kinds of things, and if we pay a little more money, the greater the experience and its value. To go to the Samadhi, we just go casually, nobody asks us to pay or anything. Of course, there are gate passes and timings, but no dress-code, no nothing, you can keep your chappals just a few feet away from the Samadhi. It is so unassuming, so one doesn't value it. If one has to pay a hundred dollars just to visit the Samadhi, then see how many people would really get such experiences! Sri Aurobindo is warning us that even this 'Kingdom of the Greater Life', so charming, so alluring and having everything, may come in the course of our inner journey, but we should not be caught in its sorceries, because one misses 'the luminous answer of the soul.' And what happens, towards the end of this part of the journey:

A blind heart-throb that reaches joy through tears,
A yearning towards peaks for ever unreached,
An ecstasy of unfulfilled desire
Track the last heavenward climbings of her voice. [193]

There are mystics who have risen through the vital planes, and they are sincere, so when they go towards these heights they begin to yearn with a deep passion and sorrow. There is a true story from the life of Mira, who of course used to feel Krishna and see him as intimately as anyone, in his many

moods. Once when she has been cast out, the family has disowned her and the city has disowned her, she leaves with a little idol of Krishna. One night, as the story goes, that idol is stolen — perhaps on the very first night she slept. She laments and cries, 'This was the only thing that I held on to and you have taken even this away?' So Krishna says, 'Oh, this was the only thing? Do you know me?' She says, 'Of course I know you.' 'Really?' and then Krishna reveals to her what he is in truth. Till then she believed that she knew Krishna, and you can see in her that pathos of the vital sometimes: yearning — that is the height towards which this can climb. It is a very high seeking, but in this yoga the seeking has to come through the psychic and not through the vital. But this too is a passage. Some mystics have sought, and here we find:

Transmuted are past suffering's memories
Into an old sadness's sweet escaping trail:
Turned are her tears to gems of diamond pain,
Her sorrow into a magic crown of song. [193-94]

This is the height of this world, after going through it, at the end one finds that one has not really found the One Face hidden behind her thousand million forms, so there is a deep pathos.

Brief are her snatches of felicity
That touch the surface, then escape or die:
A lost remembrance echoes in her depths,
A deathless longing is hers, a veiled self 's call;
A prisoner in the mortal's limiting world, [194]

Those who are born from this world into ours always feel a sense of strangeness, a sense of alien-ness, a sense of limitation; and the more one begins to live in it one feels more and more limited and tries to seek something greater.

A spirit wounded by life sobs in her breast;
A cherished suffering is her deepest cry.
A wanderer on forlorn despairing routes,
Along the roads of sound a frustrate voice
Forsaken cries to a forgotten bliss. [194]

This is its height and culminating point. And yet Sri Aurobindo tells us the significance of this world: this world has stood behind everything, because its joy sustains even the suffering, because there is ultimately even a joy in that. In this world even suffering carries within itself an undercurrent of joy, and this makes us understand many things about life. This world is not to be belittled. We have a few marvellous lines expressing this below:

Yet is it joy to live and to create
And joy to love and labour though all fails,
And joy to seek though all we find deceives
And all on which we lean betrays our trust; [194]

In this world there is only a seeking, but not the finding — and yet there is a joy in the seeking itself.

Yet something in its depths was worth the pain,
A passionate memory haunts with ecstasy's fire.
Even grief has joy hidden beneath its roots:

For nothing is truly vain the One has made:
In our defeated hearts God's strength survives
And victory's star still lights our desperate road;
Our death is made a passage to new worlds.
This to Life's music gives its anthem swell.
To all she lends the glory of her voice;
Heaven's raptures whisper to her heart and pass,
Earth's transient yearnings cry from her lips and fade.
Alone the God-given hymn escapes her art
That came with her from her spiritual home [194-95]

This is what yearns in the depths of this world, and this is the safety. Ultimately, when we have passed through this world and seen its many moods, this is the hope: that there is within it something that survives. Look how in the lower worlds, when Sri Aurobindo speaks of the 'Little Life', at the end he gives us hope. Again here, as he comes to the close of 'The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life', a world which can be terribly misleading and deceiving, yet at the end of it he gives us hope — because even here God inhabits; nothing is devoid of Him.

Now, a new movement starts:

Here is the gap, here stops or sinks life's force; [195]

This starts with many many moods, intensity, rapture, joy, power — after all its play, at the end it leaves a yearning and a suffering and a sob of missing the One. This is the essence of this world.

This deficit paupers the magician's skill: [195]

It cannot take us beyond it.

This want makes all the rest seem thin and bare.
A half-sight draws the horizon of her acts:
Her depths remember what she came to do,
But the mind has forgotten or the heart mistakes:
In Nature's endless lines is lost the God. [195]

It can give all powers and everything, yet something is missed out; and therefore, Aswapati has seen its truth:

Out of her daedal lines he sought escape; [197]

He has seen the maze, this complex world full of charm and beauty and danger,

But neither gate of horn nor ivory
He found nor postern of spiritual sight, [197]

That is why beings who are caught in this world never understand. Any amount of telling doesn't work. This world is so misleading, as Sri Aurobindo would tell us in the yoga of Savitri, that it is only through Death that can one escape from this world, unless of course one has the psychic discrimination, and above all trusts the Grace and the Grace walks by one's side. But if we try to do yoga by our own effort this can be one of the issues, very often.

There was no issue from that dreamlike space. [197]

This is for those who want to do yoga by their own effort and do not believe in either Grace or Guru or Master, who believe 'Of course we can do everything, what is there? This is material and that is spiritual and we know it all. We now have a book and we can do it.' Well, books will lead us, but here we are misled in ways that books cannot help: it can mimic everything.

Our being must move eternally through Time;
Death helps us not, vain is the hope to cease;
A secret Will compels us to endure.
Our life's repose is in the Infinite;
It cannot end, its end is Life supreme.
Death is a passage, not the goal of our walk: [197]

And we shall end with some lines where all this entire movement is summarised very beautifully. The whole seeking of life is for the One, but so long as life labours in ignorance, so long as it has not received the redeeming touch of Grace, its seeking cannot reach, and all the joys at the end cannot sum up and capture that Delight. In fact, the more it tries to capture — elsewhere there are lines in this very canto that describe this — the more it held, the more it escaped. It tries to possess that One Delight, but it cannot, because the only way one can really possess It is by allowing it to possess Itself. In this world, one has seeking but not the finding, many joys but not the One Delight, many charms but not the one Face that one loves. Therefore, at the end there is a sob, a yearning, and in the depths of the yearning a hope that He is there and one day He

will redeem us. The beings and denizens of this world cry like a chained divinity, hoping for their release.

We have these lines describing this yearning:

As yearns an obscure moth to blazing Light.
Our life is a march to a victory never won. [199]

In this Greater Life one doesn't find, even with its greater powers and force, all its energies; they can give all the siddhis that we seek, make the big small, the small big, lighter heavy and heavy light, or in inner value 'the subtle counts for more.' And yet, *'Our life is a march to a victory never won.'*

This wave of being longing for delight,
This eager turmoil of unsatisfied strengths,
These long far files of forward-striving hopes
Lift worshipping eyes to the blue Void called heaven
[199]

This world ultimately ends in a blue Void: all the forms it has created are not the form of the *paramdrishtva*, they are only forms that come and flee before our eyes.

Looking for the golden Hand that never came, [199]

This is the deep pathos of Life; in fact, all our suffering in its depth is an anguish for this. And even a greater life cannot fulfil this need. We often think in this little life that the anguish will cease if a greater life comes down, and that there are those who will give it to us; but even this cannot fulfil.

Looking for the golden Hand that never came,

The advent for which all creation waits,
The beautiful visage of Eternity
That shall appear upon the roads of Time.
Yet still to ourselves we say rekindling faith, [199-200]

If yoga is done under the stress of the higher vital, this Greater Life-world, we end up in this situation, sometimes in utter despair. That is why when somebody asked the Mother 'Would you tell us something about yoga?' she replies, 'What do you want the yoga for?' — it is so simple, yet so deep — 'to gain power, to help humanity?' She says that none of these motives is sufficient to make you ready for the path. So what is the readiness? 'Do you want yoga for the sake of the Divine?' — the Divine for the sake of the Divine, not for any of these kick-backs. When the kick-backs become the main issue then there is a problem. 'Oh, if I get the Divine then I'll become a great yogi, I shall become a superman, I shall do extraordinary things.' Then we land in a trap of this world.

Spiritual ambition is worse than ordinary ambition. Ordinary ambition will at the utmost gives us a crash feeling after we retire, and we can reconcile ourselves by going to a retired life ashrama, where we can live our life in peace, seeking something else which we didn't find in this life. Spiritual ambition lands up in despair; we end up in a terrible mess. And yet something in us, the strength of God, survives as faith, and what does it say:

"Oh, surely one day he shall come to our cry,
One day he shall create our life anew

And utter the magic formula of peace
And bring perfection to the scheme of things. [200]

This is the throb and anguish of that world, to call for that, and this is what we must ultimately receive from this world, and pass on — this faith that He is there and that He will bring perfection to the scheme of things.

One day he shall descend to life and earth,
Leaving the secrecy of the eternal doors,
Into a world that cries to him for help,
And bring the truth that sets the spirit free,
The joy that is the baptism of the soul, [200]

This is not a joy dependent on any external charm, any external form, any experience outside, but a joy that is natural, *shantim sukham*, a joy one finds by living in the Self, *atmarati*, the joy which is the very nature of the Self, 'the joy that is the baptism of the soul,' — one doesn't have to seek it in this or that experience.

The strength that is the outstretched arm of Love. [200]

This is not love that is weak, incapable, not love that is only sweetness, but love that is strong to rescue us out of the bonds of ignorance. This Love one does not find in this world, this Love can only come from the heights. The problem is that we don't recognise this Love, because when it pulls us out of all this maze, we cry 'How cruel you are! What a torturing hand is this, which is taking away from me all that I cherish and desire.' This world of Greater Life, on the contrary, whatever

we cherish and desire it presents to us, and we like this kind of god. We like a god who is more like a being of the Greater Life-world, who fulfils our desire, and everything that we desire he presents to us. And if he can present it to us quickly, from house to wealth to health, we like that god; but not so much that 'outstretched arm of Love' that is strong and pulls us out of Ignorance, sometimes with firmness taking away all that we cherish and hope for and desire — we don't like that God. Yet something in us cries for that:

One day he shall lift his beauty's dreadful veil, [200]

He has deliberately worn this dreadful veil, this little life, this darkness, this obscurity, or even sometimes a beautiful veil; but all this is because of a great purpose that it serves. One day he will lift it.

One day he shall lift his beauty's dreadful veil,
Impose delight on the world's beating heart
And bare his secret body of light and bliss."
But now we strain to reach an unknown goal:
There is no end of seeking and of birth,
There is no end of dying and return;
The life that wins its aim asks greater aims,
The life that fails and dies must live again; [200]

It is there in life, because there is a joy in everything and this cannot cease until it has found the One. At the end of all these worlds, Sri Aurobindo will reveal to us the hope, he rekindles

faith and hope and shows us the meaning and purpose of the journey.

Till it has found itself it cannot cease.
All must be done for which life and death were made.
[200]

The Mind-Worlds

A talk at Savitri Bhavan on August 22, 2010 on Book 2, Cantos 10-11 (Invocation 33:4-27)

We are grateful to Sri Aurobindo for giving us *Savitri*. If we really go back a few decades, to those moments when we hardly had the privilege of this kind of Light, while the world was full of the noxious fumes emanating from the Second World War, with all the grumblings and complainings of us human beings, Sri Aurobindo was busy pouring the perfume of another world onto this one. This perfume would one day spread far and wide and fill our hearts and minds and lives. This is the gift of *Savitri*.

We are also grateful for this wonderful venue. As one came inside — of course this is the kind of feeling one shares at Savitri Bhavan — the spontaneous state that came about was that a deep inner truth becomes concrete and real. That deep inner truth is that the Divine is not only within us but surrounding us, enveloping us. Here it is as if we are surrounded, most physically, most concretely, by their Atmosphere; and He is not only surrounding us but, beyond the limited arc of our vision, standing majestically. This is the

wonderful atmosphere that we find in Savitri Bhavan. Thanks to Shraddhavan and all the team for this. It is Her Grace.

We shall start with a small Prayer of the Mother where a deep profound Truth has been stated so simply and so briefly — this is the beauty of the Mother's writings. This is her prayer from January 3rd, 1914:

> *It is always good to look within oneself from time to time and see that one is nothing and can do nothing, but afterwards one must turn one's eyes to Thee, knowing that Thou art all and Thou canst do all.*

Then comes the profound mantra, the most profound formula of life that can ever be uttered — and yet in such simple words, so much so that we almost take it for granted:

> *Thou art the life of our life and the light of our being,*
> *Thou art the master of our destinies. [CWM 1: 45]*

Behind this limited cramped-up life there stands a greater life, and behind this greater life stands a diviner life, waiting for its hour. Behind this limited mind with all its conceptions and cognitions and opinions, behind its limitations and littleness there stands a greater mind, waiting for its hour; and beyond and behind this greater mind stands That of which both are simply a projection, a brilliant reflection or a dull shadow. This is what we have been covering during the last week, the journey through the 'Little Mind' and the 'Greater Mind'.

It is interesting because we stand precisely at this juncture of our evolutionary journey. Evolution has carried us so far,

and now it is going to carry us further, into those domains which have so far been concealed to man. They have acted from time to time, in some rare moments of some human beings whom we know by various names as saints and sages and heroes and *vibhutis*, the great ones who have led the way. This Greater Mind has acted through them and in them, from time to time. But a still greater and a larger light has remained hidden within, waiting for its hour. Sri Aurobindo comes at precisely this evolutionary juncture when a radical change has to take place, from the Little to the Greater and from the Greater to a still greater leap into the very Highest.

The great mystery of life is not death — often we think that death is a mystery; the greatest mystery of life is birth, and seen from both poles life appears a mystery. When we are at this end, when we do not know what is behind these appearances and this facade called the universe, then it appears mysterious that there is anything in this universe: out of nothing, all this is emerging. The beauty is that if we cross over to the other side, the mystery becomes deeper, because then we wonder, how has That which is so beautiful, so delightful, so wonderful, the Glory of Glories, become this Something? This is the great mystery and it is given to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to give us the link between these two poles. The infinite becomes the infinitesimal, and the infinitesimal, through a process of successive transmutations, must recover its lost infinity, without annulling the finite. This is the great challenge, the great puzzle, which the Divine has taken upon himself.

It is easy to recover infinity by annulling the finite, and it has been done. Traditional yogas have done it. From any point of finiteness or finite experience which the mind provides, we can jump into the infinite and completely annul this. There are ways of annulling it. It is like cutting the knot, rather than solving the problem. But Sri Aurobindo brings us another solution: that this finite must be more and more transmuted, until it recovers its infinity but without losing the finite. This is something very interesting: it makes the play really very interesting if we take it as a challenge and a puzzle. As the Mother says, *'There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this: "I invite you to the great adventure"'* [CWM 9: 151-52]. It is a very fascinating puzzle and only the Divine can solve this puzzle; it is not at all easy, even to conceive of it is difficult. And yet she has taken upon Herself to do it, to do it for Earth, to do it for the Divine; for this is the very purpose of creation.

It is this process of transmutation, this successive transmutation of the infinitesimal to the infinite, that we in our ignorance call death — because it is only through death of the past that the future is born. That is why one way to look at the present moment, through which we are all passing, is that it is a history of the future. Normally we have history in the past, but the present is a history of the future — because the future is settled and decided. It is a decisive action, yet events and circumstances will unfold it. What we are living at this point of time is the history of something which is already decided,

which is bound to be. This has to come about through a series of transmutations. Each transmutation involves a leaving behind of that which humanity or earth has no more need of, and moving to something which is greater, higher, better. This passage, to begin with, is a narrow passage, often a dark and difficult passage, and that is what we call death.

Savitri is solving this enigma for us; and we will just go quickly through all that we have done in this week, as a kind of concluding session.

Sri Aurobindo has revealed to us the taste of Paradise — 'The Paradise of the Life-Gods'. This was a wonderful high point of life, of the Life Worlds; and yet Sri Aurobindo starts the next canto, Canto 10, with four very powerful lines:

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

This is the highest Self which we have to arrive at, not the Self that annuls life but the Self that fulfils life. For indeed all these things that we see, experience, even though they are appearances, yet it is the Self that has become all this, and we must find the point where the two are integrated, where the two become one, where God and world grow true and one.

This is the journey. Because of this, Aswapati steps out of the wonderful boundaries of the Life Heavens, which are so captivating, so glorious; and this, as we see, is the great sacrifice and renunciation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

When we speak of ‘renunciation’, I think the word does not apply to any of us, for we renounce the lower for the higher: we renounce the ugly for the sake of the beautiful; but what is this renunciation which renounces the beautiful for the sake of something which is far greater? — for the sake of a labour which we can never fathom.

Essentially Sri Aurobindo divides this movement of mind into two basic movements, the Little Mind and the Greater Mind. The Vedic rishis followed this same division more or less, speaking of the *alpa* and the *bhuma*, the little and the vast. The Little Mind is entangled in appearances, lost in the finite; and within itself there is a triple movement. This mind which becomes completely lost in the smallest, in the infinitesimal, is, if we see things from above it, the cause of the Infinite appearing as finite. It is the action of mind which makes the One appear as many — and then it identifies with the many so completely that it is lost in the processes of what it has created. Sri Aurobindo describes it so beautifully. It is almost like one makes a little room out of this vastness — the earth is one, the sky is one — but one makes a little room and then one shuts oneself in it. We create something small and then we limit ourselves to that smallness. Then we safeguard it and don’t allow anything to intrude into it because ‘this is my space’. Almost like that, this Little Mind works upon matter and earthly life. It limits it, it cuts the infinite into small small bits; after that it identifies with it and then, at a human level, it clings to it. It will not let go of its boundaries which are so very dear

to it. That is why this mind is one of the greatest difficulties in the process of transformation. And yet this mind must change into a truer action. In fact, we have in *Mother's Agenda* this very interesting episode narrated, where Shiva comes and wants to break the layer of the physical mind, and Sri Aurobindo says 'No, we do not want that, we want transformation.' It is something which is difficult to conceive, because it is so easy to break it — this mould is so small, so narrow; why not break it and enter into the vastness? To fill this, to expand it, to lead it slowly and steadily, enlarge its boundaries, that is the difficult task.

This Little Mind in its earliest stirrings is beautifully described. This mind is lost in matter and identified with matter, and regards only form and appearance as everything. The beauty is that it has built the form and appearances, and it has got trapped into it.

A pigmy Thought needing to live in bounds
For ever stooped to hammer fact and form.
Absorbed and cabined in external sight,
It takes its stand on Nature's solid base. [245]

This mind is completely tied to appearances.

A technician admirable, a thinker crude, [245]

Why is this mind required? Because in dealing with matter, in handling matter, we need this mind. Sri Aurobindo uses a wonderful phrase to describe this mind where he says, *'A material interim diplomacy'* [244] — Truth diplomatically

allows this mind. This mind has a wonderful capacity to deal with matter because it can forget — in fact it has forgotten — all other things which are in the background. Therefore it can work so beautifully upon matter. It is the mind of the technocrat.

A riveter of Life to habit's grooves,
Obedient to gross Matter's tyranny,
A prisoner of the moulds in which it works,
It binds itself by what itself creates. [245]

We have several examples of this mind in today's life; one classic example is when we discover something and become its slave — we don't realise that this is just a habit, a habit of nature and we think it is a gospel truth. That is why the Mother says that when people go to a doctor, one of the big problems is that before you go, you have just a few symptoms, and you could actually get over it. But the moment you go into a hospital setting, and especially to a highly qualified doctor with a very active physical mind, he fixes the illness. A very nice neat label gets stuck to it. The moment the label is stuck on, with all the paraphernalia that this may happen, that may happen, the mind gets completely convinced about it. Basically, there is no such law, but its impress is so strong, its hold is so strong upon earth and the material reality, that it becomes difficult to shake off. This is a constant experience that people have after coming out from a clinic: while on one side they feel reassured, now they have come out with a nice neat label, which is written on the prescription, and this label

sticks to them almost throughout life, and is very difficult to get rid of: 'You are diabetic, you are hypertensive ...' This goes on mechanically in the mind and it is creating its own law — that is the difficult part. It moves mechanically in a certain groove and through that movement it reinforces itself. The real movement should be the other way round, but it keeps on reinforcing itself, and each visit to the doctor we shed some more money from our pocket and we once again get the label stamped on, fixed very firmly on the consciousness. This mind makes us prisoner of the mould in which it works. What we see is a set of processes. Each process is simply a habit of nature. For example, if we take something, something will happen. It is nothing, but in the process of evolution nature has evolved it. But there is within us the Master of Nature, the Lord of Nature, and it can be undone, a Greater Mind can undo it. But it is very difficult to convince because we keep observing this process again and again and it gets fixed, it is a mould.

It binds itself by what itself creates.
A slave of a fixed mass of absolute rules,
It sees as Law the habits of the world,
It sees as Truth the habits of the mind.
It lives content with the common and the known.
It loves the old ground that was its dwelling-place:
Abhorring change as an audacious sin, [245]

This mind also works in the extreme conservative, in the traditionalist who doesn't want change at all, for whom the only surety is what was, and what is or what can be is a very

difficult, almost impossible thing. How much Sri Aurobindo must have laboured, and still continues to labour against this mind which cannot conceive, cannot imagine that really it is possible for man, who is right now crawling like an ant and an animal, to grow into the Godhead he is meant to be.

Distrustful of each new discovery
Only it advances step by careful step [245]

This is the first kind of mind and its role and hold in earthly life. We can see that it has its own importance: from the motions of the planets to the atomic configuration, this mind has gone into fixing each thing within its limits and boundaries; and these limits and boundaries are because this mind has immersed itself in matter and completely fixed things within certain limits. So much so, that even a species doesn't feel like moving beyond its limits — not because it cannot, though if it did it would create chaos in the world — it lives within those limits, simply because this mind is very active in matter and has a great hold on matter.

Yet, because evolution demands an emergence and not a fixity, along with this mind another mind begins to emerge out of matter, and in matter's sleep there emerges dream. This mind that dreams of things that are seemingly impossible, things which are not there — they emerge as a wish, a desire, an impulsion, as a movement to expand, to grow, to do the impossible, to leap towards that which is unknown — this is the vital mind, the fiery spirit that Sri Aurobindo describes here:

It burns all breasts with an ambiguous fire. [247]

This seed of dissatisfaction is sown in earth. This is also a kind of grace, because if everything was satisfied with what is, then there would have been no movement forward ever.

A radiance gleaming on a murky stream,
It flamed towards heaven, then sank, engulfed, towards hell;
It climbed to drag down Truth into the mire
And used for muddy ends its brilliant Force;
A huge chameleon gold and blue and red
Turning to black and grey and lurid brown,
Hungry it stared from a mottled bough of life
To snap up insect joys, its favourite food, [247]

This mind stirs matter with all kinds of impulsions; it gives its movement and dynamism. In matter it is concealed as a kinetic energy, but it begins to express itself in the insect world, the flower world, bringing colours. What really are colours, and different types of variations we find in Nature? They are nothing but dreams of Nature. She is trying to dream and in her dream she fills all this with colour and joy and the many moods of life. And yet, although this mind is not tied to appearances like the physical mind, it jumps from one appearance to another, because it is ever in search of something which it cannot find. Sri Aurobindo describes it ironically:

Ardent to find, incapable to retain,
A brilliant instability was its mark,

To err its inborn trend, its native cue.
At once to an unreflecting credence prone,
It thought all true that flattered its own hopes;
It cherished golden nothings born of wish,
It snatched at the unreal for provender.
In darkness it discovered luminous shapes;
Peering into a shadow-hung half-light [248]

This mind is still restricted and limited to the formula of the ego; it wants to see in the world a magnified image of its own self, and therefore it paints everything with its own wishful thinking. We are very familiar with this movement: those people are very good, very near and dear to us, who tell us very nice things, who always flatter us, who always say, 'You are so good, so kind.' Our foes are the difficult ones whom we do not like, who are the bad ones, who do not flatter our hopes, who would say things which are critical about us. This mind is very active in the common human lot, and all of us succumb to it. This is because this mind is moving from one appearance to another, seeking to flatter itself. It dreams, it wishes, it hopes, it imagines — but always keeping itself at the centre: this is the problem of this mind. Therefore, it is prone to error, it hopes violently and despairs swiftly. This is the second level which appears in the process of mind emerging from matter.

Then comes the third level, the rational mind. This mind comes to study the appearances and go deeper into them. While the physical mind fixes, binds itself with appearances, clings to them, limits itself by them, and the vital mind jumps from one

appearance to another and tries to throw its own shadow onto everything, the rational mind tries to probe into the appearances to try to find out what is there inside, what is behind. Sri Aurobindo says,

> *Of all these Powers the greatest was the last. ...*
> *Came Reason, the squat godhead artisan,*
> *To her narrow house upon a ridge in Time.*
> *Adept of clear contrivance and design, [249]*

And now Sri Aurobindo describes the limitations of this mind. This mind tries to study appearances and infer what may lie inside. By its very nature it is a mind that seeks. So long as the rational mind has not emerged, the physical mind is satisfied with what is. The strong traditionalists are always happy and satisfied with the fixed formulas of life — what they have received from their parents and grandparents, the legacy of tradition. They do not question it. That is why it is good that in today's times children have begun to question everything. But the traditional mind that is governed by the physical mind does not question anything: the customary is true; whatever is conventional is the only thing which is and it should not change. The vital mind throws fanciful images into dream. But the rational mind tries to understand what is really there behind the appearances, it tries to probe into them to discover what formula of truth it may find. It also has its problems: it looks only at a small piece, it cannot look around, it cannot look above, it cannot look below. We have these lines expressing its limitations:

An inconclusive play is Reason's toil.
Each strong idea can use her as its tool;
Accepting every brief she pleads her case.
Open to every thought, she cannot know.
The eternal Advocate seated as judge
Armours in logic's invulnerable mail
A thousand combatants for Truth's veiled throne
And sets on a high horse-back of argument
To tilt for ever with a wordy lance
In a mock tournament where none can win. [252]

Here again, as we have been observing throughout, Sri Aurobindo shows such a subtle humour. Such is the nature of the rational mind that it must argue. Eventually it wins, but wins only unto itself. It never convinces another person. This is an unfortunate thing that we learn with so much pain — that no amount of argument really helps. It only creates a greater and greater gulf, it only makes the fortress of separation more and more strong. By its very nature the fallacy is that each one argues from his own standpoint, on the basis of his own premise. The other person is arguing from his own standpoint, his own premise. Unless we assume that premise, which means getting out of the ego — because this is also a kind of clinging: to opinions, ideas, premises — so unless we completely get out of that and change our premises we cannot understand the other person's point of view. That is also not desirable, because both are premises of Ignorance. We have to ascend beyond Reason.

When we fix ourselves to a particular premise we can logically explain anything and everything. In several of his aphorisms Sri Aurobindo speaks of this. For example, he says 'Whom am I to believe? My own experience, what I have seen, or the arguments of the scientists?' — because depending on the premise we can prove anything.

A question which I used to have, and I was very happy that recently somebody has taken it up, is about the directions — East and West and North and South — how do we fix them? The movement of the earth goes on — why don't the directions change? I never got a satisfactory answer. I don't know about physics much, but recently I heard that somebody has sent a theory to NASA, and NASA has apparently invited this theory. They say 'We don't accept it but it is an interesting concept, so please put it across'. He has given something very strange, a geocentric view on which he is trying to explain why the directions don't change ... it is very amazing. The logical mind tells us that it should happen. Depending on the premise we can understand anything and everything. We can even prove that east is west and west is east. It all depends on your premise. One single premise and on that we can build a whole logical system.

The second problem of Reason is that it is too much dependent on its ignorant ministers. We have this image of the courtroom, where the judge is blindfolded. The advocate is not blindfolded, he makes sure that the blindfold on the eyes of the judge becomes tighter and tighter. It is supposed to be a place

where truth must win — but he makes sure that anything else will win except the truth. Truth is too difficult to see. Sri Aurobindo is bringing that out so beautifully. In fact, no offence meant to anyone, this is a joke from Sri Aurobindo, when someone used the word 'lawyers' he said 'In Punjab they pronounce it 'liars'.' We can argue out anything, depending on a premise. This is one problem of Reason. And yet, this is the joke of it all:

Assaying thought's values with her rigid tests
Balanced she sits on wide and empty air,
Aloof and pure in her impartial poise.
Absolute her judgments seem but none is sure;
Time cancels all her verdicts in appeal. [252]

Whatever Reason has won, proved conclusively, is eventually overturned. We can go back a thousand years and see how science has evolved. About 200 years ago people used to do blood-letting and it was supposed to be the most effective treatment. In fact, the best specialists were those who could do blood-letting to perfection. As today we have cardiologists and amongst them arrhythmia specialists, the blood-letters were the greatest doctors — and in fact that is how they parted from homeopathy. It is a big story. The interesting part of it is that, if I am not mistaken, it was George Washington who died because of that. He had a simple sore throat and they did the blood-letting and he felt even more weak — so they thought that the infection was becoming worse, so they did more blood-letting. In the process they removed more than one and a half

litres of blood, and the poor man, no wonder, in an hour or so he was gone. And yet they were regarded as specialists. Their theories were considered as really perfect — the blood was impure and you had to remove it, it was as simple as that: when you remove the blood, everything will be fine. Logically it is wonderful — but something was missed out: that in this impure blood there is also vitality, there is also health which is circulating: if they removed the whole thing *en masse* that too would be diminished. Based on the premises, Reason can prove anything.

The other problem of Reason is that it is bound to the senses — they are the only data for Reason. It doesn't know anything about the play of forces which lies behind the sensory world. When the Second World War was going on, Sri Aurobindo said that this is the problem with the intellectuals — they don't know about the play of forces, and therefore all their conclusions are based on appearances which are fed by the senses. The senses feed data, and Reason can weigh only that. What it has not seen, what it cannot experience, it cannot believe in. This is the second difficulty with Reason.

The third difficulty, which now is changing, as Sri Aurobindo would reveal to us, is that it believes that matter is the sole reality. These are the three main problems: one, in its very nature Reason is something which picks up a premise and argues on that basis; two, it regards sensory evidence, the evidence provided by the senses, as the sole evidence; and

three, its main premise is that matter is the sole reality. Sri Aurobindo takes a dig at all of these on the next page.

As if she knew not facts are husks of truth, [253]

What we see is a world of appearances, the real truth is inside it. In one of her talks where Mother speaks of the supramental world she says 'You know, my child, what is the impression that one has from that standpoint? One sees that everything here is so artificial.' She says that the only thing that is true is what goes on deep inside the human being — that is the only thing which is true. All the rest is layers upon layers; we live in a world of falsehood. We breathe it because of its very nature, because this world doesn't express the Divine.

That which is inside is the true thing. When we communicate in the terms of thought, thought is simply a medium: we express a state of consciousness through a body of words and sounds. Human mind is attuned to sounds and words, and not to the consciousness which is inside. How much chaos is created simply because we give importance to sound and word and not to what is inside, what is within.

The problem of Reason is that it sees the husks, and thinks that this is the truth; the real thing which is inside, it throws aside: this is the cause of so much misery. Often people fight; if you ask each one individually, each one will say 'I have so much love'; the other person also will say, 'I have so much love.' Then why are you fighting? 'So and so says this, does this ...', a list of things all on the surface — deep inside there is

something which is true and beautiful, but it remains hidden. Reason throws out the truth:

The husks she keeps, the kernel throws aside.
An ancient wisdom fades into the past,
The ages' faith becomes an idle tale,
God passes out of the awakened thought,
An old discarded dream needed no more:
Only she seeks mechanic Nature's keys. [253]

It is like someone who sees a car and takes great pains to understand it. Having understood the car, he doesn't care who is the driver, who will sit in it, where it will go — that is irrelevant. He keeps the car and marvels at it, but never imagines that this car has a purpose, that it has been built for a purpose and is meant to carry someone. This is the problem of Reason. Further down on the same page:

The mystic's lore was a fancy or a blind;
Of soul or spirit we have now no need:
Matter is the admirable Reality,
The patent unescapable miracle,
The hard truth of things, simple, eternal, sole. [253]

Reason is dependent on the senses. The only data the senses can give us is what the senses themselves have viewed. This is the interesting part, that this world is a creation of two things: a consciousness within, and the mind and the sense play upon that consciousness and create an image, and then the being is trapped in that image and looks at all that is around and thinks

'This is me.' At present what we can see and understand is matter, and we think that this is the sole reality. Then of course Sri Aurobindo says that this kind of a rational world could go on and create a very precise and exact machine. Just as Reason looked at this universe and discovered all the processes and saw in this universe nothing but a machine, behind which there was a mechanical intelligence, or an unconscious intelligence, if one may use the paradoxical terms, which was working and operating mechanically, in the same way it may create a just society, but driven by certain fixed rules. And yet we are reaching the end of the rational curve, as Nolini-da puts it very beautifully: 'The age of reason is over, we are entering the age of luminous faith.' The Mother very interestingly reveals that the new species which is going to come is likely to follow the pattern of the previous emergence. Each time there is a new emergence, that which was the strongest point of the previous species is lost and then the new emergence takes place. When creatures emerged from the water to become land animals, they lost the ability to breathe in water, they lost the ability to live in water. This was their strength, and they lost it. So also, when the crawling creature had to fly, it had to lose all the thousand little feet with which it crawled so swiftly on the ground and then it began to fly — it could crawl no more. It must suffer that loss, in order to be able to fly. The bird's wings were clipped for it to run on the plains, and the swift and strong vitality of the animal had to be reduced and cabined for human intelligence to emerge. Similarly, she says, this rational faculty

of which man is so legitimately and yet so vainly proud, he has to lose it to grow into the next intuitive cycle. This loss does not mean becoming irrational, but the Reason must become subordinate to the action of a higher force. How it will come about, that is also revealed in *Savitri* — it is a book of Revelation. This rational world may be the last outpost of Ignorance:

So might it be if the spirit fell asleep;
Man then might rest content and live in peace,
Master of Nature who once her bondslave worked,
The world's disorder hardening into Law,— [256]

The only way that Reason can govern this world is through rules and laws. But because these rules and laws are based on appearances, after a time it begins to become a disorder. Societies where there are too many rules become extremely hypocritical, because deep inside there is something else which is going on. Because there are too many rules, this deeper thing expresses itself in ways and means which are very disorderly, and yet there is a facade. That facade is what Sri Aurobindo is expressing so beautifully:

The world's disorder hardening into Law,— [256]

There is chaos and disorder in the inner life, but outwardly there is a facade of order and law. But this would be only:

If Life's dire heart arose not in revolt,
If God within could find no greater plan.
But many-visaged is the cosmic Soul;

A touch can alter the fixed front of Fate.
A sudden turn can come, a road appear.
A greater Mind may see a greater Truth,
Or we may find when all the rest has failed
Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change.
...
For not by Reason was creation made
And not by Reason can the Truth be seen [256]

This is the first movement, where Sri Aurobindo takes us on the journey of the mind from its first crawl within matter, or self-loss in matter, right up to its emergence in man.

In the next movement, he takes us to the mind which has not yet lost its touch with the Oneness, but is advancing further and further from it towards the separativeness. This is the Greater Mind. We have these two movements of the mind — one where it has completely lost itself in matter and in the appearances; the other where there is still some touch, a lingering memory, however faint, of that Light from which it has emerged. Even though it is advancing towards separativeness, that Light is there in the background. This is the Greater Mind, and its operations are naturally very different. The Little Mind turns towards matter, it must pick up data from the senses, work upon them and conclude things, infer, analyse, conclude and thereby arrive at truth — but it cannot arrive at truth because the data themselves are deficient. The Greater Mind on the other hand simply turns towards the Spirit and, because that Consciousness is in all things, all-pervading, it arrives at truth

by a contact of consciousness. This is its means of arriving at Knowledge. It touches something deep inside, and the truth emerges. When one dwells in those regions, it is effortless; that kind of effort through the intellectual mind, through inferences, analysis, categorisation — that is all gone. That goes away, and instead of that the spontaneous knowledge begins to emerge. Sri Aurobindo describes this beautifully:

> *There ceased the limits of the labouring Power.*
> *But being and creation cease not there.*
> *For Thought transcends the circles of mortal mind,*
> *It is greater than its earthly instrument:*
> *The godhead crammed into mind's narrow space*
> *Escapes on every side into some vast*
> *That is a passage to infinity. [260]*

As we emerge into this Greater Mind the mode of knowledge begins to change: we are no longer dependent on sense-data alone, instead we are informed by a contact of consciousness. New faculties of knowing begin to emerge as one ascends higher and higher. Sri Aurobindo reveals four main faculties of which the Vedic seers were seekers and aspirants: Truth-Vision, Truth-Hearing, Truth-Touch and Truth-Action. Truth-vision is of course the Truth-sight: the whole thing is revealed as if in a flash. Behind appearances, behind thought, there is an Idea and this Idea clothes itself in symbolic significances. Suddenly the symbolic sense is revealed within, intuitively. This revelation becomes the key to understanding the phenomenon. It is an understanding of the

phenomenon from inside out, and not from outside in. The apparently disparate movements of Time and seemingly separate objects in Space are all linked in a rhythmic sense. Similarly, there is Inspiration, the dawning or the downpour of knowledge from above, through concentration and stillness: as the mind grows still and quiet and opens to something above, then just one moment of concentration on an object and its secret truths start being revealed through Inspiration. The third faculty is Truth-seizing, where immediately the true significance of anything is seized by a greater thought, so it is Truth-touch. The fourth is Truth-action: what needs to be done, what has to be done at a given point of time, becomes a spontaneous law of being. We begin to become closer and closer to what in the Vedas is called *rta* — the right action, the right arrangement of things. The mind, if it really tries to find the right law of action, cannot find an absolute law because it is always weighed with probabilities, possibilities, this data, that data. This is right from one point of view, it is not right from another point of view, so the mind gets confused in its action. If we really rationally try to find the right course of action, and if we are really impartial, it is very difficult — because the more data flow in, the more confused we become. That is why it is not always because courts are bad that injustices are committed — the judges really cannot decide; years pass but they cannot decide, because the more data that come in, the more witnesses, the more confused the issue becomes: is this right? is that right? There is no absolute

certainty. That is why most of them keep retiring because nobody wants to take the onus of responsibility — until one day somebody comes, after the matter has dragged on in the courts for ten or twenty years, and pays to end the whole process — because Reason cannot know. Its play is inconclusive. But Dakshina, the faculty of Truth-action, is inspired by the *rta*, which is the right arrangement of things. There is an inner law by which things should be arranged. The beauty of this inner law is that it spontaneously relates the individual to the totality. Therefore, this Truth-action reveals to us what is the right thing to be done at a given moment, in relation not only to the totality of things arranged in Space, but also in terms of Time. When we act, we are seeing only the immediate good; but this *rta* reveals itself in terms of the past and the future. As this begins to emerge, we keep on growing into a greater and greater light and suddenly there is a sense as if one has come up out of a well in which one was imprisoned.

As we were seeing, the physical mind is like being at the bottom of a well where there is no light and all that it knows is what is inside the well. The vital mind is inside the well, but closes its eyes and dreams of what may be around; one doesn't quite know, sometimes one dreams rightly but many times it is just a guess. The rational mind is nearer the top of the well, but still looking down; if at all it turns upward it sees a strip of blue with an odd bird crossing it. It cannot make sense of what it sees. The moment we step out of the well into the Greater Mind there is a larger, vaster consciousness: a sense of wideness,

calm, beatitude, ananda, sweetness begins to emerge. This Greater Mind is not just a greater cognition and understanding, another way of thought and knowing. It is these things but also something more. It carries within itself a beatitude, a peace and joy; any discovery at the level of the Greater Mind carries with it joy and peace. That is its characteristic action. In fact, one can differentiate even a right inspiration from a wrong one on that basis. Depending on the joy and peace and wideness one is experiencing within, one knows whether one is keeping to the right track or not. They become indicators of where the car of life is going.

This is one of the ways that the higher consciousness begins to act, and Sri Aurobindo reveals its workings in Canto Eleven — 'The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind'. He takes us further and further — and yet, even at its peak, where we begin to live in a greater intuitive sense, there is something which is still missed out, even in the Greater Mind, because still it is a mind that divides, though it moves in large spaces of time. What it misses is the crucial element through which all else can be understood, that is, *'The mighty Mother's whims and lightning moods'* [270]. Because it is mind, it still tries to give a formal structure to the great unfolding. But the great unfolding is simply an unfolding of the divine Delight. The mind has to give it structure and form — that is its purpose, that is how creation emerges out of the Formless, the Infinite, the Unmanifest. But in the very act of giving form and

structure, it misses out something behind: the infinite Vastness which is simply unrolling itself.

The mighty Mother's whims and lightning moods
Arisen from her all-wise unruled delight
In the freedom of her sweet and passionate breast,
Robbed of their wonder were chained to a cause and aim;
An idol of bronze replaced her mystic shape
That captures the movements of the cosmic vasts, [270]

This is the level of mind at which we have the highest intensity of speech, the mantra, the deities, the *bij* mantras, the mandalas, the occult laws — all these are natural discoveries of this Greater Mind which is right now occult and foreign to us. And yet, even at its highest it misses out something:

Yet was their wisdom circled with a nought:
Truths they could find and hold but not the one Truth:
The Highest was to them unknowable.
By knowing too much they missed the whole to be known:
The fathomless heart of the world was left unguessed
And the Transcendent kept its secrecy. [271]

This mind also has to be overpassed. Sri Aurobindo leads us to this. Just as at the level of life we had the Paradise of the Life Gods, here we have the highest Heavens of the Ideal, where ideas are unleashed into a million forms and activities. It is in this Ideal Mind that we have the four great gods. In the exhibition we have Motilal Roy's reminiscences, where Sri

Aurobindo spoke of these four great gods, which in the Vaishnava tradition are given the names of Anirudha, Pradyumna, Vasudeva and Shankarshan. They have been given other names also. They are the four great luminous ones which stand as guardians of the Light: Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman and Bhaga — each representing an aspect of the Divine, and each one creating worlds and worlds and worlds, because each can expand and expand its energy into a vastness that seems almost to merge into the Infinite.

This is the Overmind consciousness. In the Overmind consciousness we have these two sides of the divine Reality, what in Indian thought is regarded as Saguna and Nirguna. We can approach from one side and see all the flaming intensities and qualities of the Divine and realise it as Saguna Brahman. We can approach it from the other side and see it as void of all qualities, featureless and absolute, nothing but Silence, and realise the Nirguna Brahman. But this division is also an arbitrary division. There has to be a greater ascent, which we would be taking up next time. In that greater ascent these two aspects of one single Divine, the Saguna and the Nirguna, the manifold activities and dynamism of the one Truth, and its silent passive Witness and impersonal universal support, are one, not two.

Even in these high intensities, something was missing:

All there was an intense but partial light.
In each a seraph-winged high-browed Idea
United all knowledge by one master thought, [281]

One Idea was taken as a clue, and the entire universe was built according to that. Take Love — the God of Love sees everything as that, Strength sees everything as that, Knowledge sees everything according to that basis. Each Idea builds a world, and that is how, as it went down into the universe, the quarrel began to emerge. The Puranic gods quarrel: Love begins to quarrel with Strength, not in its originating sphere where it has the power of Oneness still with it, but as it comes down into more and more rigid and narrow moulds. In that Overmind consciousness each is allowed its space and term. They can continue without any interference from the other gods and they work in harmony. But as they come down, each idea begins to war with other ideas, so much so that each of us, when we embody predominantly one particular aspect, tends to come into conflict with other aspects of the same divine consciousness. That of course is because of the ego-identification, but in this Overmind consciousness there is freedom from the ego and an emergence into the cosmic consciousness. This was what we were reading yesterday.

Persuaded all action to one golden sense,
All powers subjected to a single power
And made a world where it could reign alone, [281]

But this too is not enough. What the Mother wants to bring down, and has brought down, is a yet greater consciousness where all these gods are married harmoniously in a single house.

Yet were there regions where these absolutes met

And made a circle of bliss with married hands;
Light stood embraced by light, fire wedded fire,
But none in the other would his body lose
To find his soul in the world's single Soul,
A multiplied rapture of infinity.
Onward he passed to a diviner sphere:
There, joined in a common greatness, light and bliss,
All high and beautiful and desirable powers
Forgetting their difference and their separate reign
Become a single multitudinous whole.
Above the parting of the roads of Time,
Above the Silence and its thousandfold Word,
In the immutable and inviolate Truth
For ever united and inseparable,
The radiant children of Eternity dwell
On the wide spirit height where all are one. [281-282]

These are the highest levels of the mind, the Overmind consciousness, from which we must emerge into a still greater consciousness where all these are harmoniously brought together.

We may close with a beautiful prayer of the Mother, which reveals this Truth wherein all these great gods, each bringing out a power from the Infinity of the Divine, come together. She brings them together, harmonises them, and leads them. This beautiful prayer brings out this experience and revelation in its fullness. It is dated September 30, 1914:

Lord, Thou hast broken down the barriers of thought and the realisation has appeared in all its amplitude.

[CWM 1: 254]

The Mother is speaking of that state of consciousness, that experience, wherein all the last barriers of thought are broken down, the thought has melted and merged into That Infinity. Therefore, she can experience that plenitude. She is now bringing out that realisation in terms of thought, for us.

Not to forget any of its aspects, to carry out their accomplishment at the same time, without neglecting any of them, not to allow any limitation, any restriction to come in the way and delay our march, this is what Thou wilt help us to do through Thy supreme intervention. And all those who are Thyself, manifesting Thee in the perfection of some particular activity, will also be our collaborators, for such is Thy Will.

[CWM 1: 254]

And then she brings the secret of this journey:

Our Divine Mother is with us and has promised us identification with the supreme and total consciousness—from the unfathomable depths to the most external world of the senses.

[CWM 1: 254]

That consciousness has to be found which marries the infinitesimal and the infinite. Right now in our journey we have to keep on moving forward, leaving behind the lesser for the

sake of the higher. But then there comes a time when these two poles of existence unite and come together, the mundane and the supra-mundane, matter and spirit, world and God, become true and one. The Law changes then, but right now we are involved in an ascending march.

> *And in all these domains Agni assures us of the help of his purifying flame, destroying all obstacles, kindling the energies, stimulating the will, so that the realisation may be hastened. [CWM 1: 254]*

Agni, the divine Will, the purifying energy, manifesting in man as aspiration towards Truth and Light, is the help that is given to us. He is the firstborn, the first god, and also the last one. He is the firstborn who carries this evolution upward. As he rises, the planes do not collaborate, they do not want the emergence to go further, and yet Agni will remove all obstacles. Along with Agni there is someone else:

> *Indra is with us for the perfection of the illumination in our knowledge; ... [CWM 1: 254]*

He is variously described as the divine mind, as well as the illumined mind.

> *... and the divine Soma has transformed us in his infinite, sovereign, marvellous love, bringer of the supreme beatitudes... [CWM 1: 254]*

As one goes up and up, the oxygen of the earth becomes less and less. We need some other oxygen to sustain ourselves.

Normally our earthly life is run by the fuel of desire. When desire begins to lose its hold and the senses begin to fade away, what would engage us with this world? Sri Aurobindo says that the fuel that we begin to get as we ascend further is the spontaneous delight of Being. That sustains the journey and leads us further and further. That is Soma, the supreme beatitude.

> *O divine and sweet Mother, I bow to Thee with a rapt, ineffable tenderness, and with infinite trust.*
>
> *O splendid Agni, Thou who art so living within me, I call Thee, I invoke Thee that Thou mayst be more living still, that Thy brazier may become more immense, Thy flames higher and more powerful, that the entire being may now be only an ardent burning, a purifying pyre.*
>
> *O Indra, I venerate and admire Thee, I implore Thee that Thou mayst unite with me, that Thou mayst definitively break down all the barriers of thought, that Thou mayst bestow upon me the divine knowledge.*
>
> *O Thou, Sublime Love, to whom I gave never any other name, but who art so wholly the very substance of my being, Thou whom I feel vibrant and alive in the least of my atoms even as in the infinite universe and beyond, Thou who breathest in every breath, movest in the heart of all activities, art radiant through all that is of good will and hidden behind all sufferings, Thou for whom I cherish a cult without limit which grows ever more*

intense, permit that I may with more and more reason feel that I am Thyself wholly.

And Thou, O Lord, who art all this made one and much more, O sovereign Master, extreme limit of our thought, who standest for us at the threshold of the Unknown, make rise from that Unthinkable some new splendour, some possibility of a loftier and more integral realisation, that Thy work may be accomplished and the universe take one step farther towards the sublime Identity, the supreme Manifestation.

[CWM 1: 254]

This was the highest point that past human effort could achieve, which the Vedic Rishis aspired for, which we see realised in the life of one of the great ones, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who could reach a state of consciousness where all these great gods could be brought together and harmonised. It was a world of religions, as the Mother says, because each great god, as he unleashed his energies more and more upon earth, became fixed at the level of the higher mind into a system of thought and way of life. Yet now the time has come to go beyond this into a greater and more sublime adventure, a more harmonious and integral splendour. Standing on the threshold of the highest that human consciousness has ever achieved, the Mother invokes something yet to come, beautifully closing:

And now my pen falls mute and I adore Thee in silence.

[CWM 1: 254]

The Problem of Pain

A Talk at Savitri Bhavan on November 19, 2005 (Invocation 25:20-47)

There is a beautiful prayer of the Mother — of course all her prayers are beautiful, but this one is perhaps especially appropriate for the topic we have chosen for this evening:

> *To turn towards Thee, unite with Thee, live in Thee and for Thee, is supreme happiness, unmixed joy, immutable peace, it is to breathe infinity, to soar in eternity, no longer feel one's limits, escape from time and space.*

But then, the touch of divine pathos:

> *... Why do men flee from these boons as though they feared them? What a strange thing is ignorance, that source of all suffering! How miserable that obscurity that keeps men away from the very thing which would bring them happiness and subjects them to this painful school of ordinary existence fashioned almost entirely of struggle and suffering! — June 18, 1913 [CWM 1: 22]*

A few things stand out: first, suffering as part of the schooling process of Nature. It is a difficult process we are

going through. Sometimes it is a long schooling because we are poor learners. And what is it driving us towards? *'To turn towards Thee…'* We have often seen and it is very true that when all the doors are closed in life it is time to turn towards that one door. However difficult it may seem, however obscure it may appear, because that's how life is: *'To turn towards Thee'*; that is the solution. Ignorance is the cause of suffering, pain is part of the process of schooling in our ordinary life, and turning towards the Divine as the source is the solution, the way to come out of it.

This is the broad canvas, but let us try to fill in the canvas. There is a very touching story of Sri Aurobindo's life, and I find it very significant. It is a small story, a real anecdote. Once while he was with the Maharaja of Baroda, they were taking a walk together and they came across an old lady who was trying to lift a bundle onto her head. The Maharaja, as a good Samaritan, walks up to the lady, picks up the bundle, and lifts it onto her head. Then he turns towards Sri Aurobindo, looking for a word of praise. That's what we do — 'Oh, I have done so many good things, the Divine must have recorded them, or somebody must have noticed them ….' But a smile comes from Sri Aurobindo, a smile of divine irony perhaps. He makes a remark that is very significant. He says something to this effect: 'Yes, yes, yes, all this while we have been doing only this: taking the burden of man and putting it back on his own shoulders.' There is a beautiful line in *Savitri* to that effect, where Sri Aurobindo says:

And, leader here with his uncertain mind,
Alone who stares at the future's covered face,
Man lifted up the burden of his fate. [6]

The problem of pain is a really vexed one, and it doesn't go away through the simple fact of believing that this is a world created by the Divine, the Divine who is Sat — pure Existence, who is Ananda — Bliss, whose very stuff is Consciousness, who is omnipotent. Yet this world, which is full of misery, 'packed with pain' — what is it? What or who is struggling here? We have been passing the burden onto man, saying 'It is your own bad karma, you have called this evil onto your own shoulders.' Sometimes this sounds so insensitive. As a doctor I have had patients who have suffered a myocardial infarction, a heart attack, or a fractured foot, and as it is traditionally done, people who went to visit them said, 'It is all karma, so you have to bear it.' It sounds doubly insensitive. This man has been knocked down by a lorry, and on top of it his friends tell him it is not the fault of the driver, it is not the fault of anyone else, it is his own karma from some lives back! Sri Aurobindo, as if taking a dig at this attitude, says, 'As if man had much of a role to play in the making of this universe!' There are so many cosmic forces, so many unseen things around us. How much of a role do we really have? Is it really karma?

There have been other ways of looking at it: it is because of some Titan, some dark adversary force who alone has subjected man to all this. Now obviously, this dark adversary is there, but surely he cannot have much say unless there is

behind him some kind of a sanction. What is that sanction behind this pain, this suffering? How does ignorance manifest itself at so many levels? This of course is a broad canvas. We use the word Ignorance and say that it leads to suffering. One simplistic way of understanding this is that we are too much captured by appearances. What appears as death and disaster to our eyes, to a deeper vision is no death, no disaster, but only a changing of forms. This has been one way to look at the problem of pain. But that would perhaps be cutting the problem too hastily. Some can do it, but it is not of much help to one who is really going through the process of grief. How does pain manifest, how does ignorance manifest at different levels?

Let us trace the evolution of pain upon earth. We can see something very interesting: at the level of pure matter, there is no pain. You can leave iron for millenniums, and it remains what it is, hid in the bowels of the earth, god knows how many millenniums and 'trillenniums'. You take out that iron and use it for some work, some kind of movement. The moment you use it, in a machine or as equipment, in a movement, it begins to show signs of wear and tear over a period of time. It is something very strange: that matter, left to itself, feels no pain, undergoes no perceptible wear and tear. But add to it movement of any kind and it begins to come in clash with other forces and it begins to show wear and tear and with that comes the possibility of pain, not in matter itself but at the next level when the force of life tends to pull matter, it begins to crack and it begins to have the sensation of pain. Sri Aurobindo says

that this is because of the inertia of matter. It refuses to respond. Because what really is Ignorance? Who is hiding behind the mask of Ignorance? Who is hiding in this darkness in which we cannot see? It is none else but the Supreme Godhead waiting to be born through this process. And pain is nothing but the labour-pangs of that birth-to-be. Sri Aurobindo beautifully says, *'For w*ith pain and labour all creation comes*'* [444]. Who is hiding in this darkness? In Alipore jail, Sri Aurobindo did not know what was going to happen to him, outwardly so to say, he could be sentenced to imprisonment, deportation to the Andamans. Yet, just at the time when we might be expecting a lament from him, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

> *It is He in the sun that is ageless and deathless*
> *And into the midnight His shadow is thrown.*
> *When darkness was dense and covered in darkness*
> *He was seated within it, immense and alone.*
>
> *[CWSA 2: 203; 'Who']*

He — All-Bliss, He — All-Truth, is waiting to be born. And he is born first as the force of life. Matter begins to stir with consciousness. But matter doesn't want to stir: it is inert, it doesn't want to move. The moment there is movement it begins to crack, to cry out, and that is the first level at which pain appears. Pain comes with life. Where there is no life there is no pain, no conscious pain. And that is because of inertia. And therefore pain is required. In human beings this inertia takes the form of inability to move forward. One is stuck with one's fixed beliefs, one's mechanical habit, routine — even turning

to God can become a routine! Even our beliefs can become mechanical. And then pain comes to shake us up.

How does it help? How does this schooling process work? Very beautifully, Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri:*

Pain is the hammer of the Gods to break
A dead resistance in the mortal's heart,
His slow inertia as of living stone.
If the heart were not forced to want and weep,
His soul would have lain down content, at ease,
And never thought to exceed the human start
And never learned to climb towards the Sun. [443]

That is how we are. We lie down content, at ease. It is so easy for all of us to sink into inertia. It is the first thing! This is an in-house crowd: we know how it is: you come and join an Ashram, and the first thing is, 'Oh, now it's finished! Everything is fine, because after all we have come here.' We don't realise that now the grinding begins, now the hammering begins, now the chipping begins, now the shaping begins. It is very natural, because inertia is the very law of matter. It loves inertia, it wants to remain where it is, and every time it is pulled out it cries out with pain. That is the first impulse — pain. And pain comes to tell matter, 'No! That's where the ignorance is.' Ignorance hides in the inertia of matter.

But as life begins to climb, it again ignorantly begins to seek that Oneness. As a result, in life there is born desire. Desire is a strange thing. There is nothing wrong with desire as such. The only problem is that first we don't really know what it is

we are desiring, and the second thing is that, as it is said, there are two things that are the source of unhappiness in life: one is not getting what you want, and the other is getting it. Only these two things.

There is a very nice little story which I have always found very instructive: A person goes into a hospital setting and finds a man crying 'Lulu, Lulu, oh my Lulu!' The inspector asks, 'What is wrong with him?' The answer comes, 'Well, nothing much. He was in love with one Lulu, but he couldn't get married to her, therefore the lament. He is very unhappy.' The inspector says, 'Well, it happens in life, he will get over it.' A few beds further on there is another one crying, 'Lulu, Lulu, oh my Lulu!' Once again he asks, 'Who is this Lulu? She seems to be quite terrible, giving so much pain!' But the answer comes, 'No, no — his problem is different. He got married to her, and now he is miserable and unhappy.' They go a little further, and there is a third one crying out 'Lulu, Lulu, oh my Lulu!' He asks, 'Now what is wrong with this guy?' The answer comes, 'There is nothing wrong with him. He doesn't know who Lulu is. He is just seeing these others crying Lulu, Lulu and thinks she must be someone very desirable and that he must be missing something.'

This is so very true of desire: we think something will give us happiness — until we get it we are miserable. When we get it we are miserable, and for various reasons we are miserable. Therefore, they say there is a very old transaction which Nature has started which the modern market has copied. The deal is

'Buy one pleasure, and get two pains free.' You don't have to pay for it. It comes unasked for, because it is in the very nature of things. It is in the nature of things because it is Ignorance; it is not because of 'bad karma'.

Someone asked Sri Aurobindo — we don't have the question, but it was probably something to this effect — 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' Sri Aurobindo replies, 'Blows come to all.'

> *... blows fall on all human beings because they are full of desire for things that cannot last and they lose them or, even if they get, it brings disappointment and cannot satisfy them. To turn to the Divine is the only truth in life. [CWSA 35: 844]*

Bad things do not happen to you because there is something bad in you. Blows come to all human beings. None can escape. Why do they come? Because men are in love with things that are in their very nature transient. We love things that are transient, and we don't love the Eternal.

Just a few days back I had someone telling me, 'You know, for me, parents are God.' Now, this sounds very fine, it is a fine sentiment, many people like it, at least parents like it. But then, if I am so much enamoured by those who have given birth to me in one life and brought me up and nourished me, how much more love I should have for the one has given birth to me for Time sempiternal, who has always been watching over my progress, as over a little baby, waking me up, step to step! So that is the real problem. We are in love with things that cannot

last, and we do not understand that what we are really looking for in them is not there. That is why desire is another source of pain and suffering in human life.

That gives us two causes. One is inertia, the second is the principle of desire.

But then, that Godhead who is hidden in obscurity and ignorance is born as mind. With mind something else comes in. Mind believes that it knows — until it notices that it is falling flat every time and learns that it does not know. It is a seeking for Knowledge, but it doesn't have the Knowledge. This is the problem with mind. Very beautifully, Sri Aurobindo summarises this in *Savitri*, where he says:

Man, still a child in Nature's mighty hands,
In the succession of the moments lives;
To a changing present is his narrow right;
His memory stares back at a phantom past,
The future flees before him as he moves;
He sees imagined garments, not a face
...
He waits to weigh the certitude of his thoughts,
He knows not what he shall achieve or when; [53]

This is how our life is. We try to think — and that adds to our misery. The mind adds to our misery because, at an animal level there is pain, but there is no anticipation of pain. At the level of the animal there is ignorance, but there is no awareness of the ignorance. There is limitation, but there is no conscious awareness of the limitation.

In some places there is the practice of animal sacrifice, and of course animals are sacrificed every day to the belly god, if not to the gods on the altars — it doesn't make much difference. If you see these animals being taken, except for the moment when they are actually going to be killed, they will be munching. When you take a goat and it is munching, it doesn't know that it is being taken to the altar to be sacrificed. But put a man in the same place. Even if there is no scope for him being taken, but things begin to weave inside: 'Oh, if this happens, if that happens, oh, there will be so much pain, this is going to hurt so much.' Mind brings in its own element of uncertainty. And with that uncertainty comes anxiety and morbid thoughts and all kinds of negative preoccupations that add to the pain. There are a number of examples in real life which one could recount. We have seen instances where people were so much in anticipation of pain due to just a simple injection — they didn't know that the injection had already been given! — yet they were wincing, as if it was going to come, because the anticipation creates pain. This is the third level.

But does pain stop there? No, there is yet another level of pain. It comes as the spiritual being begins to get extracted out of this obscurity. When life emerges from matter there is pain, when mind comes out of matter there is pain, when the Spirit begins to come out of matter there is pain. We find in *Savitri* — that is the base, always the base — Sri Aurobindo says,

An absolute supernatural darkness falls
On man sometimes when he draws near to God:

An hour arrives when fail all Nature's means;
Forced out from the protecting Ignorance
And flung back on his naked primal need,
He at length must cast from him his surface soul
And be the ungarbed entity within: [11]

Why does it happen? It's an anguish. Many of us have gone through it. The mind conceives an ideal, it wants an ideal world where there is no pain, no suffering, where everything is beautiful, everything is love and peace, harmony and joy. But the first brush of life on this sensitive humanity in which the Spirit is beginning to be born — because as Spirit is being born it expects an ideal world, and yet what it finds is nothing but *'This earth is full of labour, packed with pain'* [443], *'This earth is full of the anguish of the gods'* [444] — it translates itself as anguish. What is experienced as wear and tear at the level of matter, suffering at the level of life, anxiety at the level of mind, becomes anguish at the level of the Spirit — an anguish for perfection, for freedom from slavery of all kinds, an anguish for bliss, for Truth, for love.

There is of course another kind of suffering which we experience in certain moments. Sri Aurobindo uses the term 'psychic suffering'. It is the suffering of the soul. There is a sweetness in it, there is a compassion in it, it suffers when it sees that the mind, life and body are making a fool of themselves, are riding a merry-go-round of desires, are going fruitlessly and vainly in search of god knows what … the soul sees it and suffers silently within.

These are various types of suffering, and this is how ignorance manifests itself at different levels. Essentially, we can look at it like that. We commonly understand ignorance as absence of knowledge, but in yogic terms that would be 'nescience'. Ignorance is actually that which takes away the Oneness, so that we start seeing everything as separate: 'I am separate; I am a being and I am most important to myself.' Sri Aurobindo says that one of the great mistakes that we all do is to place ourselves, our ego, at the centre of the universe, and then we expect God and everyone else to cater to our needs and desires. What a nice God that would be who would fulfil all that I ask! What a bad God who would starve me and stifle me and takes away so many things that I want to hold on to! But that is the regard of the ego. What would be the regard of the soul within us? A very different regard. For,

The spirit rises mightier by defeat;
Its godlike wings grow wider with each fall. [458]

What the soul sees is something very different. It sees that pain is nothing but

... the hand of Nature sculpturing men
To greatness: an inspired labour chisels
With heavenly cruelty an unwilling mould. [444]

And then the poet goes on to tell us who are those who are picked up.

They shape with giant strokes their own; their sons
Are marked with their enormous stamp of fire. [444]

Who are the ones who are picked up? Not necessarily those whom we regard as sinners. In human life, the concept of sin itself, Sri Aurobindo says, was a trick of Nature created to make men move a little more easily towards the Divine. But man has responded to this trick of Nature with a greater cunning: he has become very acutely aware of the sins of others, and completely oblivious to his own. This trick of Nature hasn't worked, there was no basic truth in it, it was a trick, a device. But what is the truth? Who are the ones who are chosen for this great pain? Those who are marked out to grow in Spirit, to conquer.

Only last night somebody rang me up to tell me about a young lady who is facing imminent death because of widespread cancer. The person who called me was in distress, and I had to speak out these lines of *Savitri* — and how it changes the whole perspective!

Then this person asked me, 'But won't it affect the faith of those who love her?' Now the problem is that our beliefs and our nonbeliefs are so much on the surface that it really makes no difference. Many times it is very difficult to say who really believes and who doesn't believe, because we live so much on the surface. What is happening in the depths? That is of crucial importance. We see only outwardly, outward things. And there are people who seem to believe, but at the smallest pain they wince, start cursing God, and start questioning 'Why me? Why me? Why have you sent this calamity to me? What kind of God are you?' — as if God is nothing but a genie in the bottle to

satisfy all our desires? 'My life should be happy — then it doesn't matter if the whole world is going to blazes.' We wince only when we ourselves have pain? This is the extreme degree of selfishness we can experience, even though we say that we believe. On the other hand, it is also true that there are people who outwardly don't believe, but who can say that they have less faith? They go through life as if they knew that a silent hand is leading them. Though they don't speak about it, they are silently doing yoga. In fact, many times I feel a little hesitant, speaking like this, going out to give talks, because I feel there are many more who go through life in such a beautiful way and they are the ones who are a source of inspiration for all of us. They live yoga. We talk about yoga. And very often those who don't talk, walk on the path much better. So it's a disqualification, very frankly I feel — to be sitting here!

Coming back to our problem of pain — these are the types of pain that we experience, and this is how ignorance manifests as pain. So what can we do? This is one aspect of it. We are not going into the philosophical and metaphysical aspects of it — how ignorance came into existence, how the inconscient came into existence, why it has been born — because those questions would interest a philosophical mind, but all Sri Aurobindo's devotees need to have a bit of pragmatism in them, because he is really a spiritual realist. Otherwise we would become like the philosopher who was taking a boat ride: as he was a little way through he asked the boatman 'Have you read the Vedas?' He

said 'No sir, I am totally uneducated.' They went on a little further. 'You must have read the Gita at least, it's a sacred scripture?' 'No, sir — I have heard about it, my father used to, I believe my great grandfather used to read it, but I have to earn a livelihood.' They went a little further and the philosopher asked, 'At least you must have read something from the Ramayana?' 'Well sir, it was there in my house but I couldn't open it …' Then suddenly they are caught in a whirlpool, the boat is sinking. The boatman asks, 'Do you know how to swim, Professor?' 'No, I never learnt it!' 'Well I am sorry, I think your whole life is a waste!' So let us touch the pragmatic aspect, how to really handle this problem of pain.

Of course, there is the spiritual solution, to get out of Ignorance, to get out of the limits of the ego — and that is what pain is trying to make us do. It is trying to enlarge us, it is trying to tell us that these are the limits and that if we live within those limits there is pain. In fact, Sri Aurobindo says when asked 'What is pain when transformed in the Divine?' he says, 'Pain gets transformed into intolerable ecstasy.' After all, this world is nothing but delight, but I feel pain because in me that delight is cabined in narrow bounds, I want happiness to be within these bounds, under these conditions, and therefore the touch of the great World-Master and Artisan is felt as pain to me.

We have seen the various sources of pain and how it manifests. But what do are we to do at each level?

At the level of matter, it must open to Light. We know how much Mother has emphasised this, but we shall come back to

that a little later. What are we to do if we actually have a pain? If we have a toothache, or a pain in the hand or the foot — what do we do? We have to do precisely that — open to the Light. There is, beyond the borders of Ignorance, a Force, a Stillness, a Power of Immobility and Peace, and we have to bring that down to where our pain is. Now we cannot do that if in everyday life we are not accustomed to do it. It cannot be done suddenly in one day … although it does happen in many people instinctively that when they are in a state of deep crisis or physical pain, somehow they go through it, and afterwards, when it is over, they suddenly realise, 'Oh my god, it was such a terrible thing!' — but during that intense phase it is as if something takes hold and instinctively they make the right movement. For instance, fainting: fainting is the right movement when there is sudden stress or sudden physical trauma, because the being goes out of the body and it is one way to bring that peace and stillness into the body from above. But otherwise, hoping that we don't faint, we can do it voluntarily by literally pushing that power of immobility into the part that is suffering; this is one very complete way. And I can tell you that this is a very very powerful method. One can just practice it and try it and it can really help any kind of pain.

Or else one can cut oneself off from the pain. These are the two alternatives available. One is to still the turbulent movement, the vibration which gets translated in our active mental consciousness as pain. The other is to get out of the zone

of pain, that is the spot where the consciousness is in a whirlpool — to cut oneself off.

Now these are temporary solutions; this is not the permanent solution that Sri Aurobindo has mentioned. Sri Aurobindo has also mentioned medicines, and the Mother too was very pragmatic in her approach. People have the idea that the Mother didn't want anyone to take pain-killers or drugs. It is not true. Yes, she said that this is a temporary thing, it is not the real thing. There are psychological methods by which we can overcome pain, and one is to detach oneself from the pain, from the painful spot and turn the mind elsewhere. Or we can hand over the responsibility to the Divine — that is the best, she says, that is 'the supreme science' — instead of all the time bothering about 'what is happening to my body?' and observing it acutely, as if the body were such a fascinating thing to observe. 'Oh, I had five hiccups in the morning, and I had ten now in the evening, can there be something done about it?' How does it matter? The other alternative is to introduce immobility into that spot and that acts like a balm, or indeed much more powerfully.

Then, on the vital level, the pain is caused by desire and attachment. We saw that desire comes because we are not experiencing the Oneness that all is. Here, isn't pain also a means which Nature uses to re-create that oneness? Through our mutual affection and attachments? What should be done? The Mother tells us that while one should not ask for suffering,

one should not run away from it either. That is what Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri* also.

Pain and suffering are evolutionary mechanisms, but Sri Aurobindo is telling us, please, do not ask for suffering.

> *O mortal, bear, but ask not for the stroke,*
> *Too soon will grief and anguish find thee out. [453]*

Already there is enough load of it. We don't have to ask for an additional quota. At the same time, when it comes we should not turn away from it. What should we do then? Go into the heart of pain, touch its very core from where it originates, into its depth. Go where there is no more separation, where there is Oneness. When we lose someone whom we love, when we lose something that we cherish, what should we do? Go within, go within, go within, into the depths. There is a bedrock of consciousness where there is Oneness, and these things are not abstractions. Indeed, suffering is a powerful lever with which we can open many a closed door if we know how to use it as a handle to go within. But instead, we sit at the face of the door that is closed and fret and fume rather than turn around and look at the door that is opening.

This is the problem with ignorance. We look at the TV, we are so captured by it that when there is a scene which is full of suffering we begin to suffer — because we are attached to it, it is so real to us. When there is something which is comical, we laugh. But we can always stand back from that horror-show and know that we are in ourselves alone and infinite. To go into the depths and discover that bedrock of Oneness, where none

is separated from anyone, where all of us are together on the breast of the Mighty Mother, that is the solution, when we face suffering due to the loss of something or someone cherished. To have non-possessiveness about anything since all belongs to the Lord and is given to us on trust for a short while, is to be ever happy and free from the pain that comes through the stress of desire.

But if we cannot do that, there is another thing we can do. It is to face life with calm fortitude and endurance and trust in the Divine. As Sri Aurobindo says,

> *O mortal, bear this great world's law of pain,*
> *In thy hard passage through a suffering world*
> *Lean for thy soul's support on Heaven's strength,*
> *Turn towards high Truth, aspire to love and peace.*
> *A little bliss is lent thee from above,*
> *A touch divine upon thy human days.*
> *Make of thy daily way a pilgrimage,*
> *For through small joys and griefs thou mov'st towards*
> *God. [451]*

We may not understand how it happens, but 'make of thy daily way a pilgrimage', that is the injunction. We have to do this in everyday life. This equanimity is not indifference to the touches of life, it does not mean becoming hard to pain, it is not becoming insensitive; equanimity is not just a stark facing of life, it is not a shrinking from life either.

There was somebody who had gone away to an ashrama and was staying there, and he was asked, 'Why did you come here?'

'Well,' he says, 'I have six daughters and you know it is so difficult to get them married, so I thought this is a nice solution for my miseries.' There are all kinds of things, you know, in this world. But this is not what is meant: 'Oh, now I am OK, I have no pain, no suffering because somebody else is going to have to take the burden on my behalf.' That is not the advice. It is not indifference, equanimity is not insensitiveness. It is something much deeper. It rests on the bedrock of faith. It is a leap of faith, to let go and surrender to the Divine, with the conviction that He is there, He will take care. When we have knowledge, we don't need faith. When we don't have knowledge, faith is the line that bridges the chasm.

This letting go is again not easy for the human consciousness. There is a very fine story about a man who has an accident and gets thrown over a cliff. He hangs onto the edge and cries out loud, 'Anyone there?' A voice comes, 'Let go.' He looks down. Below him there is nothing but a gaping abyss. Once again he calls, 'Anyone there?' Once again the voice comes 'Just let go. Have faith and let go.' A third time he calls out, 'Is there anyone else up there?' *[laughter].*

This 'let go' is very difficult. It sounds very easy, and that's why yoga has to be practiced in real life. It is a real-life event. We cannot practice equanimity unless we have these everyday experiences of life. The Mother says very beautifully in one of her Prayers: *'the daily activity is the anvil on which all the elements must pass and repass in order to be purified, refined, made supple and ripe for the illumination which contemplation*

gives to them' [CWM 1: 6]. They have to pass through the crucible where they are purified. At the end only that pure ingot of gold remains. All else is burnt away. This is what yoga is. It is a fire, and as She would say, do not touch this fire unless you are not only sincere but want to grow more and more sincere. One mistake we should not make in life or rather make it consciously, it is to tell the Divine 'I want to be Yours' — because we may say it quite thoughtlessly, 'Oh, how nice …' But once we say it, nothing can hold us back. When we say it we have to be willing to be all alone, to be cast out from everything, from every paradise. There's a beautiful aphorism of Sri Aurobindo in which he says *'*God drives us out of every Eden that we may be forced to travel through the desert to a diviner Paradise*'* [CWSA 12: 496]. He casts us out of every Eden. The moment that we say 'I want to be Yours', the safe limits begin to crack around us, and all that was our protecting ignorance, all that was the very thing keeping us away from the Divine, it begins to break and break and break to free *'*the ungarbed entity within' [11].

This is the deep meaning of pain, and this is its significance. It shows us our limits and our weak spots. It comes to liberate us from the boundaries of our Ignorance. It is as it were an evolutionary device to push us towards a greater and greater self-exceeding. But Sri Aurobindo is a perfectionist and wants nothing short of perfect perfection. He says, all these things are fine, these are intermediary ways — equanimity, faith, detachment, practicing immobility, courage, aspiration for

light, putting into matter a plasticity and will to progress — all these are solutions, but they are just steps on the way. What is the perfect solution? The perfect solution is only when matter, life and mind would be transformed into their divine equivalents. Matter is pure existence. The Self has become matter, and now it must recover that Selfhood. What is life? Life is pure Consciousness-Force, Chit-Shakti, delight fulfilling itself in manifold ways. The delight of oneness becomes the delight of union, delight of multiplicity. That is life, it is consciousness-force, reaching out to its aims, continuously fulfilling itself. And what is mind but a derivative fall from the supramental Truth? When mind recovers its plenary illumination, when it dwells in a self-existent knowledge where *'All Time is one body, Space a single look*' [660] and '*Time's secrets*' are '*an oft-read book'* [44], then there will be no more ignorance at these levels. That is the solution.

But who will do this? Who can do this? There we come to the great mystery of December 5 and November 17. Sometimes people wonder 'Well, if that be the case, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother should not have had any problems, they should be always free from pain. Did not they go through suffering and pain?' Beautifully, Sri Aurobindo has answered,

> *He who would save the race must share its pain:*
> *This he shall know who obeys that grandiose urge.*
> *The Great who came to save this suffering world*
> *And rescue out of Time's shadow and the Law,*

Must pass beneath the yoke of grief and pain;
They are caught by the Wheel that they had hoped to break,
On their shoulders they must bear man's load of fate.
Heaven's riches they bring, their sufferings count the price
Or they pay the gift of knowledge with their lives. [445]

This is the basic distinction between the old yoga and the yoga of Sri Aurobindo. In the old yogas, you escape from the Law: 'Here is the rule of Ignorance. This is going to remain forever. Escape from this zone of Ignorance, go into the zone of Light, don't get caught into this cycle of birth and rebirth and you are free.' But in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga there is something else. It is not enough to escape, for

Escape, however high, redeems not life,
Life that has fallen here upon earth. [448]

Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
The forge where the Archmason shapes his works. [686]

It's a smithy. This is the place of work that is always our home. We have come here from there, and we have come here for a work. The moment we live in the consciousness that we are essentially That, but we have come here for a work, all pain and suffering vanishes away. What is that work? He says it is to change the very law. Not to escape from the law — to change the law. But how can I change the law unless I pass beneath the

yoke of the law? Unless I experience the law, its acuteness, its bitterness, its pang, the struggle and the suffering. When one goes below it, then one sees all the details and works to change it. It is relatively easy to escape from the law. That has been done time and time again for thousands and thousands of years by the great sages and saints all over the world. But here Sri Aurobindo comes to change the law and when one has to change the law one has to pass beneath the yoke of the law. And this is the secret of 'the dread mysterious sacrifice'. 'Now is the debt paid, wiped off the original score.' … 'The debt the Eternal owes to the fallen kind' [445]. The incarnate God takes upon Himself the burden of human suffering and pain so that our path may become easier. A small tear drop in His eyes wipes away the tears of a million. That is the secret of God's labour and His pain in a world that is yet unfinished and betrays Him. That of course is the story from the Divine's side. How we respond to this divine holocaust is another story. How do we respond?

Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change;
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:
It fears the pure divine intolerance
Of that assault of ether and of fire;
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,
Almost with hate repels the light it brings;
It trembles at its naked power of Truth
And the might and sweetness of its absolute Voice.
Inflicting on the heights the abysm's law,

It sullies with its mire heaven's messengers:
Its thorns of fallen nature are the defence
It turns against the saviour hands of Grace;
It meets the sons of God with death and pain.
A glory of lightnings traversing the earth-scene,
Their sun-thoughts fading, darkened by ignorant minds,
Their work betrayed, their good to evil turned,
The cross their payment for the crown they gave, [7]

This is how man responds. Essentially, we have to change our response towards pain. So far, we shrink from pain, or we try to escape from pain. But as His children, as Her children, we have to work and aspire for the change of the very law of pain, the very law of struggle and suffering. And for that even His children have to go through the test of this purifying fire.

We can pause here, and leave a time for questions and answers, with these lines from *Savitri* which are very very relevant and evocative. Among the boons that Savitri asks from Death — transformed into his own divine Reality — is the secret of emerging from pain:

"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." [697]

'Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain' — this is the divine embrace. When we go through life, instead of going as if we are travelling alone, struggling in yoga alone,

struggling with life alone, if only we could have this sense that He is with us all the time, it is He who takes our burden upon himself. If we can take this leap of faith, this trust that it is He who strikes in the spears and rides in the chariot, He who slays without stint and is full of compassion, and if we can endure it with that equanimity, which Sri Aurobindo beautifully brings out:

I face earth's happenings with an equal soul;
In all are heard Thy steps: Thy unseen feet
Tread Destiny's pathway in my front. Life's whole
Tremendous theorem is Thou complete.

And what is the victory and failure of life? He says

Failure is cradled on Thy deathless arm,
Victory is Thy passage mirrored in Fortune's glass.
...
No power can slay my soul; it lives in Thee.
Thy presence is my immortality.

[CWSA 2: 612, 'The Divine Worker']

Questions and answers

Question from the Audience: Sir, what is the role of the subconscient in pain?

It comes in many ways. One, the subconscient holds the slightest impressions that it registers. It is like a place where the memory of pain and the responses which we have made

previously all get stamped there as a habit. Therefore, though we know mentally that we could give another response to a situation or event, the subconscient spontaneously throws up the response we are habituated to. The subconscient is a big load — the atavism which we carry. It is the stamp of the past that lurks as a shadow and drags at our feet as we move into the future. Especially with regard to the yoga, when the journey enters into the subconscient it throws up all that. Before we experience that, it is natural for each of us to feel that everybody else is bad and we are the nice person. But when we confront the subconscient we discover what lurks within. And it is in everyone. Its role essentially is that it throws up the same habitual responses again and again — and again and again. One has to be very very patient and persistent when the working is going on in it. No one can work upon these parts himself. It is the Divine who works. But we have to allow the Divine to work. We have to understand that this is a process and this is a stage and a phase. We have to go through it and if we have to go through it, we might as well go through it smilingly and cheerfully, because that makes the pain much more bearable and tolerable.

It is this subconscient which hypnotises us into believing that things are as they are, that they will never change. This is the ancient adversary which has hidden in the subconscient, and Sri Aurobindo alludes to it as 'the veil of cosmic forces'. These are the forces which are the cause of the question the Mother raises in that Prayer we saw at the very beginning,

'Why do men flee from these boons as though they feared them?' [CWM 1: 22]. It is very strange that in this town of Pondicherry or in the world with billions of people hardly a handful really want to seek a solution which is lasting. Why? What is this? In *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo explains it very beautifully:

> *A dark concealed hostility is lodged*
> *In the human depths, in the hidden heart of Time*
> *That claims the right to change and mar God's work.*
> *A secret enmity ambushes the world's march;*
> *It leaves a mark on thought and speech and act:*
> *It stamps stain and defect on all things done;*
> *Till it is slain peace is forbidden on earth. [447]*

Essentially, this is the point where this darkness resides.

Of course, adverse forces work in many ways. Since we have come to this point, we can just take it up — how they contribute to the problem of pain and suffering.

They have three characteristic ways of working. One is that they increase and exaggerate the movements of universal nature which drag us down. If there is anger, they push upon it and even a small irritation becomes like a volcano erupting. The second method is that they distort the image, so that what is small becomes large, out of proportion; what is truly useful and real tends to become small. Because of the action of the adverse forces, that which is true, that which is dear, that which is real, tends to become small and insignificant, and that which is very small, appears very big. That is one of their roles: to

make us feel that we are very big and important, or that this or that small problem is very big and out of proportion to their true size. Then there is a third way which is the most dangerous, they throw doubts and depression and discouragement. When these things appear it is a direct action of the adverse forces which throw heaps of suggestions on the mind. 'You cannot do yoga, you are a failure, your life is miserable, everything is bad in life.'

In *Savitri* the Queen voices many of these things, and Narad says

> *Thy mind's light hides from thee the Eternal's thought,*
> *Thy heart's hopes hide from thee the Eternal's will,*
> *Earth's joys shut from thee the Immortal's bliss.*
> *Thence rose the need of a dark intruding god,*
> *The world's dread teacher, the creator, pain.*
> *Where Ignorance is, there suffering too must come;[443]*

The adverse forces throw up all kinds of things and cloud our reason, obstruct it. What should we do during these moments of depression that we all go through? What is the yogic way of coming out of it? There are many ways, of course, there are anti-depressant drugs also, but there is a very beautiful way that Sri Aurobindo gives, something to this effect: 'To all such suggestions of discouragement and failure and doubt and denial say to yourself, "I am Bacchus and Apollo and Ares. I am Agni, the Fire, the Force. I am Surya the creator. I am a child of immortality called by the Divine. I cannot fail".'

This is how we must respond to it.

Question from the Audience: Is there any way in which the specific notion of pain is different in Sri Aurobindo's teaching from that of other spiritual or philosophical traditions?

In the traditional philosophy one origin attributed to pain is desire. One notion is that it is because of desire that the universe is created, and that as long as there is desire, as long as there is universe and as long as you are part of the universe, we are bound to experience pain. This is one explanation. In that case the only solution is to get out of the manifested universe and into some plane of consciousness, into some *laya* or *nirvana*, where you don't have to come back into this.

There is another notion which is more or less parallel. In fact it takes the problem one step backward. Where does desire come from? It comes from Ignorance. Desire is an ignorant attempt to recreate the oneness that has been lost. The more original conception is that pain and suffering is caused by Ignorance — that is, ignorance of our true nature, of who we really are. We are really divine so we don't need to strive after things, to try to possess things. That is another way of understanding that pain and struggle and suffering come because of ignorance of the true nature of things, of the true divine Reality behind. Again, the solution is more or less similar: get out of this world of ignorance, into some divine status and you are out of this problem of pain.

Of course, there are philosophies that are purely materialistic which hold that pain and suffering are part of the

struggle of nature. They don't even try to explain, but look at pain as the inevitable result of the clash of forces. Now this is also true at one level. These philosophies do not admit the possibility of the Divine or any status of consciousness which is beyond this manifested universe. According to them the very nature of life brings pain because there is a clash and struggle; because of that clash disease, error, death, incapacity, pain and all these things are there.

Sri Aurobindo accepts all these explanations as partial truths. He also adds the new dimension of inertia: why essentially is there pain? Because the Divine is wanting to pull this world out of that Inconscient, but there is the resistance of the Inconscience at the back. Sri Aurobindo goes to great lengths to explain why this Inconscient should be there at all, why this had to come into existence at all. And we can understand it in a very simple way. For example, there is a cricket match going on today I believe between South Africa and India. A lot of people here are waiting to get home and turn on their radio sets or the TV. Now if there were a cricket match between say Bangladesh and India, most people would not be interested, because for it to be really interesting the adversaries have to be closely matched. In the case of the manifestation, the adversary created is almost as powerful as the Creator himself. Naturally the drag which it exercises has to be very powerful. But it helps in the evolutionary process. The greater the pain and difficulty, the greater the inner strength that comes out, the greater the possibilities that begin to manifest. In a

nutshell, it is because of the pull of the Inconscient in one direction and the Divine pulling the consciousness in another direction; there is inertia, resistance to that pull of the Divine, and that leads to the sense of pain, translating itself as suffering in the human consciousness. That is why when the divine consciousness is more active, as it is today, many new maladies are being thrown up on earth, many upheavals are taking place — precisely because the divine consciousness is much more active today than at other times. During such phases there is a possibility of new forms of pain and suffering manifesting on earth because of the resistance of earth-nature. This idea has been introduced by Sri Aurobindo.

As to the solution, his solution is radically different. Till now the solution given has been to escape. I'm talking about spiritual solutions, they have been to some way or other find a door of exit and an individual escape from pain. Sri Aurobindo questions this. He asks, if this is so, then why was the cosmos created at all? If escape is the goal, then why all this drama and all this fuss and all this struggle? If the end is the same as the origin? Sri Aurobindo says that instead of just escaping into that zone of light, instead of the finite merging and escaping into the infinite, dissolving in the infinite, we should aspire for the infinite to invade the finite. When the infinite invades the finite it shatters the limits. By that touch mind and life and matter here should be redeemed. The manifestation itself should become fulfilled. It must recover its lost origin. With Sri Aurobindo's vision there is a whole continuum: life is

nothing else but the one Consciousness-Force which is full of delight and self-possessed power. That falls and becomes life as we know it here. It is not that life is different and that is different. If this can recover that lost unity, even while there is an embodied existence, there would be no problem of pain and suffering. There would be no incapacity, no limitation. That is the solution that Sri Aurobindo offers — a solution that is radically different — it is a long process, but a more perfect and complete solution.

> *Question from the Audience: Since the supramental power has come down, why do the world conditions seem to have worsened instead of getting better?*

If we look at things very very impartially, both things are happening. Very interestingly, the Mother has spoken about this. She has spoken about the evil becoming more evil and the good becoming more good. On one side we see things going from bad to worse. On the other side we see exceptionally new things coming up, new forms of thought, new forms of music, new forms of ideas, new forms of groups, many kinds of impulses: women's liberation, youth unrest, even things which we think are bad because we don't understand them, things that seem to be destructive, even there a seed of new construction is concealed within. Many of the old things are being brought down to the ground. All of us have old eyes that are still accustomed to the old world, so with these eyes we see the bringing down of the old world. But with a new pair of eyes, we will see right behind it the construction of a new world. The

classic example is the hippie movement. The hippie movement, the coming of the Beatles, even the drug culture, appeared to many like something very negative. But if we look deeper into it we find there is a seeking, an anguish for an ideal world. Many of us will remember that song 'We don't need no education' which expresses the feeling that people are being churned out of the schools like products out of a factory. When you listen to it you feel that these singers are open to the light. There is an anguish which outwardly seems to be breaking the old world and all its forms and constructions. But right behind there is a new construction also taking place which is much more free, much more open, and with the new set of eyes we see that also happening.

After all, fifty years is a very short period, and also it depends on how we respond to the Force and the Grace. There are those who open in response, it is just a question of sincerity, and they do emerge into a much greater light. It is far easier today to contact one's own inner reality than it must have been, say, 200 years ago. Today, if one really sincerely tries to go within and get in touch with what the Mother has termed the psychic being, it is far easier than it would have been 200 years ago. I have instances of children, young boys and girls who have beautiful experiences — it is amazing! And these are genuine experiences. I am not talking about that intermediate zone where experiences are created by the vital or the mind, but something very genuine.

On one side there is the old world which is crumbling and going to pieces, which we see and cry over, but that has to go for the new to come. A clear ground is being made for the new creation to come up. That is one way to look at it.

Some people explain it as the churning of matter, others as the digging of the subconscient: when you stir the depths then the impure things float up to the top. Sugar which appears absolutely white and pure, when we heat it on the fire after some time the white sugar leaves a brown trace which comes to the surface — this is actually the impurity which we were not seeing before. It is just the same thing with human consciousness: we have so much muck inside! Sometimes I feel, and I'm sure many of us share this sentiment, that we are sad for the Divine. We all the time feel sad for ourselves, but if we once look at His work one really can weep.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.
...
I have been digging deep and long
Mid in a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.
[CWSA 2: 534; 'A God's Labour']

But how do we respond? The thousand million insincerities of everyday life — this is the response we give to the Divine.

The Divine takes it, that is his greatness and divinity. The hope lies in us growing sincere by the touch of Grace — because really without that Grace it is difficult to become sincere. Layers of obscurity after obscurity. But one thing is sure, despite all the present turmoil, chaos and crisis, as the Mother has said: *'Never for an instant vacillate in the belief that the mighty work of change taken up by Sri Aurobindo is going to culminate in success. For that indeed is a fact…'* [CWM 13: 21].

Already some early signs are visible, for example, in the young children. How truthful and straightforward they are, how free of fear and all the hang-ups that we carry like big loads on our heads. How much freer they are! That is the work that is going on. At a very personal level, I feel that it is going on at a far greater speed than what one expects. Fifty years is nothing in the history of the life of the earth. If you think of the many lives we have lived and the many that are yet to come — if we look from that vast standpoint … which incidentally is one of the ways of escape from pain also. The Mother says, 'Whenever you are tormented, step back from this whirlpool of forces and see how many lives you have lived and how many lives are still going to come and what is this period of pain but a small fraction in eternity?' Fifty years is really nothing.

For example, some people ask about what Mother said, that India and Pakistan would become one. Of course, playing cricket is bringing people together. These are the strange ways of the Divine. These two are coming closer, thanks to cricket

and earthquakes. But apart from that, how long have India and Pakistan existed as two separate nations? Fifty years. What was there before? A thousand years ago people did not even know India as India and Pakistan as Pakistan. There was an entirely different geography. And what is going to come after another 100 years we cannot conceive — who knows what is going to be where? We should live in that vaster state and then we see that this is a small fraction of all vast Time. Fifty years does look a lot to all of us because we live in that frame, but for the Divine it is one moment in Eternity.

There is something very nice that the Mother has said about how to face the Adversary. She has said that the Adversary can be vanquished only by a greater joy. Someone asked her, 'Mother, unless we have conquered the Adversary, how do we get that greater joy?' The Mother said, 'No, go past him, laugh in his face.' He is there to threaten us. Say to him, 'Who art thou, wearing this mask? Are you not my lover who comes masked as the torturer?' The moment we have that attitude: 'You want to play with me the game of fighting? Come and play it, let us fight, but let it be a game', then we discover a deeper reality behind. It's a question of looking at the whole of life from that perspective. It should become a way of living, so that every time we face suffering from an adversary, whether it be in the form of individual or collective suffering, we have to look beyond the mask. Even in the terrorists, we should not forget — in fact, very frankly I feel that because of them, so much awakening has come into human beings. Our world is

changing today thanks to the terrorists. People are coming together and uniting, thanks to the terrorists. They would not want to unite, the nations would fight against each other, but today because there are terrorists there is a global war against terrorism. Now the earth has become a unit and a unity because there is a common enemy: no longer one nation against another nation, but an ideology — a way of life that is atavistic, a way of behaving which drags us backward, a way that takes away human freedom — this becomes the enemy, not one government against another one. Of course, politics is the last thing to change, so we should give it time.

Everything helps in the process of divine creation, everything helps. Even destruction helps:

> *He saw in Night the Eternal's shadowy veil,*
> *Knew death for a cellar of the house of life,*
> *In destruction felt creation's hasty pace,*
> *Knew loss as the price of a celestial gain*
> *And hell as a short cut to heaven's gates. [231]*

Sometimes that which appears worst and most terrible is actually the swiftest road, *'For daring Hell's kingdoms winds the heavenly route'* [210]. As Sri Aurobindo said, hell is the shortcut. This is the shortcut he has taken us on and naturally it is a bumpy ride; we are sitting in a big Tata Sumo on a very rough road, with rough weather all around. What we should know is that, even though we don't see him, the unseen pilot holds the rudder well, he does not sleep.

Even those who sink in the victorious flood,
Where do they sink? Into his breast.
He who to some gives victory, joy and good,
To some gives rest.
[CWSA 2: 281; 'To R. On her Birthday']

Always we should stand back behind appearances and look at life from that vaster landscape; then we see that all *'shall be safe in the breast of the One'* [CWSA 2: 650]. Behind even the terrorists, ultimately it is He who is playing.

Question from the Audience: What is the role of past karma in present pain?

Past karma does have a role, but not in the way we often understand it according to the popular notion. The popular notion is that you have done a good deed, you will be born in a king's family with a silver spoon in your mouth. Obviously, this is absurd, for that would mean that God values the silver spoon and the king's palace just as we do. And it would also contradict many of the facts. Even in Indian mythology, the people who suffered most were the Pandava brothers who were born in the jungle, who lived in the jungle, who got the kingdom and were thrown back into the jungle by deceit, they won the kingdom again but decided to go back into the jungle, and they died in the jungle. While Dhuryodhana, the so-called evil one, was born in a palace, remained a king, fought like a king, died like a king. But that is the outer life. If you look at the inner life, with one there is trouble, pain, strife, even though

he has a kingdom; with the others, they were also anguished but they had the delight of the Divine's company. The repercussion of karma is essentially inner. It is an evolutionary mechanism and not a mechanism of reward and punishment — that is what Sri Aurobindo says. God is not a big CEO, rewarding some and punishing others. It is more like, when I do a selfish action it makes me narrow, and when I am narrow my consciousness is more obscure, more ignorant, more dull, and more unresponsive to the delight that is always there in the world. Essentially, selfish deeds bind my consciousness, make me narrow. It is a well-known thing that people who lead a selfish life really lead a very miserable life, even though outwardly they have everything.

Today we see that many people cannot smile. And it is so nice to see that by the very fact of turning to the Divine we begin to smile, we begin to laugh, even to the extent that people wonder, 'What has gone wrong with you, why are you laughing?' — and we won't even be able to give any tangible reason.

Karma is a mechanism for evolution, its role is to help the soul to learn. Gradually it learns that if I do this I am bound. Take the view of the Gita, what it says about tamasic action, for instance. Krishna doesn't say that if you have done tamasic deeds you will be punished by being born half blind or with bowed legs: he says your consciousness will become dull and obscure, you will be more and more deluded. What about rajasic karma? He says it will bring pleasure and pain together.

What about sattwic karma? He says it will increase *sukham* and *prakasham* — gladness and light. It is not that suddenly you will hit a jackpot. He doesn't say that. And what happens when you turn to the Divine? That also is asked in the Gita. Arjuna says, 'Everyone cannot get full realisation in one life, so if I fail, what will happen in my next life?' Krishna does not give the assurance that because you have turned to God, in your next life I will ensure that you are born to a billionaire and everything is available to you on a platter. He does not say that. He says 'You will be born into a family that is already turned towards the Divine and you will very soon regain that lost yoga, and will cover the path that is left.' This is the real significance of karma. It is essentially an inner mechanism of evolution, not reward and punishment.

The Challenge of Death and the Conquest of Immortality

A talk at Savitri Bhavan on November 11, 2007 (Invocation 28:24-46)

As human beings we have one faculty which we are meant to use, but most often misuse: the power of speech. The power of speech is supposed to communicate something of the Word that lies in the higher spheres, but too often we end up making it an instrument for all that is low and ugly, all that is full of doubt, despair, denial. Death speaks through us at such times, and that is the sad part.

But there is another power human beings have that is expressed in one of the lines in *Savitri*. After Death has been transformed into a radiant god, she asks the god for the first of several boons for *'the magnificent soul of man on earth' [696]*.

It is so touching. We are used to believing in ourselves as ephemeral creatures, as waves on Time's inconscient sea; we are used to believing that we are powerless, helpless, weak. And yet, the beauty of it all is that there is something in us which always wants to wrestle and is always full of hope, in spite of the darkest night. There is something in us — as a race,

a species, not individually — which strives towards something more than what we are. That is *'the magnificent soul of man'*. And sometimes one wonders whether it would have been really magnificent if all was too easy. If immortality were served to us on a platter and we were told, 'Take it', would we really deserve it? In one of his writings — it is a deeply moving writing, it shakes us to the very core, it is called 'The Way' — Sri Aurobindo speaks about the supramental yoga, and its many difficulties. He says:

> *Hell will vomit its hordes to oppose and enring and wound and menace; Heaven will meet thee with its pitiless tests and its cold luminous denials. ... But thou sayst God's hand will be with me and the Divine Mother near with her gracious smile of succour? And thou knowest not then that God's Grace is more difficult to have or to keep than the nectar of the Immortals or Kuvera's priceless treasures?*

Kuvera is the Lord of Wealth, who holds all the wealth in the world. More difficult than to hold those treasures is to hold Grace. Then, after all this, he sums it up very beautifully:

> *Nay, then, is immortality a plaything, to be given lightly to a child, or the divine life a prize without effort or the crown for a weakling? [CWSA 12:156]*

It is really the worthy prize of a worthy soul. That is the whole truth about the human struggle. In fact, if we look at human life we can always see this paradox. It is as if we always

live a double existence. On one hand, our body is a fragile vase in which we hope to plant the flowers whose fragrance never fades, flowers that bloom in heaven; we want to plant them in the fragile vase of this human body. We hope to find a love which would never, ever die. And yet we are constantly surrounded by love turning into hatred, malice, and all its very opposite. Our thoughts want to reach out to the Infinite, and yet how brief-lived are our hopes, almost like illusory gleams. We soon turn back to doubt. And yet our thoughts want to grasp the unknowable. Our passion wants to grasp at a bliss that it will never again have to forfeit to pain, and yet how short-lived, how brief, how passing our happiness is. This is the paradox of human life. Sri Aurobindo very beautifully sums it up in Savitri when he says:

A link between the demigod and the beast,
...
A strange antinomy is his nature's rule.
...
Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds, [337]

If today you ask anyone 'What do you want: freedom or bondage?' Instinctively everyone will reply 'Freedom!' But then if you tell them, 'OK. From today you are free: no bonds, no trappings', most people will say, 'That is all right, but freedom can wait'.

Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds,
He has need of darkness to perceive some light

And need of grief to feel a little bliss;
He has need of death to find a greater life. [337]

Nowhere else do we see this paradox more acutely than in the fact that we know that death walks by our side all the while: as a shadow it chases us; before noon the shadow is behind, and as the noon passes we see the shadow falling in front of us; and yet something in us always believes, instinctively, it is an instinct: 'This can't happen to me.'

Except for some people who get into a pathological state, most of us live as if instinct with immortality. It is very strange. We know the well-known story, when Yudhisthira is asked all kinds of questions and gives his replies. Then he is asked the master-question: 'What is the greatest wonder, the most surprising thing?' He says 'Every day we see men die, yet we believe we are immortal.' The story is often interpreted in a superficial way, as reminding us that everybody has to die: we know it, yet we are foolish enough to believe that we are immortal. But if we go a little deeper, the story touches this paradox: we believe that we are immortal because something in us is immortal. There is something in us which just refuses to believe in death — and something in us which even uses death as a goad to discover our own immortality!

If we look at many of the most beautiful things that have happened in life, we wonder whether, if death were not there as a goad, if there was no death and man had a lot of time at his disposal, would they have had the same value? Now I am nearing 48 and the other day I was just thinking, how much

more time before one can be fully rooted in the Divine all the time? And then I was wondering, if I was told 'You have 500 years to live' would I still feel the same way, or would I say, 'Oh, I have a lot of time, I can wait. Maybe after a hundred years I'll think about it.'? It is something very strange, that death serves as a goad, a spur.

A dim bystander at the body's start

Death starts from our very birth. Cells start dying from the moment we are born. Age catches up, time begins to fly:

A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face: [600]

What is that other mystery?

Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth, [600]

Death is a passage to immortality. In fact, the Upanishad speaks of it cryptically: 'By death they discover immortality.' It is a very interesting question: why there is death and how it appears to us at different levels, posing, as we say, a kind of challenge. But if we go behind the appearances we see that beyond this dark and hideous mask still there is only one thing, the smile of the eternal Beloved — because there is nothing else in this universe, so what else can death be but a mask?

In another place Sri Aurobindo writes that if at all there was an eternal Hell, God would make it out of love, because he

knows only to love; there can be no other logic behind it. Yet we meet the stark paradox: we want immortality, we want eternal love, we want bliss, we want unchanging truth — and all the time we are met by a force that breaks and shatters everything as if it has one single goal, one single agenda, just to break our dreams. Sometimes it can act with such ruthlessness that we wonder whether it isn't, to use a phrase from *Savitri*, a cruel and blind god that is Destiny's architect. You are having a good time and have things you cherish, and something is snatched away from you which you cherished so much. Actually, if we go behind the mask, we see it is a reminder. Probably we have been clinging to our imperfections, we won't let go, to use a modern phrase. Death comes to remind us that what we are clinging to is truly something imperfect, at least it is not yet perfect. Even our ideals, our philosophies are ephemeral. Death takes *Savitri* through the symbol realms where it shows her, 'Look here, all these philosophies, all these intellectual debates, all that you have been seeing, they are nothing but words! Many people have come and said beautiful things, but look at what has happened to this lineage of prophets. There they are in my symbol realm and I reign over them; I Death am Lord.'

What is the thing which Death is really trying to tell Savitri or ask from her? He is saying 'They mere words.' But are they? The other day I was sharing with Shraddhavan that I always feel a little reluctant about speaking. The reason is that these are high truths that need to be experienced and lived. We have

to become them, and sometimes when we speak about them, and more so when speaking becomes a way of life, we are apt to forget that it is one thing to speak about them, it is quite another to experience and live them. It is easy to say, we hear it in the traditions and we learn, that there is a psychic being, and we can give a beautiful lecture on the psychic being, we can speak on it and talk about it, but that is not what impresses Death. It knows how to test us. It is standing there and one day it says, 'Oh, you have been giving talks all your life on the psychic being. Show me, show me: where is it?' Can we say at that time, as Savitri says to Death, *'Conscious of immortality I walk'* [588]?

It is very interesting, very powerful, this one line. Death gives Savitri all kinds of logical arguments: 'This is matter, you are built of this matter and what are you talking about — bringing God into matter? Are you talking about love, high things? What is it? It is mud: a *'frail mud-engine'* [25] for temporary use. Savitri doesn't reply to this logic by another logic. She could have given a whole theory of physics and replied, 'No, no, you are calling it mud, but actually it is energy and if you see, it is a dance of energy, and energy doesn't disintegrate and therefore it is immortal'. She doesn't say a word about all that. She could have said that. She simply says one line: 'Conscious of immortality I walk.' Finished: 'I don't need all your logic about whether it is mud or not — I know what is mud, but I know what is soul.' Who can say that?

If you look at the whole Debate of Love and Death, when does it start? Often of course we want to reach that point very fast. But it starts after Savitri has already undergone the basic yoga. She has realised her soul, all her centres have opened in full bloom, she has realised Nirvana and the all-negating Absolute, she has known Being and Non-being, and, as Death acknowledges later on, she has risen above both the contempt of form and the snare of form.

In the spiritual traditions we find that there are two snares which we must rise beyond if we really want to establish immortality here upon earth. One is the snare of forms. The snare of forms we know very well — we just see the form and are identified with it. And form is not only physical. There are forms of philosophy, intellectual ideas, opinions, feelings, passions, desires, impulses — everything is a form. The snare of forms means that we are too much attached to the form and we don't know what is behind it. This snare holds us with a very tight knot around us. In the Upanishadic language it is called *avidya*. We are caught up in the trap of *avidya*, the multiplicity.

But there is another snare. When we begin to detach ourselves from the snare of forms there is another snare that attracts us — the snare of the contempt of forms. We have had spiritual traditions, great in their own right, but which all talk about the beyond. There is a contempt for forms: 'This transient unhappy earth'. That is how even the Overmind looks upon this earth. A scripture as great as the Gita speaks about

this world as '*anityam asukham lokam* — this transient unhappy world'. This is the look one has even standing on the borders of the Overmind. When we look at this world we see it as transient. A being as great as the Buddha, as heroic and mighty in spirit as the Buddha, looks upon this world and he speaks about it as a sorrowful world, an ignorant world, moved by desire, created out of the womb of desire. That is the other snare, the snare of the contempt of forms. And Death tests both. In *Savitri* we see that Death first tests Savitri to see whether she is attached to the form and mistaking it for something true. Because words can easily deceive: we are always used to using very beautiful words, and we think 'No, in my case it is different.' Mother says it very beautifully when she speaks about how people can easily get deceived. She says 'People get deceived, this power of deception is so powerful in the human mind and they know all this, but when it comes to them they say 'No, no, no — my case is different. My love is true love. I know there is a vital love, a mental love, there is a physical love, but my love is true love.' It is so easy to get deceived, so difficult to be sincere. That is why if there is one word that strikes repeatedly throughout in Mother's writings, prominent from beginning to end, it is 'sincerity': the capacity to look at things just as they are and not to be deceived by appearances. Yet we can be deceived by appearances, and Death comes to see, if we are using a word, what is its meaning. So Savitri says, 'I want my other self, Satyavan. Give him back to me.' And Death responds, 'Oh, you are talking of love! I know what love

is — there has been a scientific study done at Harvard University and they have just discovered what love is. It is a secretion in the glands, and lately some psychiatrists are talking about neuro-transmitters — that's all. Don't talk about love! And I also know that some poets write very beautiful poetry on it, nice words, ethereal. Yes, yes, it gives a little happiness sometimes, but I know what happens to love: it dies within the lover's breast.' And he says, 'You should thank me that I am taking Satyavan. If he would have lived, love would have died within your heart — that has been the history.' What is he really doing through all this whispering? He is testing Savitri. He is the great tester. It is the most difficult task. That is why Mother says that it is very good to remember that you are being tested, but we should never ever assume the role of a tester in anybody's life — because it means that we are identified with the great Adversary. It is his task. God has given him this dreaded task, to test, and every time we criticise, pass harsh judgments on others, we are basically assuming the role of Death. But that is not our role. Our role is to be on the side of the Divine. And when we are asked, can we say, like Savitri, *'My love is not a hunger of the heart, / My love is not a craving of the flesh'* [612]?

One may not have a craving of the flesh, there may be a heart's need that wants to clutch at the joy. Can we say that love has undergone its full evolution within us? What is that evolutionary journey? When Death challenges her and says, 'You talk about love, but I know what love is and I have seen

the stories of Romeo and Juliet that have come down through the ages, and I know what happens to them — they ultimately come to my lap and sleep', Savitri has something very beautiful to say. She says, 'Then you know not how love blossoms and grows and evolves.'

And Love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.
A lonely soul passions for the Alone, [632]

The whole evolutionary journey of love she has mapped: 'My love comes from God and returns to him.' The day we realise this truth, that everything is a mask of the One Beloved, then we can confront Death and say, 'Who are you? You too are a mask, and I can see behind your mask, and see that same unchanging smile.' That is the whole evolutionary journey.

Death comes to test us. We use words, we use philosophies, we use very nice language — and Death says, 'OK, tell me — what is the sense you put into those words?' What is the sense of 'matter'? Savitri speaks about it. She says, 'I see that matter is crammed with spiritual signs, everywhere: this world is written in the script of matter.' What do we find here? This world is crammed with spiritual signs. One has to really look around and one will see. The very structure of the atom is nothing but a reflection of the One around whom the stars move. It is so interesting: that gets reflected right into the atom. Sri Aurobindo sees even in the electron Shiva's fiery chariot.

That is the vision that has to be developed: when we look at matter actually as a robe of the spirit, and a robe that must become worthy of the wearer. It doesn't mean 'matter is a robe of the spirit, so I shall disrobe the spirit and go back.' The robe has to become worthy of the wearer, and that is how Spirit works upon matter. When we start to have that view, then things begin to become different. It is not because of any attachment to the form, it is because one knows that It is here, in this place.

The next challenge is the contempt of forms. We can get detached from the snare of forms with a little bit of yoga and a whole lot of experience of life — because there is a subconscious yoga in life: what yoga doesn't do for us, sometimes the experience of life does for us, and we begin to become free of the snare of forms, if we look at life a little perceptively. But then there is the possibility of a swing to the other side: contempt of forms, contempt of this world. And Death gives a very interesting reasoning: it says, 'OK, fine, you speak about God. But what is God?' And he defines God. He says, 'Your God is nothing but a cold impersonal Void, and you call it God. But I know that God. Matter is standing on that Void, and that God can't help you. Why do you talk about love and other things? OK, you have your God — choose him! Go into That and merge. Where is the question of divinising earth, where is the question of changing life, where is the question of immortality? I know what God is — a cold impersonality into which everything returns, out of which everything is born.

Maybe he is beyond me, although I believe that I am that God.' Death makes it categorical.

We may use the word God. Again Death tests Savitri. 'What do you mean by the term? Do you have the experience?' Then Savitri describes who is this God. She says, *'My God is love and sweetly suffers all'* [591]. What a touching line! It is not God as an impersonality. Sri Aurobindo says what is the goal of his yoga. He says that the goal of his yoga is that beyond the Personal and the Impersonal there is the supreme infinite Personality of the Divine, and we want to manifest that personality into the human. There is also that side of the Divine — the Divine as Being. Death would concede the Non-being, the Impersonality, but it would not accept that there is a Being. There is this other kind of lure and temptation: 'OK, merge into the Impersonal.' But Savitri speaks about the God she has experienced, and she says 'I have seen him smile through many a mask, I have seen him triumph in the flower, I have seen him speak through the birds in the morning, heard him call from every bough, I know who this is. He is the one from whom I have come upon earth.'

Then Death says, 'Fine — your God is very great, maybe he is some kind of transcendent being; then go to him. Why do you want to do something here? He is too great for this earth.' And Savitri answers something very very beautiful. She says, 'That is why I am here: because this is the difficult task. It is very easy to go up there, but much more difficult to build

immortality with mortal things, perishable stuff, with gross things. We want to build something beautiful here.'

When we look at this approach, the whole attitude, the whole inner life of Savitri is being tested thoroughly by Death — because he is not to be deceived by appearances. That is why he is also called, in Indian mythology, Dharmaraja. He is the Guardian of the Law. And what is the Law? Everything has been put into certain limits, and it must live within those limits, it cannot exceed those limits, because if it exceeds those limits everything will collapse. Creation runs by that whole machinery. If an animal begins to live for many more years than its average life-span it would upset the balance, even if in one species this happens, the balance is so delicate. He is the Guardian of the Law. But in man there is an incorrigible impulse to break the law. You make a law — it's the surest way to make sure that somebody will find a way to break it. This is a human impulse — we unnecessarily blame poor animals, because really they are very nice. If you put a little fence around a lion or a tiger, it is amazing! You really wonder — you see a lion sitting there, not just one but seven or eight of them, and that small little man with his whip … and those animals, if they wanted they could just get out of the frame. But so many times it has happened. Even if, once in a while, you really leave the door open and something disastrous happens, they would not break from the law. Generally animals are like that, they will not break the law of their species. Whatever law is fixed for them they will live within that. When they are

hungry they will eat, but they will not eat just like that. But humans try to break the law. This is something incurably right or wrong in us. This impulse is there. It is very interesting that this breaking of the law is actually to expand the boundaries and limits, to test the boundaries: 'How far can I go?' At every level man tests the boundaries.

Here we see the ancient Upanishadic sense of Death. Death is in a sense the natural consequence of being finite. Immortality, in its widest sense, is infinity of being. Finiteness of being leads to death, because by its very nature, whatever is finite will have a beginning, it will have an end. But if it is infinite it has neither a beginning nor an end. One possibility is to jump from finiteness into infinity, the other possibility is — it sounds almost an impossible task, but that is the work one is here to do — to fill the finite with the infinite. These are lines used to describe this in *Savitri*:

> *A Power that lives upon the heights must act,*
> *Bring into life's closed room the Immortal's air*
> *And fill the finite with the Infinite. [315-316]*

That is the sense of Death and Immortality. Death is about living in boundaries; so we test the boundaries. Every time man tries to exceed the boundaries, he becomes a claimant to immortality. It is very interesting: what is the path to immortality? By gradually expanding the limits and the boundaries. If we look at it from that point of view, we see that throughout the history of evolution — though we may say that Death is the last victor, ultimately that is not true — life is the

victor. When the first living beings appear, the boundaries of matter are pushed a little further, and rigid matter begins to become pliable matter, breathing matter. There is a pushing of the boundaries. Again, when man comes, the boundaries are pushed back further. Savitri gives this logic to Death, saying 'Look how every time boundaries are being pushed back — again now with human beings.'

There is a natural urge to push at the limits of things, and especially now in our own age we see this coming up in a very big way, whether at the level of Science or of Art and Music. Everywhere we want to break the norms and push beyond them. Every effort to push back the boundaries, every effort to exceed the limits, every effort to go beyond the law — not just to break the law, but to go beyond the law and exceed it — is essentially a step that humanity takes towards immortality. That is the great labour in which the Ancient Mother is engaged.

When Savitri speaks about all this — that is the context for which we are speaking — Death asks her, 'What is the purpose of all this?' Then she gives the whole story of creation, of how you, Death, have been born: it is the Divine who has plunged into this darkness and is rescuing consciousness out of this darkness. The first sign of this rescue is that matter is born. The second sign is the rescue of life, then comes the rescue of mind. And now, following that inevitable process of logic, Sri Aurobindo comes to rescue the eighth sun of Aditi, the

supramental, which is also plunged into this darkness, hidden in its dark cave. He is rescuing it. That is the whole labour.

In every life, the moment a psychic being is born into matter, some consciousness, however little it be, is increased upon earth. That is the little victory that each one wins. Mother speaks about this. She says, 'Well, your little victories may not lead to the universal victory right away, but that is what is given to us, and we must do that. And if we do that, we add to the sum of the victory of the universe.'

It is very beautiful to live with that divine humility. It is really not so necessary for our individual body to become immortal. It is amazing that, even Mother, at the level she had reached, the level from which She came, even at the very highest, could say, 'It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether it is this body or some other'. She could have that humility, to say, 'It doesn't matter'. She, armed with all the knowledge and the power, armed with such a wonderful preparation, could say, 'It doesn't matter whether it is going to be this body or some other body'.

Of course, the ego has a penchant for taking every statement that the Divine gives and twisting it. Ego can reflect and say, 'Some other body — maybe mine is the one'. We should be very careful about these whispers, how death deceives us. 'Some other body' she says, with that humility.

But everything that is achieved, every little victory, is a victory for the earth. It is that sense of the collective in which one has to live — that whatever little is stamped upon matter,

whatever little truth one can bring down, whatever little light, contributes to the forward movement of the whole.

One is reminded of a beautiful little story, when all this talk is going on about Ramasetu. In the Ramayana, when the bridge is being built between India and Lanka, the story goes that great monkeys come and take the name of the Lord and write it over huge stones and throw them into the sea and the stones float. There is a little squirrel, it rolls itself in the mud and goes into the sea, takes a dip and comes back. Rama asks her, 'What are you doing? You may get crushed! Don't you see all these great monkeys and bears? What are you up to?' She says, 'I don't know. I know they are building a bridge for you, so I too want to help. But I can't lift big rocks like these fellows. What I can do is to bring a few grains of sand. I can roll myself around on the sand, and put them into the sea. Maybe the sea will be a little more accessible for you.' Rama, full of compassion, runs his fingers over the back of the squirrel, and as the Indian legend goes, that is why we see three stripes on the squirrel's back. It is a very touching story. We need not all be the great monkeys who lift up big rocks and throw them in, but we can always be little squirrels, roll into a little sand, this earth, and this little earth, this mud of which we are made, offer it to the Divine and say, 'Take it, this is yours. Do with it what you will' and leave it to him. If we can do that, we have done our bit in the conquest of immortality.

Immortality is not just waking up one day and seeing 'I am never going to die.' In fact, Death says that such an immortality

will be a pain. Perhaps I have already recounted the story of the professor who became immortal overnight. He received a card from Death:

'Professor So and So, it has been decided by consensus in the land of Death that thou shalt not die.' The Professor is very happy, and all the media gather around him: CNN, IBN, BBC … everybody. 'You have become immortal?' 'Yes sir, yes sir, I have got this card as proof.'

'Oh, very good!' There are a lot of interviews and parties, and he overeats and gets indigestion. One night he is troubled because of this indigestion. First he wakes up his wife, his wife says, 'Stop, don't disturb me at night, I know nothing is going to happen to you. Quietly go off to sleep, don't disturb my sleep. You are immortal, but I am a mortal being.' He calls his doctor and the doctor says, 'Oh, you are the same man? OK, don't bother — anyway nothing is going to happen to you, even if an ulcer bursts you are not going to die.' That kind of immortality is a curse. In the Mahabharata we have Ashwatthama, who is accursed because of his immortality — he cannot die, although he has a wound over his head, a reminder of his deeds.

The first immortality that we have to gain is to become conscious of the One; that is the immortality of the soul. There is a beautiful line in Sri Aurobindo's poem 'The Divine Worker':

I face earth's happenings with an equal soul;
In all are heard Thy steps; Thy unseen feet

Tread Destiny's pathway in my front. Life's whole
Tremendous theorem is Thou complete.

He goes on describing that. He says,

Thy Force in me labours at its grandiose plan,

Then the punch line comes:

No power can slay my soul; it lives in Thee.
Thy presence is my immortality.
[CWSA 2: 612; 'The Divine Worker']

That is the first immortality, the immortality of the immortal being in us. When we think about immortality, we straightaway think about immortality of this personality. But Sri Aurobindo says, it will be very boring! Who would like to be the same outer personality forever? It is going to be sickening — even for one life it is so difficult to be the same, same, same! Sometimes you wish you had a change. Now the fellow comes with a ticket, saying 'OK — I am going to give you a change.' What does Death do normally? It comes with a ticket: 'I have brought you a free ticket, with a gift hamper, and in the next life you will be going there, and to boot it all, you will forget about all this.' When we go on holiday we don't want to remember all the business meetings and the problems and the issues at home, we want to forget everything. So normally Death tells us, 'I am going to give you a change.' Very nice — where do I go? 'Well, pick and choose. Do you want to go to such and such a place, have a nice time? OK.' But what about phone calls and all? He says, 'Don't worry. I'll switch off your

phone for good, change your numbers — even your identity I am going to change. Don't bother — just be there, enjoy, relax and when you feel like it, call me again. Maybe from time to time I'll visit, I'll come and ask you, 'Do you want a change?' If you say, 'Yes, I want a change' — OK, fine, come over.' That's the normal plan of death — to give us a chance and an opportunity for a change.

Sri Aurobindo says that this is one of the reasons why death exists. There are several reasons and we must counteract each of these reasons, because unless we take care of those issues, immortality cannot be given just like that. One reason why death is there is because we live by the separative sense of the ego and even if something within us is free from that, matter and the physical form lives by the ego. There is a physical ego, there is a vital ego, and there is a mental ego. Of course, there is also a spiritual ego, but we need not talk about it. We live with all these egos as masks and caps. Not only do we live by them, we are really happy about these masks and caps. We think 'That's me', and if one cap is taken off we feel very hurt. 'I am Mr. So and So — how could he speak to me so casually, so rudely? How could he ask a gate-pass from me? Doesn't he know who I am? Right from my childhood I have been here and done so much work, and this fellow has the cheek to ask a pass!' We go and give way to our Ignorance at the first test and death smiles and says, 'I am coming.'

We may say, it is an opportunity to be immortal. We are still identified with this frail stuff, and yet think that we are a

claimant to immortality. These are the identities we wear around us, and the first thing is to discover our true identity — so much so that all the time we can feel and be conscious: *'No power can slay my soul; it lives in Thee. / Thy presence is my immortality'* [CWSA 2: 612] It is a twin meditation: one, Thy presence within me; second, I live in Thee. This double meditation: Thy presence, everywhere, *'In all are heard thy steps'*; and second, *'I live in Thee'* [ibid.] If we can practice these two meditations, it is a very practical way of doing it — and then to live with that sense, that in everything there is the divine Presence, even in these terrible masks. Sri Aurobindo has actually practiced it; it is not just theory. If we take it at the level of theory, it doesn't work. We may know all the theories in the world, but no theory can save us, no philosophy can rescue us; it is only by being, living, doing. And the second step is that we live constantly in her Presence, whatever happens, however difficult the circumstances, we live by the sense that we live in Her, we live by Her, we live for Her.

The second thing is that the life-force in us seeks infinite experiences because it comes from the infinite. So Death says, 'OK, I am going to provide this to you.' And as long as we have this kind of an aircraft or vehicle, we will need to change vehicles. But supposing we have a vehicle which is so plastic that it obeys the inner will — and I suppose that is the beauty of the Pushpak Vimana, only it is in the wrong hands. In the story, the Pushpak Vimana is in Ravana's hands. It should be in the right hands. It is the *yaan*, the vehicle, this body is

described as the vehicle. This vehicle does not obey the spiritual will. How often does it not happen that we take beautiful resolutions in the morning, especially of course on December 31st or January 1st, and it takes just a few hours before we are breaking them. Just a few days ago we had a whole lot of tests done in our Nursing Home and some people were found to be diabetic. Some of them took the resolution, 'I will not eat sweets any more.' Hardly a week has passed and somehow they are already at it again.

Matter does not carry you forward, it pulls you back, because it is born from the womb of inconscience: it consists in habits and laws, habits most of all. In fact, what are laws? They are simply habits, Mother says, and death is one of the worst habits. It is not a law: because matter is born, it has a tendency to collapse back into the inconscience. Again and again it comes, because it is pulled. One can almost have a visual picture of it: that the psychic being, a being of light, an immortal being plunges into the darkness and pulls something out. That something is resisting, wanting to go back. But the psychic being pulls and pulls, and by the Grace of the Divine pulls it more and more, and after a while, the rest of it is not able to follow pace. It breaks and collapses. But still, something has been extracted and that develops around the soul as the psychic personality, some experience of contact with the earth.

We have all lived here a million times and of course Death claims us. Why does it lay that claim? It says, 'I am the one from which matter is born, you are just a newcomer.' And as

long as we believe that we are just a newcomer and live in that consciousness, it can't work out. For Death says, 'I am created long before you, I have created all this.' And it is true of the mind of man, it is true of the embodied being. But what of the soul? It existed before there was Time, before there was birth, before there was non-birth, it was there. It is that we must find. That is the first step. Its very substance is immortal. By a constant infusion of that substance percolating into all the layers of our being, and its constant aspiration waking up in every part of our being to unite with the Divine, one day humanity will — there is not a shadow of doubt about it — or rather, God in the mask of humanity, will reclaim this earth for himself.

That is what is called 'the redemption of matter' or what is called in a lot of traditions 'the second coming'. There are many traditions about the second coming, in Buddhism, in Christianity, and there are various ways of looking at it. What really is the second coming? It is very interesting. Why, having come, does God have to depart again? We come directly to the subject of Mother and Sri Aurobindo's departure. This is the month in which apparently, outwardly, they left the physical body.

What really is this talk of the second coming? What is the first coming? It is God taking birth in matter. The question is, since he is omnipotent, omniscient, all-powerful, why does he have to leave? Why can't he stay forever upon earth as an embodied being? How beautiful and simple it would be!

The other day somebody was telling me that it used to be so easy, that even for putting a child in a particular hostel, one simply wrote to the Mother. One didn't have to use this head to decide. You know now one talks about this hostel being better, or that one. One wrote to the Mother, Mother said, 'Put him in this hostel' and the matter was over. Now you have to go inside, get a feel, you have to think, you have to use all these machineries. The first coming: the Divine comes in matter and for some reason, various reasons, we won't go into that, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have spoken about it, it leaves again. One reason is, as he says:

Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change;
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:
It fears the pure divine intolerance
Of that assault of ether and of fire;
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,
Almost with hate repels the light it brings; [7]

But how do we respond when God is here? We throw heaps of doubt and anguish and all that. We do not even spare him the stones! On one side we think that God is slow; from the side of God, he thinks that man is slow! That's how it is. The second coming, in all the traditions that we have, is that when the Divine comes he doesn't have to leave again. When we speak about the second coming, it is a coming forever. It is as if this coming will establish the Divine's reign upon earth — even that is said.

What does it mean, the Divine's reign upon earth? It is not about the victory of a particular religion, or a universal religion spreading over all other religions. It is very simple: it is the victory of the Divine upon earth, the victory of godhead in matter, matter divinising itself, and discovering its own spiritual substance. It is then and then alone that the embodied Divine need not leave the earth. That is the second coming. That is, as the Mother says, the true resurrection. It is matter being lifted up to its true status. That is the coming for which we wait, and Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have made it very, very clear, they have not left any iota of doubt that this is the work we have to do, and it doesn't matter whether it takes 100 years, 1000 years, 10,000 years or a million years. Have we not been engaged in it already for a million years? In a very beautiful poem of Sri Aurobindo, *Meditations of Mandavya*, he says:

I will not faint, O God. There is the thirst,
And thirst supposes water somewhere. Yes,
But in this life we may not ever find;
Old nature sits a phantom by the way,
Old passions may forbid, old doubts return.
Then are there other lives here or beyond
To satisfy us? I will persist, O Lord.

[CWSA 2: 512]

This is the perseverance required for the seeker of immortality; what does it matter how long it takes? We have left behind a hundred thousand lives, even if we have to go

through a hundred thousand lives more, we'll have the joy of the labour. If there is something to be done, this is it. This is the fire that the Mother, I suppose, has awakened in earth. How beautifully she says, this should be the fire with which we should approach. What is that fire? She says, 'When you feel that this is the thing you are meant to do, and you don't want to do anything else, this alone attracts you, no longer for your own sake.' Not that this little personality will become immortal, this personality that everybody knows as Mr. X or Mr Y. — that would be an absurdity, for in all the masks of various personalities is it not the One alone playing with Himself! Immortality will be the triumph of the Divine in matter, the redemption of matter by the touch divine. That is the task, a task worthy of man. And what does it matter how many times we have been born, how many times we have died, how many times death has claimed our bodies, our lives, our minds? How many times this has happened, and yet there is something it cannot claim — and that is what we truly are. That something, and the Grace divine, will rescue matter one day out of its inertia and somnolence, and upon this earth will bloom the heavenly Rose, the deathless Rose. Then will the seed of immortality bloom upon earth and then will the divine family be born!

To summarise we may say that there is a double immortality to which man can aspire. The first is to discover his immortal self, the individual soul, and through its doors the eternal Self. The second is to discover the possibility of divinising nature

and the stuff of which our mortal sheaths are made. The first has been achieved by rare seers and sages of Truth in different ages of mankind. It is now even more easily accessible because of the coming of the New Force that is awakening matter and helping man in his godward aspiration. But the second is yet to be realised and it is only through a progressive change of the earth consciousness and as its spearhead, of human nature, that this too will become possible one day: for man to enjoy the immortality of the gods. Of course, if we consider it on the universal scale, then there is no death, whether at the material, vital or other levels, there is only a change of status and condition of organisation in individual beings. But the individual sheaths do dissolve since like their universal counterparts they partake of the nature of Ignorance. When this Ignorance disappears that divides these sheaths from the One who is their secret origin and Master, then they would not have any reason to disintegrate. Then mind would discover its own supramental infinities and Light and Truth, then life would recover its home of Bliss and Conscious Power from where it has strayed into the dark depths of Inconscience to create and to endure, then matter itself would wake up from the Inconscient's spell and remember that it is, like everything else, in its origin divine, a fall from the one and only true Existence. Then shall the spell of Death be broken and we may say not only of our soul but also of our nature that all is indeed divine and shares his infinity and eternity.

Questions and Answers

Question from the Audience: Should we aspire to become supramental, or is that egoistic?

Sri Aurobindo always made it clear that there is nothing like an individual endeavour to become an individual supramental being. He himself never tried it. In fact, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said that at one point of time there was a choice — whether to go ahead and become supramental themselves, or to carry everything together. And then he says, the choice was instantaneous, spontaneous and obvious: to carry everything together. What it means is that as long as we seek for an individual victory in the yoga it is in some way or another the ego asserting itself. It is hiding under the guise of yoga, under the guise of spirituality, and at some point, Death is sure to knock it down. You see, it is very interesting, the last victory is won not by knowledge but by the authentic power. He says to Savitri,

'Knowledge is with thee, Truth speaks through thy words — but who art thou?' At that time we see the individual being of Savitri melting into the World-Mother's. She immediately brings that out: 'You think that I am just a little woman who is living for this man. Here you see who I am.' When she is one with the being of the World-Mother, Death not only concedes but is licked up by that Light. That authentic power resides in the World-Mother.

A divine incarnate Being is at the centre and everybody is weaving his life around that Being. We should live with that sense of the collective, and not just a human collective, which can be a collective ego, but where we work together for the Divine and centre our lives around the Divine, and each individual unit is conscious that in the background that they are but a child of the Supreme!

There is a nice story, a true event, about someone whose wife was very ill in bed and she started seeing beings of death, and she was very afraid. Her husband told her, 'Tell them when they come near to you that you are the Mother's child and they have no right over you.' She did say that and those beings went away, and she went on to live for a few more years. Of course, she did eventually depart. The point is that we don't go to death: we come from Light and go to Light, and we should live constantly by that awareness. It is my conviction, based on certain experiences and things I have heard from others, from those who know very clearly and are identified with the Divine in some way or the other in their heart, in their aspirations, that we don't go to the land of death — we go to Her, and we come back from Her. That is what Sri Aurobindo speaks about in the Durga Stotra:

'We come from you, age after age to do thy work and return to you.' When we live in that consciousness then anyway the sting of death is lost. All that we do is, we move from her bosom to her garden; and when we go to the garden we may hold a little blade of grass, a little work, or we may plant a little

seed, or maybe we are just sitting against a tree and just enjoying, but the whole thing makes a garden. When we are drawn back, we go back to the breast of the One in whom all Her children are safe. From the garden we move on to her heart, and back to this workplace.

> *Question from the Audience: How can we face death without fear?*

When we live identified with the surface being, then Death just comes like a wave and washes us away. It is like the tsunami. But if you have held yourself anchored in some depth, then yes, you know that it is there, it's a brooding shadow you can feel and sense, you can confront it, and if you want, have a dialogue with it, but not a very pleasant dialogue. But it is that, basically one should be anchored within. But that is the whole journey: if we live conscious of our souls, conscious of our immortality, conscious of the divine Presence, then we can see it and there are yogis who know when they have to depart, for whatever reasons, and they talk about it. But for that, this awareness has to come in this very life.

> *Question from the Audience: How is Sri Aurobindo's view of death different from the view of the ancient Indian mythology?*

The way Death is conceived in Indian mythology is in a certain limited sense. Sri Aurobindo has given it a much wider sense. In the way that Sri Aurobindo has looked at the being of Death, it evolves. In *Savitri*, as Death is standing in the Eternal Night,

it simply assumes a dreadful form and says to Savitri 'This is fragile matter, who are you to challenge me?' In Book Ten, as they move into the twilight zone it changes, its language changes. It begins to mix truth with falsehood. It begins to pervert. At first it is dark denial, then it is distortion, perversion of truth. In fact, Savitri says, 'You speak the truth, but truth that slays'. And it goes still further: as they move into the higher realms of mind, Death assumes a different voice again. Initially it says, 'There is no god.' Next it says, 'I am god.' Then it says, 'There may be an impersonal god.' Last, it says, 'There may be a transcendent god, but nothing can happen here, you go back to Him.' I think that in Indian mythology we will not find anything like this. It is very wide there, but still it is limited when we compare it with Sri Aurobindo's vision. In *Savitri* he has put so much into the figure of Death, so many things. But if I look at it from the little Sanskrit that I understand, I would feel that the word Yama carries a lot of meaning. It gives me the feeling almost of the Sun concealing itself, and I think that is the story of how Yama comes into being. It is the sun which goes and hides in the darkness, and Yama becomes the guardian of this world, and Surya the guardian of the higher worlds. But Sri Aurobindo brings all this out with so much force of light and truth. This is my feeling.

> *Question from the Audience: Sometimes death seem to be a tragedy; how can one find the positive in what appears to be something tragic?*

Every time one is born, as Mother says, one takes a plunge into the inconscient and it is true that even a very great being has to struggle before he can recapture something of the state he had reached in the previous life. To that extent there is a certain amount of loss, of waste of energies, and in one place Death is described as the one who eats the cold remnants of the sun. There are two ways of facing this. One is of course the way of knowledge, which always has its pluses and minuses. For example, we know of a young lady who had died and Dilip Kumar Roy was asked 'Why did such a fine flower have to fade away so soon?' That reply is there in Sri Aurobindo's letters. I think it was Uma Devi, known as 'The Nightingale of Bengal', who died of throat cancer at the age of 21. She was a very fine lady with all the noble qualities. Sri Aurobindo said something very interesting. He said that she had arrived at the highest she could develop in this life, as a singer, at a sattwic stage of development, and to take her journey further was not possible in this body. One can understand, she was quite famous and she would probably have got caught into the cycle of fame and name, and something in her being wanted to take a leap, so she chose the door of death. The problem is, I have seen that this kind of knowledge is also not enough. Because as long as we only know intellectually, it doesn't work. In our life we must try to go beyond this intellectual knowledge and strive to translate it, to the best of our ability, into actual living experience, because then to a large extent we become

conscious. Intellectual knowledge does not suffice. But still further, there is the aspect of the power, which is so important.

Having seen so many people who have gone through this kind of pain I have pondered on this question: what would be the ultimate way that humanity will come out of this difficulty? At our present stage you cannot do much beyond offering what is probably cold comfort, a solace, saying 'Time's grace heals it.' But ultimately, it is only when human beings reach a point of development where they can see the soul just as we see the body. There can be no other way than a complete rending of the veil of ignorance. Right now, we cannot see, we are so badly identified, that is the collective consciousness of the race. Those individuals who are free have always been free of the sting. Some young person in the Ashram drowned. The Mother was asked about it and she said 'He came to me, and he wanted to leave.' As simple as that: So and so came and said 'I am going'. Another person who died in an accident — Mother described it in such a way, it is amazing: Some people would say it is a very traumatic death, a young death. But Mother said, 'Oh, the moment he was free from the body he came running to me and said "I am free, I am free, I am free!" He was happy.' Now if we were to see with that vision, where would the sting be? That is why I feel that the real triumph is to grow in experience — there is no other way. We should press hard for that individually. It is hard, it is a long road, a difficult journey, but then we remember: 'Is the cup of immortality for the

weak?' So maybe it will take a few lifetimes — it doesn't matter.

We should not be satisfied with intellectual knowledge. I think one of the big problems, especially with those of us who have this upper storey active, is that we read something and we understand something, we don't know whether what we read and what we understand is the same thing or not, but the trap is that we believe that because we have intellectually understood — and worse still we can make others understand — we have no further work to do. This is very dangerous. One has to constantly work towards experiencing and realising (not to seek experiences: that Sri Aurobindo says very clearly) but on the path one should move forward, beyond the mind into something which is beyond. This is the whole path of Yoga. Till we can reach that point where we see the soul as we see the body — and the Mother has said that day will come — human beings have to follow that road. As Narad says, *'O mortal, bear this great world's law of pain, ... Make of thy daily way a pilgrimage, / For through small joys and griefs thou mov'st towards God'* [451]. Perhaps if one goes through grief it becomes a kind of subconscious tapas. It is a sad thing, but that is the reality, and in a way serves to press us. If we look from the other standpoint, if the pain was not there, *'If the heart were not forced to want and weep / [the] soul would have lain down content, at ease'* [443]. This is the problem with us: if we are not shaken in our circumstances, if we are too happy, we very easily forget the One. You remember that line in *Savitri*:

All that denies must be torn out and slain
And crushed the many longings for whose sake
We lose the One for whom our lives were made. [316]

We forget all the time. Unfortunately, at one point the shake-up really becomes necessary. Perhaps it is a shortcut to heaven's gate.

The Divine Mother in Savitri

(The 10th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture, recorded on Febuary 19, 2020 at Savitri Bhavan, Auroville. This talk is based on the story of the Divine Mother as it unfolds in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri.)

Sri Aurobindo's main work, at least one of his most important works, has been to awaken and install the divine Shakti in the heart of humanity and in the heart of Earth. Not that the Shakti was not there earlier, she has always been there; nothing in this creation can stir without the Shakti. But she has been in the background. And what we see with Sri Aurobindo is that he brings the Shakti into the forefront of the human quest. This is something of unparalleled significance.

During India's freedom movement, we see that Sri Aurobindo installed the Shakti in the heart of the Indian people, awakening them to the strength that is innate within. We know how the song *Bande Mataram* was used so effectively and powerfully to awaken the Shakti. Once the Shakti was awakened, the result was inevitable. Nothing can stop it, because with her is the victorious force of the Supreme.

Then he moved on to the larger sphere of humanity, starting with a small nucleus, where once again, he established and

installed the Divine Mother as the Shakti right at the forefront. He stepped behind, because in creation the Ishwara always stands behind with the Shakti in the forefront.

When He withdrew… Withdrew is here a very awkward word, because where does Sri Aurobindo withdraw? But human language is very inadequate when we talk about deeper truths, and when it comes to Mother and Sri Aurobindo, it's completely inadequate. But still, for the sake of the limits of our sight, when he withdrew from the limits of our sight, he once again installed the Shakti in the heart of humanity through the mantric power of *Savitri*. He gave it to mankind in 1950-1951, that's the birth year of *Savitri*. Through this gift, he installed and established the supramental Mahashakti for the creation to march further. Seen thus, *Savitri* is essentially the story of the Divine Mother.

Shraddhavan agreed that I should speak about the Divine Mother in *Savitri* because it's the 100 years anniversary of the Mother's final coming to Pondicherry, India. I didn't imagine how very vast is the subject; the whole of *Savitri* is the story of the Divine Mother. But She is the inspirer, the guide, the leader. So let's run through *Savitri* as the story of the Divine Mother, and see how it develops.

Right in the opening scene of *Savitri* in Book One Canto One, Sri Aurobindo gives us a hint to what is going to come. The hint is in the form of the symbol of dawn. The morning dawn brings the light and energy of the Sun to the Earth. The same Truth which is inside the Sun — the same light, force and

splendour — reaches out to Earth. This is a big difference from the Vedantic way of turning to the Purusha because then we have to travel. But the Divine Mother comes down to us; the dawn is the very symbol of this; she comes right into the very soil of Earth nature. We read these marvellous lines in Canto One,

Our prostrate soil bore the awakening ray. [5]

Then comes the great assurance:

All can be done if the god-touch is there. [3]

Her coming and touching Earth is itself the beginning of a marvellous change. And what does she bring as gift when the Divine Mother comes to Earth? When mothers go to their child's home, they bring a number of gifts. Here we have those gifts:

The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss
...
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy. [6]

She comes to give us all this. It's a different story than what we ask from her. On one side she brings these gifts. Second, she wants to ensure that our future, the future of Earth and humanity, is secure. How does she make it secure? We have it in the opening canto itself that she has come to wrestle with Doom. She has come to once again perform the sacrifice, which man offers constantly, unconsciously:

The sacrifice of suffering and desire

Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy [10]

Unfortunately, for us it is a sacrifice to the nether gods, but yet, as the Gita says, ultimately it reaches the Supreme and something comes trickling down. But she also makes this sacrifice, consciously, for the sake of humanity. This sacrifice starts with the process of assuming a human form, a human face and body. This itself is a great sacrifice of the Divine Mother, the holocaust of the Supreme in creation. This is how *Savitri* opens.

But who is Savitri? We have a wonderful description of Savitri's being, and from there we can start; it's one of the most exquisite passages. Leaving aside its poetic beauty, its inspiration is magnificent. For me, many things in *Savitri* are inspiring because they serve as an example of what we should be. Sri Aurobindo spends quite a number of pages in *Essays on the Gita* on a phrase said by Sri Krishna in which he explains to Arjuna that even if I don't do anything, nothing will happen to me, but still I come to set an example. If I don't work, the world would perish. Here too Savitri comes to give us a living example of what we should be. When the Divine comes, he by his own life shows us what we should become, but of course he also shows us the simplest way of becoming it. She will reveal that subsequently; Savitri itself will reveal to us that the shortest, the surest, the swiftest way is through love. After all, don't we become the image of that or whom we love? Savitri comes as the embodiment of love. She has come to fight Doom, but this time she has come armed with a weapon as never

before, the weapon of love, which has a transforming power. I will read a few lines.

Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
Even in earth-stuff, and their intense delight
Poured a supernal beauty on men's lives. [15]

Even a smile, her silence, her speech, her look, they are all an action. Her Presence is an action. Then come these very inspiring lines,

A wide self-giving was a native act; [15]

The Divine comes to teach us what is it to be like a god. We are busy wanting, wanting, wanting. Even when we go to the Divine, the problem of want is there. Even if the Abyss is filled, there will still be want, because want comes from separation from the Divine. The Divine pours his heart of Love into this Abyss. The Mother has come to give and give and give at all levels. That's the beauty. She repeatedly says you can ask anything from me and it doesn't depend on whether we collaborate or not. When she was asked what do you expect from us, she said 'nothing'. What can we expect from you? 'Everything'. That disciple again asked, 'Is humanity fulfilling your expectations? This is the same question but turned upon its head. She says, 'Since I expect nothing, I cannot answer this question'. As we see here:

A wide self-giving was a native act;
A magnanimity as of sea or sky
Enveloped with its greatness all that came

And gave a sense as of a greatened world: [15]

None is outcast from her. None is too low as not to be accepted by her. None is too great who cannot be enveloped by her vastness so that a greater greatness can open its doors. Everyone, who ever came to her, from the child in the kindergarten, nursery school, to the saints, sages and seers, to prime ministers and presidents and commoners. Everybody could come to her and she opened the doors to greatness. This is the difference between the Divine's action and the action of an exalted humanity. Exalted humanity, when you go to them, they make you feel you are inferior — 'I'll give you something'. The other day somebody was saying how the Mother speaks about forgiveness, she said it's not a very good term. It's like 'I'm somebody superior and I forgive you, you lowly creature'. What was the Mother's action? She exalted, greatened, heightened. That's why she says that true surrender enlarges you. It aggrandises you, but people are afraid of it. Of course, it will take away all that is dark, all that is ego-based, but what it will give you in return is all the beauty, all the goodness, all the qualities which are still in the making, they will blossom and reach their perfect fruition.

And gave a sense as of a greatened world:
Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun, [15]

The Divine has come as the Mother. Of course, the Divine has come in many forms. If you are a follower of Rama, you have to be a warrior and be willing to go into the jungle and fight the battle. If you are a follower of Krishna, you have to

be ready to abandon everything, like the gopis, or to fight under the Chakradhari's great flag. If you are a follower of Christ, another Avatar, you have to be ready to sacrifice and forgive from the cross. But if you are a child of the Mother, what does she demand? Simply to receive her care, to receive her love. That's why repeatedly Sri Aurobindo speaks of openness and receptivity. If you look at the *Letters on Yoga*, the later part, he keeps emphasising on openness and receptivity to the Mother. What is strange is that people say this Yoga is so difficult. It means that either one has not walked the path, I'm sorry to say, or one has not read all that Sri Aurobindo had said. This Yoga, Sri Aurobindo says in *The Synthesis*, seen from the point of view of the goal, is the most difficult of all, but seen from the point of view of the method, is the easiest of all, because surrender is its beginning and surrender is the end.

Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun,
Her high passion a blue heaven's equipoise. [15]

What do we experience when we go to her? All of us, I'm sure, can relate to this:

As might a soul fly like a hunted bird,
Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms,
And a quiet reach like a remembered breast,
In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose
One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,
Recover the lost habit of happiness, [15]

People ask, 'what miracle have you experienced after coming in contact with the Mother?' Just before I started today somebody was narrating me some story and said I wish the Mother did some miracle like x, y, z guru. That person did something wrong and his hand was paralyzed. I said, 'Good Lord! What miracle the Mother gives is that we *'recover the lost habit of happiness'*. Is it a small thing? As we grow through adulthood this is something we lose, and we don't even realise that we have lost it. To once again recover it we try all artificial means from money to relationships to cars and various objects, and in extreme cases, drugs and alcohol, just to recover that which we have lost, that which we were born with. It was a free gift and we lose it. That's a different story. When you go to a big conference they give you a bag full of things. Here the first thing you get is to *'Recover the lost habit of happiness'*.

A couple of lines below it describes who she is:

A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,
Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven;
Love in her was wider than the universe,
The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.

[15]

She's not just the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. She is not just the Mother of Auroville. She's not just the Mother of this or that centre. She wants the whole world to become the garden house of the Lord. This is something she wrote also when Rabindra-ji once asked her. He had left everything and had come but some of the family members wanted to come

much later in 1971. By then the Ashram was already chock full of devotees. He asked, that now they want to come, what do I do? She said, if it was up to me, I would want the whole world to be here in the Ashram, but my means are limited. The material means are limited, but look at her heart, she would want the whole creation, *'The whole world to take refuge'*. That's how I look at it. Even the birds, the squirrels and every creature is under her shelter, here, there and everywhere.

This is the opening, the first two cantos of *Savitri*. Then of course the story starts, as we know, in a flashback. The whole of *Savitri* takes place in about 18 hours, primarily. How did she come down? Who called her down? She's here upon Earth, but what was it that led her to be here. We now have Aswapati introduced to us; he embodies within him the anguish and the aspiration of Earth. He is God's delegate in humanity, the representative of the Divine, who must embody what we experience and carry it right up to the Divine Mother. We see that Aswapati engages in a yoga, and as he engages in the yoga, at one point after he had what is so much celebrated as Self-realisation and the Brahman, he wants that state to be embodied in his very body. The ideal which he has glimpsed must be now his home, even the body must experience it. This is a completely new aspiration for Earth. Otherwise, we have to withdraw in a great trance of Samadhi and have some glimpse, but he wants that state to be right in the very cells of the body. In response to his aspiration, he experiences something which has never happened before.

A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,
...
In a moment shorter than death, longer than Time,
By a Power more ruthless than Love, ... [81]

Suddenly he experiences the descent of… (This line reminds me of Kali and Krishna in Sri Aurobindo's own yoga, during a stage when they were constantly working in his consciousness.) *'A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire'*. *'A violent ecstasy'* is certainly the Kali aspect of the Divine Mother, who slays the ego and liberates the soul into *'Ecstasy' and 'Sweetness dire'*. He is the gopala with the flute, but don't be misled. The Shakti is going to come behind. He is not just standing on the Yamuna, he also stands on the battlefield of Kurukshetra as the leader of the march of mankind. He's '*a Sweetness dire*'. When he experiences it the transformation starts because in his own body this aspiration is awakened.

Then comes the great renunciation. People speak about the renunciation of Buddha and of Mahavira, and of course, each renunciation is something powerful in its own right. But Sri Aurobindo, as the Mother writes, renounced by his physical withdrawal the realisation in his own body so that it could take place for the whole earth. When he experiences the descent, which has not been there in old yogas, he departs. When Dilip Kumar Roy asked him if there had never been any descent in previous yogas, Sri Aurobindo said, if at all, it has been incidental, some illumination in the mind. But that's not what he calls the transformation. But because he has grown so wide,

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart:
I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
My spirit's liberty I ask for all. [649]

He says this must happen for all, and he renounced the realisation in his own body for the hastening of the collective realisation. After this, Aswapati starts a long, long journey, undertaken through an arduous tapasya in Book Two. He is running upstream, as it were, catching the rays of the sun and climbing up up up to find the Source from where this Power is coming down, this transformative alchemist energy. There are places or levels where he has some glimpse of that Power. One of the places, one of the first glimpses, is in the Kingdom of the Greater Mind. There he sees that the Divine Mother, her energies, her Power has come into the cabin of the idea. Man is tying her down by conceptions like a noose, believing that this is it. It is like in Tantra sometimes they try to draw the Divine Mother through the power of mantra, yantra and puja; through these means, they call the Divine Mother and try to fix her in a space or something. Sri Aurobindo reveals to us what really it is. She accepts to come, but we should not be mistaken, it has nothing to do with our greatness, our tapasya; it is simply the Grace accepting to come to anyone who calls with a sincere heart. He says,

Into thought's narrow limits she has come; [275]

Even if you were to read book after book — there have been so many wonderful hymns and books on Tantra and on the worship of the Divine Mother: the Puranas, and she is there even in the Vedas and the Upanishads, she is hinted at in the Gita and discussed by countless devotees — still, this gives only a very limited understanding, a limited glimpse.

She made earth her home, for whom heaven was too
small.
In a human breast her occult presence lived;
...
Into thought's narrow limits she has come;
Her greatness she has suffered to be pressed
Into the little cabin of the Idea, [275]

I have heard some very interesting things. There was a seminar on the conception of the Divine Mother. I said, I don't understand the subject. The Divine Mother is not a conception. She's a living reality and a living truth for one who undertakes the journey. It's not a conception. We should not reduce it to a conception. In this age that is the way academics work. Nevertheless, she says, okay, 'I'll come into the cabin of the little idea'. But on the next page Sri Aurobindo reminds us,

But thought nor word can seize eternal Truth:
The whole world lives in a lonely ray of her sun. [276]

Instead of wanting her to be limited by the idea we should give ourselves to her.

In our thinking's close and narrow lamp-lit house

The vanity of our shut mortal mind
Dreams that the chains of thought have made her ours;
But only we play with our own brilliant bonds;
Tying her down, it is ourselves we tie. [276]

Many times she reminds us. When people would say, 'Mother says so', 'Mother likes this', 'Mother does not like this', she would say, 'what do you know?' She may act in one way in a given circumstance and in a different circumstance completely differently. Even with the same person, the same situation. She would change her viewpoint and the disciple couldn't understand. He would say, 'Mother, you have changed your opinion'. She said, 'no, I don't act according to opinions'. In fact, she says, 'thankfully, I have no opinions'. As things change, her action changes. Amal-da gives a beautiful example of how when once he approached the Mother in the context of *Savitri* when he wanted to make a few corrections, so-called corrections, in *Savitri*. Mother looked at him and said, 'Not a coma is to be changed!', like a Mahakali. He went back and then looked within and saw was there was a bit of arrogance on his part, there was something within that was feeling proud that he was going to help in the work, or something like that. After some time, he went again to the Mother with the same issue when the final printing had to come, and he explained to Mother, this is how it is. Then she said, 'yes', it was completely different. He notes that he went in a very different state of mind. They were not actually changes, there were so many different scripts and transcripts, and it was a complex issue. But

the point was that depending on the change within the disciple, she could change the very next moment. It is not a change of opinion, but our own state of consciousness. If that changes, everything changes.

This is what she would teach us and show us. But still, we say 'Mother said so'. Once somebody quoted Sri Aurobindo to the Mother. He said 'Mother, Sri Aurobindo has said "Truth and Falsehood cannot live together". Why are you keeping them together?' Mother laughed and said 'Everybody believes they are in truth and others are in falsehood. How do I tell them that everybody has their own little falsehood, clinging?' Then she says, 'not only Sri Aurobindo, they quote me also and tell me 'Mother you have written "Cling to Truth"'. She said, 'What can I do? Yes, I wrote it. But that's not what I meant'. Then the disciple asked, 'What is truth?' And this gives us a hint again: she said, 'Truth cannot be defined. But if you want to live it, it will reveal itself to you'. And then she says, 'the only word that comes closest to it is the word dharma'. It is not something fixed. It's not a rigid edict firmly engraved in rock: thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do this; truth is not like that. It evolves, it changes. For a child, there is one way of being and becoming; for an adult, another; for an old man, another; for a wise man, another; for a stupid man, another; for everybody it is different. It's something that grows and opens and unfolds and evolves and helps us on the journey. We should be very careful not to reduce their words into rigid dogmas. What we should understand, and what he says,

We see not what small figure of her we hold;
We feel not her inspiring boundlessness
...
Thus is it even with the seer and sage;
For still the human limits the divine: [276]

The Divine is infinite, it is not a fixed something. What we should do, and here comes the hint:

Out of our thoughts we must leap up to sight,
Breathe her divine illimitable air,
Her simple vast supremacy confess,
Dare to surrender to her absolute.
Then the Unmanifest reflects his form
In the still mind as in a living glass;
The timeless Ray descends into our hearts
And we are rapt into eternity. [276]

This surrender opens the doors to that immortal ecstasy.

For Truth is wider, greater than her forms.
A thousand icons they have made of her
And find her in the idols they adore;
But she remains herself and infinite. [276]

This is the command to us. But the beauty, or the strangeness, of human nature, as someone has said, is that only two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity. About the former one may doubt. Man must *'Dare to surrender to her absolute'. 'Her simple vast supremacy confess'*. We see

the web of thought, 'Oh, this is another cult created around the Mother'. *'Out of our thoughts we must leap up to sight'*.

Therefore Aswapati goes beyond. What that surrender is, is described very beautifully. By the thought we cannot know her, but there is another way through which we can go. We see when Aswapati approaches through the thought that he enters into the Self of the mind. It is a vast impersonality and it doesn't allow him to go further. There is no further extinction. That's it. It is an escape. Then he takes another route. He's seeking and an answer comes. He's drawn into a tunnel and at the end of that there is light and what he sees is something very marvellous. It is a living Darshan of the Divine Mother.

Often people speak about darshan: we are having Darshan Day. Sri Aurobindo has made Darshan so easy, simple, natural. There are places in *Savitri* where there is actually a living Darshan of the Divine Mother and, of course, of the Supreme Lord. This is one such place where we have the first glimpse of the Divine Mother as the world Mother, as the universal Mother. And it's only by her grace that one can go beyond. No human effort or tapasya can take us, even when it seems like that.

Ramana Maharshi followed the way of Jnana yoga and he reached that point and at one point when he was struggling, moving from here and there, suddenly he met an old woman who tells him 'why are you so restlessly moving from here to there? Why don't you stay at one place?' 'Where should I stay?' 'Stay here in Arunachal.' When someone asked Sri

Aurobindo he said yes, it was the Divine Mother who came to show him the way. This is also seen in the life of Buddha, acknowledged or unacknowledged. Buddha was struggling and trying so much. One day, the Divine Mother comes as Sujata. Thankfully, in Gaya now they have a temple dedicated to Sujata. At least they've acknowledged her, that she was a power of the Divine Mother. She comes as ordinary common folk and gives him some payasam and she sees he's sitting so tense. What does she do? She just relaxes him. 'Don't tighten yourself so much like a bowstring that it snaps, and don't keep it so lax that you can't use it'. He gets the hint. Everywhere throughout we see in the evolutionary history of mankind that she has always been there, but in the background. Here we have the Divine Mother opening the gates of infinity for Aswapati to facilitate his quest.

Behind them in a morning dusk One stood
Who brought them forth from the Unknowable. [295]

The Ishwara and Ishwari:

Ever disguised she awaits the seeking spirit;
Watcher on the supreme unreachable peaks,
Guide of the traveller of the unseen paths,
She guards the austere approach to the Alone. [295]

Even for the tapaswin, who claims that it's by his own effort, She keeps the watch guides, and helps, gives an indication based on his faith or absence of faith. She leads him through the journey and he thinks it's by his own effort of tapasya. But

where does the power of tapasya come from? It comes from the Divine Mother.

At the beginning of each far-spread plane [295]

She is the universal Mother and she is there on each plane of consciousness, waiting for the seeker.

Pervading with her power the cosmic suns
She reigns, inspirer of its multiple works
And thinker of the symbol of its scene.
Above them all she stands supporting all,
The sole omnipotent Goddess ever-veiled
Of whom the world is the inscrutable mask; [295]

Any which way we go, any aspect of the world we take, if we go deep, deep, deep within, we will meet the divine Shakti standing there.

The ages are the footfalls of her tread,
Their happenings the figure of her thoughts,
And all creation is her endless act. [295]

Whatever she has conceived, that will be. There is no way it cannot be. It may take a while, it may take centuries, but it is going to be. It cannot be changed because She is the one who conceives and the rest follows. What does Aswapati do? We see it in the Greater Mind.

His spirit was made a vessel of her force;
Mute in the fathomless passion of his will
He outstretched to her his folded hands of prayer.

Then in a sovereign answer to his heart
A gesture came as of worlds thrown away, [295]

The Divine Mother says okay, what do you want? She throws away the world. You want all these worlds? You can take them. All these triple worlds of body, life and mind, you can become sovereign king over them, the great Emperor. You want these worlds? You can take them. With one arm she's giving. Aswapati has done the tapasya and the surrender. By the other arm she does something else:

And from her raiment's lustrous mystery raised
One arm half-parted the eternal veil. [295]

On the one side, all the glory and greatness of the worlds. On the other side, do you want the Eternal?

A light appeared still and imperishable.
Attracted to the large and luminous depths
Of the ravishing enigma of her eyes,
He saw the mystic outline of a face. [295-296]

Look at the Darshan.

Overwhelmed by her implacable light and bliss,
An atom of her illimitable self [296]

Who is Aswapati? He is a tapaswin, a great yogin. What does he experience himself as?

An atom of her illimitable self
Mastered by the honey and lightning of her power,
Tossed towards the shores of her ocean-ecstasy,

Drunk with a deep golden spiritual wine,
He cast from the rent stillness of his soul
A cry of adoration and desire
And the surrender of his boundless mind
And the self-giving of his silent heart.
He fell down at her feet unconscious, prone. [296]

One cannot remain conscious in that blaze. This is the universal Mother and her arm parts the eternal veil. Aswapati goes further because he's in search of that which can transmute. The universal Mother can give all that is there in creation within the cosmic consciousness, but if there has to be something more, one has to go to the Transcendent. Aswapati goes further, because she knows his heart. He doesn't want this; he wants something else, something new, something which has never been on Earth, which he wants to be.

He goes further. He is face to face with the transcendent Mother going past the gates of the Unknowable. We all are aware of this wonderful passage. It is a very long passage so I will just read a few lines from here and there. As she comes out, as he stands at the gates of the Unknowable, he has to make a choice. The choice is like that many yogis have made, well, a few yogis: to dissolve in the supreme consciousness of the Ineffable and be done with birth and life and death and rebirth, or to bring something of That back and recreate this world and mind and life. Aswapati obviously has chosen the second one, but he doesn't know how it will come through. He stands at the doors of the Unknowable. One can't know it, That has to reveal

himself. But it's a 'She'. Someone comes out of the Unknowable. This God is a woman. Sri Aurobindo says in one his *Aphorisms*: *'After I knew that God was a woman, I learned something from far-off about love; but it was only when I became a woman and served my Master and Paramour that I knew love utterly'* [CWSA 12: 481]. This is where he stands:

Even while he stood on being's naked edge [312]

Trip over onto that side and … gone — no Aswapati, no creation, nothing.

And all the passion and seeking of his soul
Faced their extinction in some featureless Vast,
The Presence he yearned for suddenly drew close. [312]

This is the thin line over which Sri Ramakrishna must have stood when he said, whoever has a glimpse of that side, he falls and vanishes. The great Upanishad declares, 'what can one speak about that Mystery?' There's nothing one can say, every word that you utter will be a blasphemy before That. Then he gets a glimpse of the transcendent Mother.

Out of a marvellous Transcendence' core,
A body of wonder and translucency
As if a sweet mystic summary of her self
Escaping into the original Bliss
Had come enlarged out of eternity,
Someone came infinite and absolute.
A being of wisdom, power and delight,
Even as a mother draws her child to her arms,

Took to her breast Nature and world and soul. [312]

Here he finds: 'yes, this is what I am seeking. She is the One whom I am seeking'. This beautiful passage goes on describing her, and on page 314 Sri Aurobindo says,

At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate,
In their slow round the cycles turn to her call;
Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base.
Hers is the mystery the Night conceals;
The spirit's alchemist energy is hers; [314]

She is the one who can transmute matter and divinise it.

She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God;
She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent, [314]

This word is the Supreme Word of creation. Once she was asked, but Mother in Indian mythology, it is written that the word of creation came from Brahma. What do you have to say about it? The Mother says 'Yes, but hasn't Sri Aurobindo said that I am the Mother of Brahma?' It is actually there; if you read the Puranas it's there: She is the Mother of Brahma Vishnu Mahesh, and there is not one but there are countless Brahma Vishnu Mahesh. Incidentally, they also have a term. Nobody enjoys termless power except the Absolute. None of us should think that we are going to enjoy power forever, that is only given to the Absolute. She comes, Aditi:

The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
The joy that beckons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down. [314]

We know of the Mother as mighty Durga, Kali and countless other forms, but there is a still greater Power which has never come down upon Earth, and that he glimpses:

All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things. [314]

Every time we have a pain — we shouldn't have pains because Mother doesn't want us to have pain — it is a beautiful opportunity to remember her: Ma Ma Ma, because She alone can heal. I remember one incident in which Jugal-da had a corn on his leg that was very painful. For many days he would walk with a limp and someone asked him 'why don't you get it operated?' He said 'no, no, no, don't say that.' 'Why? You don't believe in doctors?' 'No, no, doctors are very nice people.' 'Then what is it?' 'Every time I have pain, I say "Ma", inwardly. It's so wonderful; it's making me remember Her.'

Aswapati is now face to face with the Divine Mother. She has appeared and She knows his heart. She first cautions him:

My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.
But too immense my danger and my joy.
Awake not the immeasurable descent,

...
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.

[335]

She says: 'Don't try. You're calling me down, but be careful. This is not just some godlike energy. It is the supreme Energy and think what will happen to Earth.' Aswapati of course is the gods' delegate in humanity; he is the representative. He says, 'yes, I know, but you could come down and prepare earth'. There have been other tapaswis who have asked the Divine for a boon and the Divine appeared and said 'no, I can't grant you this'. Most of these would ask for a second boon, but Aswapati is wisest of the wise, so he says 'yes, I understand what you're saying. But Mother, why don't you come down in a human body and prepare us? Is there a problem with that?' We have these wonderful lines describing this:

O Truth defended in thy secret sun,
Voice of her mighty musings in shut heavens
On things withdrawn within her luminous depths,
O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time,
As if Time dare not open its heart to God.
O radiant fountain of the world's delight
World-free and unattainable above,
O Bliss who ever dwellst deep-hid within

While men seek thee outside and never find,
...
Mission to earth some living form of thee. [345]

And the Mother agrees: 'Tathastu' — so be it. She says 'I'll choose my moment'. When will she come? *'When darkness deepens, strangling the earth breast'* [55], in *'...Death's tremendous hour'* [346]. 'Let that fellow Death do my work a little bit more to clear the ground':

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." [346]

There must be some preparation in the background. Wherever the Mother went — for example, when she returned to France from Pondicherry in 1915 — revolutions started. In her previous incarnations also the Mother was associated with revolutions. We should not imagine God is a pacifist who comes and says 'please'. When Krishna comes there is revolution. With the Mother there is the Russian Revolution, the French Revolution. When she went to France in 1915 there were all kinds of activities, attacks, everything was happening. She had to move from there because France was not ready to contain that Shakti. It was '*Death's tremendous hour'* and it knew its game was up, so in a last ditch attempt the whole world was engulfed on the one side with the first great war and on the other side with the influenza epidemic. More people, by

the way, died of influenza in the First World War than by the war itself. And yet humanity advances. Sri Aurobindo said because she was coming all the vital forces came down to Earth to make sure we didn't succeed but they end up doing our work. They cleared the ground and created everything afresh. Otherwise, man would have said, we are a very fine, we don't need anything. You need a Kansa unfortunately for Krishna to come.

The Divine Mother grants Aswapati's request, and the Divine Mother is born on earth. Sri Aurobindo describes it very beautifully. The whole long passage,

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: [353]

This is not the first time she has come. This is not the first time that all of us have come. That's what she has said something to this effect that 'We have all met in previous lives. Otherwise, we would not have come together in this life. We are of one family and have worked through ages for the victory of the Divine and its manifestation upon earth'. She allows us to take the joy of the effort. Some people get so worried, 'Oh, how many centuries will it take for the supramental body?' If you keep waiting and thinking like this, for you, it will remain as it is. Let it take centuries, if it means centuries of her *seva,* centuries of our service to her. How beautiful is the joy of service, the Ananda of service, through which we are prepared.

Then we have the divine Advent itself. She is Divine from birth, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, but there is a progressive manifestation of her divinity as the instruments develop the divine consciousness which she has brought with her. Along with that, she brings something new which is not there within the cosmic consciousness. That is the beauty.

In the Ramayana there is a description of the marriage of Rama and Sita. When the marriage is going to take place, all the gods have come, and they know it's not just an ordinary marriage. Suddenly Brahma says, 'Look at that flower!' Vishnu says, 'What about it?' He says, 'I have not created this. Where does it come from?' The gods nudge him, 'Please, don't you know it is the Divine Mother's wedding? There will be things which you have never dreamed, they will also be here'. Like that the Mother has brought something new. A new epiphany appeared in her. And what is it that is new?

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, [357]

This is something she brought with her. What is this mind of light? Sri Aurobindo speaks about it at great length. The first thing that the Supermind will do is create a mind of light that is no more in ignorance. It has not yet reached the supramental but it is a mind which is already luminous and will take us towards it. The fundamental ignorance is gone. It's a mind of light; it is one of the first things that manifests and becomes a

link for man's ascension. *'A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force'* comes to attune us to the Supermind, because we have lost that rhythm, but this is appropriate to man as an evolutionary being.

A body instinct with hidden divinity [357]

We have lost the instincts of the animal, that is good, but we don't know how to act because we are trying to do it with the mind. Ultimately, we have to discover the intuition. That is part of man's journey. She has 'a body instinct with hidden divinity'; there are so many examples in Mother's life. She has said that when you pick up something you should know with the hands. How much all this is instinct with divinity! One example I often remember is when she was sitting in a car and suddenly a cobra slithered in somehow and sits on her lap with its hood spread open. She looked into the cobra's eyes. God knows what she said. She must have seen Shiva and perhaps said I'm in Uma's form but you're not supposed to be on my lap. After some time, she said 'OK, now it's enough'. It just put its head down and went away. It must have come for Darshan, as all creatures might come. The disciple told Mother, 'this is too dangerous, you should have killed this fellow'. Mother said, 'Kill? Don't you know I am the Mother'. The body itself is instinct with divinity, it's not a thought; the body knows spontaneously what has to be done. She has described that several times.

Prepared an image of the coming god; [357]

She comes and then we have beautiful description of her growing up. Humanity in its various types and shades comes to her. In France, the Mother had started the New Idea group, and subsequently, in different places, all kinds of humanity were coming to her. Savitri also met a number of beings and people, from other worlds and this world. But whom is she going to choose now as a partner in this great game? Because the Divine is not playing with marionettes. When Nirod-da asked Sri Aurobindo, why is the effort needed from our side, he said, because the Divine is a real thing, and the Divine is not playing with marionettes; it's not a puppet show that is going on. If it's a puppet show, then there's no evolution and then we won't even deserve the Divine. A puppet you can paint to look like a king or queen, but they're not kings and queens within, it's still made of the same material. We have to go through that evolutionary process to become divine. There is something which mankind has to do and she's in search of that. There is a canto called 'The Quest' in which she is in search of that material she needs to transmute, that person who will be picked up by her and lifted to the Divine.

Satyavan is not just one person. There is a little Satyavan in all of us who is ready for Her. We have a description of Satyavan where he says,

I looked upon the world and missed the Self.
And when I found the Self, I lost the world, [407]

Satyavan is not a seeker after Nirvana; he had that experience. He's a Veda Knower of the unwritten book. He

wants the great reconciliation, the creator and the creation; God, Spirit and Nature. She comes in her quest looking for Satyavan. What a beautiful symbol this is. We talk about going in search of God. But Sri Aurobindo has said, and all mystics have said, when you are ready, the guru and the guide come to you.

We shouldn't worry about that part. We should worry about what we have to do. She comes to us, but where does she come? Does she come to some hermitage looking for some sadhu or sannyasi? No, she goes past all of them. They are too satisfied with their realisations. Some are uncompanioned and reaching the Absolute — seer sages, ascetics — but she goes past them. She goes past the palaces of kings, all these people, she goes past knowing there is someone waiting for her. That person may even be in a forest where there is nothing, even Google maps will not show that there is a place like that.

That's how she comes. Each one of us, I'm sure, has our own beautiful story of journey, how the Divine caught us. People often ask, 'how are we initiated in the Ashram?' Old time sadhaks used to say she catches our *choti* and then she doesn't let us go. She starts with our *choti* and after some time all our being is Hers. That is how we are initiated. Where does she initiate? Do we have to go to the Ashram? Will she give us a mantra? No, no. You might be initiated while taking a stroll on Connaught Place, you may be in the busy street and She will come and initiate. It is not only when we are ready that She comes. She comes, but then there's something we have to do,

and that is the offering of our being to her. That's all that She wants. When Satyavan sees her, what does he say?

Although to heaven thy beauty seems allied,
Much rather would my thoughts rejoice to know
That mortal sweetness smiles between thy lids [401]

We want the Divine to be like a human. There's a great difference between the Divine becoming human as the Avatar and coming close to us and the Divine who is out there somewhere as an absolute abstraction beyond thought. How can we concentrate on That? Therefore She comes within the human range. That's why the Avatar is an unparalleled phenomenon.

And thy heart can beat beneath a human gaze
And thy aureate bosom quiver with a look
And its tumult answer to an earth-born voice. [401]

O, Mother, can you hear our voice? We have not read the hymns and prayers in the Shastras. Can you just listen to our babble?

If our time-vexed affections thou canst feel, [401]

We don't know what She will ask from us. We have little issues and little problems. Can you feel these little issues that so vex us?

Earth's ease of simple things can satisfy, [402]

What I can offer you is not riches and bungalows and palaces. I can't offer things like Ravana of Lanka for you. But I can offer my heart, it's a small little place.

If thy glance can dwell content on earthly soil,
And this celestial summary of delight,
Thy golden body, dally with fatigue [402]

Knowing myself, I can tell you Mother that you will have to work a lot with this fellow. Can you?

Oppressing with its grace our terrain, while
The frail sweet passing taste of earthly food
Delays thee and the torrent's leaping wine,
Descend. Let thy journey cease, come down to us. [402]

Come Mother, come. And She comes, whenever a devotee, a child, calls her with a sincere heart. It is not like only if we offer much money she will come. She says your gift is not measured by how much it is worth, it is measured by the completeness of your offering. She gives the example of when Shiva comes disguised as an ordinary mendicant and asks for something from a poor lady. The lady says I don't have anything, but I've eaten half my apple and half is kept here. I can give it to you if you want it. Shiva says give it to me, and then he says this is the most perfect gift. Then Mother says the gift is even more beautiful because she didn't know he is Shiva. That makes it more beautiful.

Then there is the divine marriage, the divine betrothal, the mystic marriage, as it's called. Krishna has all his gopis and

Christ, all the nuns are married to Christ. And we can say that all of us are married to Mother and Sri Aurobindo, in the deepest sense. It's called the mystic marriage. This mystic marriage takes place between Savitri and Satyavan. Once it happens, our own life is no more our own. Actually, it never was, but we lived in that illusion. Now it is hers. What happens next is that Satyavan doesn't know she is leading his life, just like all of us. It's okay. We have come here and think 'very good, Mother is there' but she's keeping watch. There's a line in *Savitri*,

Thou hast come down into a struggling world
To aid a blind and suffering mortal race,
To open to Light the eyes that could not see, [536]

We don't even know. When you are leading a blind person and you say, 'Be careful', the person doesn't know what to be careful about. It is so difficult to lead us through the blindness of our ignorance. And then destiny approaches with silent feet and Satyavan dies. Now what happens, it is again something very beautiful. Satyavan is making no effort, but what does he do before he dies? That is important. Just before he's going to die, he lies in Savitri's lap and says,

"Savitri, Savitri, O Savitri,
Lean down, my soul, and kiss me while I die." [565]

That's all I want. Maybe if you are near, even death will go away. Satyavan's first act is the act of surrender and Satyavan's last act is the act of surrender. All the yoga is basically between

these two great acts. Sri Aurobindo says that surrender to the Divine, and to the infinite Mother is the first and the last word of Integral Yoga.

He makes that last act. Then it's no more his journey through death, but her journey. She carries Satyavan; she follows him through the gates of death. We know that there is a long debate between Savitri and Death and finally Death gets transformed. Basically, she doesn't have to engage in this debate. She could have just said, 'here I am'. But it's not just about one Satyavan, one Satyavan could easily be brought back. It's about the destiny of mankind, with countless small Satyavans. It is his great shadow which is lurking in man's depths that must be transformed. Through all the debates, she is transforming Death the restrainer, the Yama Raja, to the upholder of the law, the guardian of truth, Dharma Raja. That is his origin, because Yama is the child of the Sun. From Surya and Chaya, Yama is born. Surya gives the law of truth but Death is the restrainer, he doesn't know. All that he does is restrain. Ultimately, he restrains the breath which restrains the life which restraints the body. Then he restrains our upward climbing, and in doing so he oversteps his brief; this is something he's not supposed to restrain. He even restrains that, he doesn't know, he has only one word in his head. She reveals herself to him and says 'now move away'. At the end, he says, 'okay, I'm convinced, but who are you hiding behind the human form? The eternal truth speaks through your voice, but I want to see your face and see your power so that I too, can

bow and worship you'. This is about the conversion of Death, which is one of the most important things. Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's work is not confined to us humans. We are very important as partners because the work is to be done in us. But there are many actors behind the scene. The gods must consent and the titans must surrender or dissolve or be converted. Here is this revelation of the Divine Mother to Death:

And Savitri looked on Death and answered not.
Almost it seemed as if in his symbol shape
The world's darkness had consented to Heaven-light
And God needed no more the Inconscient's screen.
A mighty transformation came on her.
A halo of the indwelling Deity,
The Immortal's lustre that had lit her face
And tented its radiance in her body's house,
Overflowing made the air a luminous sea. [664]

Suddenly she shows him her *swarupa*. What happens next, is the inevitable:

A pressure of intolerable force [667]

This what many people experienced when in close contact with the Mother. Some of the old disciples would say when in front Sri Aurobindo they would feel as if they are entering into infinity, into vastness, but when the Mother came there was a tremendous pressure of transformation. Not that she said anything. People mistranslated it into 'oh, she's a disciplinarian'; it was none of those things. But her presence

brought that transforming energy. The only way one could bear it was through love, the power of love. There was that pressure, and the pressure was felt as intolerable. There is a divine intolerance:

A pressure of intolerable force
Weighed on his unbowed head and stubborn breast;
Light like a burning tongue licked up his thoughts,
Light was a luminous torture in his heart,
Light coursed, a splendid agony, through his nerves;
His darkness muttered perishing in her blaze. [667]

We have to bear all this change because within us also, along with the immortal wine, there is mixed this poison of falsehood. When she starts the cleansing process, it hurts. It's okay. It's the process. Sri Aurobindo says we need endurance and faith. These are the two watchwords. We know that Death perishes, and she has reached the Ultimate. She wants to bring down the boon for earth. She brought these gifts to earth and men, but man is not ready. But she makes men ready. To become ready we have to go through the gates of death, unfortunately. That's how we are. She brings these boons to men. What is it that the Divine Mother has come to give us?

"Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep [696]

Oh, the peace of flight from the world? No, not that peace.

"Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep
Amid the roar and ruin of wild Time
For the magnificent soul of man on earth.

Thy calm, O Lord, that bears thy hands of joy." [696]

Without peace we cannot bear the Ananda. Peace in the midst of the roar and ruin of wild time. Peace in the storm, calm in the effort, that is the peace she brings.

"Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts,
My sweet infinity of thy numberless souls." [697]

Not the oneness that blots out all differences, but oneness that is enriched by differences, that oneness she brings.

"Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
To take all things and creatures in their grief
And gather them into a mother's arms." [697]

This is the perfect solution for all grief and suffering: to fling oneself in her arms and feel the touch of divine love. And finally she asks for men,

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

All these boons are granted and then there is a passage in which Savitri's true nature is beautifully revealed:

O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word,
The face of Truth upon the roads of Time
Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God. [703]

This is, of course, for our own being. This applies as much to *Savitri* the book, the Immortal word that opens and points the road to mankind.

And at the end, when Satyavan is back on Earth, and she has received all the boons, Satyavan asks her, what is the path you have followed? He asks, *'What high change is in thee, O Savitri'* [718]. And Savitri says,

All now is changed, yet all is still the same.
Lo, we have looked upon the face of God,
Our life has opened with divinity. [719]

People speak about the Mother's withdrawal, but it was not a withdrawal. It is a transformed being. Nothing of her human approach changes. That is how she revealed herself to Nolini-da in 1974, or perhaps it was 1976. He has a vision where the Mother appears in a new and transformed body, and she says I'm here just as before, just as accessible as before, you can approach me just the same way as a human mother. And there are countless people the world over, some I'm sure in this very room, who will testify to the fact. If you tell them that the Mother is no more they will say there could be nothing more untrue than this.

All now is changed, yet all is still the same.
...
Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not our earth: [719]

But when she is asked, have you done all this, it seems like the seers and sages are not satisfied. Satyavan says simply,

'Lay all on her; she is the cause of all' [723]. Don't ask me how to meditate, which mantra to say, what kind of breathing techniques to do, which asanas to do. I know only one thing, *'Lay all on her; she is the cause of all'*. They wonder, and looking at her they see that her face is aglow with the glow of the suns. They ask, what is your secret? Is there something you're hiding inside? What is the secret that you have come to give to earth? Savitri's message, the Mother's message, is given in four lines:

"Awakened to the meaning of my heart
That to feel love and oneness is to live [724]

There are few lines more powerful than these. If we don't feel love in our heart, we are as good as dead. The Mother says somewhere that there are many who are living but dead inside, and there are many who are dead that are alive.

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

Then come these beautiful lines:

Wondering at her and her too luminous words [724]

Truth can be so simple and so profound. Nolini-da once was asked before a play in the Ashram to speak a few words about the programme. He went to the stage and stood silent for a while. Then he said, 'Love the Mother', and came back came

down. Yoga and life could be this simple and easy. But perhaps love is the most difficult thing for human nature. It always wants it but it doesn't know how to love even a human being, forget about the Divine. It is jealous and full of competition: 'Oh, Mother loves this person more'; 'He is closer'; 'She loves talented people'; 'She loves those who go around and give lectures'' 'She loves wealthy people'. The truth is she loves everyone because she's a wonderful Mother of unnumbered souls.

We will end with an earlier passage which describes when Savitri recovers the fullness of her being and culminates her yoga for earth and man. She does the yoga for earth and man and she completely identifies with earth and all of us. What does she discover?

Her spirit saw the world as living God;
It saw the One and knew that all was He. [556]

Never a greater truth was ever uttered. He, in the being, he in the becoming; he in the past, and he moving towards himself in the future. When the Mother used to do the japa 'Om Namo Bhagavate' people thought, 'oh, she's doing something very traditional, that's very good'. She said, 'no, when I do the mantra Om Namo Bhagavate I'm invoking the Divine of the future'. It's not just about the mechanical repetition, it's about what is put in the japa. On the next page the description continues:

She was the single self of all these selves,

She was in them and they were all in her. [557]

This is our permanent dwelling place. All places, the whole world, Auroville, Ashram, Andromeda galaxy, Mars, they're all temporary places. She is the only permanent place.

This first was an immense identity
In which her own identity was lost: [557]

She loses herself in the creation and is there in each atom of existence.

What seemed herself was an image of the Whole.
She was a subconscient life of tree and flower,
The outbreak of the honied buds of spring; [557]

That's why they give us joy. Everywhere we can glimpse something of her magic and mystery.

She burned in the passion and splendour of the rose,
[557]

When we look at a rose and feel joy it's the Divine Mother who is burning in its splendour. For a moment our eyes see something wonderful and we feel happy looking at it.

She was the red heart of the passion-flower,
The dream-white of the lotus in its pool.
Out of subconscient life she climbed to mind,
She was thought and the passion of the world's heart,
She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
She was the climbing of his soul to God. [557]

It is a portion of her that dwells in us as a divine spark and grows into a psychic being. The psychic being is nothing else but a portion of the Divine Mother. That is the realisation one has when one discovers the psychic being: that I am forever, have been forever, and will be forever, a part and parcel and portion of the Divine Mother.

The cosmos flowered in her, she was its bed.
She was Time and the dreams of God in Time;
She was Space and the wideness of his days.
From this she rose where Time and Space were not;
The superconscient was her native air,
Infinity was her movement's natural space;
Eternity looked out from her on Time. [557]