

# Collaboration

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Land and spirit: An American yoga for the 21st Century, *continued* by John Robert Cornell •

The composition of *Savitri*, part 2 by Richard Hartz •

The role of the body in the Integral Yoga, part 2 by Martha Orton •

Current affairs • AV almanac • Source material • Poetry • Apropos



## About the cover

Title: Vigil (detail). This is a greyscale reproduction of a color painting by Kirti Chankak (kirtikalakar@gmail.com). The original painting is watercolor on gauze cloth and paper pulp. It measures 36 x 160 cm (five feet, 3 inches tall), and shows the full body down to the feet.

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## From the office of Collaboration

### Artists

**Kirti Chandak** ([kirtikalakar@gmail.com](mailto:kirtikalakar@gmail.com)) graduated from the Ashram's school, SAICE, then went on to study art at Santiniketan, Baroda and Paris. She lives in Pondicherry where she pursues her creative art work and is the Managing Trustee of the Shilpataru Art Foundation and director for TASMAI, a Centre for Art & Culture.

**Karen Cornell** has been drawing and painting since childhood. She was a graphic artist in the software industry for many years. She specializes in computer graphics, pen and ink, and watercolor.

We open this issue with Current Affairs, which includes updates on the books and study guides of the Institute for Wholistic Education, and of recent visitors and activities at the East-West Cultural Center – The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles. This is followed in Briefs by an announcement of the AUM 2015, which is being held jointly this year with the Auroville International Meeting near Matagiri. There is also an announcement by the Foundation for World Education, and an update of activities at the Auromesa Center in Taos, NM. We also have included announcements of three new books from the latest SABDA recent publications newsletter.

In AV Almanac, we have an article by Alan of *Auroville Today* about the Auroville Health Services. After discussing its work in promoting hygienic practices in various Auroville food service units, the article focuses on the health service's accomplishments and challenges in dealing with the physical and mental health issues of Auroville's growing elderly population. This article is followed by an announcement of a new Auroville book that has been published of selected photographs of Sri Aurobindo.

The Essays section begins with the third installment of John Robert Cornell's previously unpublished book titled "Land and spirit, An American yoga for the 21st Century." This book explores the relation between nature and spirit that John Robert discovered while traveling and trekking in the American West with his wife Karen. In this third installment, John Robert and Karen search for the sacred in the canyons of the Navajo Reservation in northern Arizona. There they encounter the Navajo culture, their stories, and their bond with nature. John Robert also gives us a living sensation of these ancient lands and their landscapes—their beauty and their geological development: "Altitude 7300 feet. Nearest city—none. White cumulus clouds float overhead so clear and close you could nab one with a butterfly net." Enjoy the tour!

This is followed by the second of a two-part essay, "The composition of *Savitri*," by Richard Hartz. A larger version of this work was previously published in *Mother India* in 50 installments beginning in October 1999. In Part 1, published in the previous issue, Richard provided an overview of Sri Aurobindo's writing of *Savitri* from its beginning in 1916 to its final revisions in 1950, with special attention on Books 1 and 2 of the epic. Part 2, published here, is based on my selections from the *Mother India* series that specifically address the composition of Books 3-12. While focusing on the periods in which the various books and cantos were written, the selections also show parallels in the writing of *Savitri* with the development of Sri Aurobindo's experiences and consciousness as reflected in *The Record of Yoga*, *The Mother*, and *The Life Divine*. Richard's painstaking analysis of successive drafts of *Savitri* for his work at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives is utilized in this work to give us a deeper appreciation of Sri Aurobindo's masterpiece.

Our third Essay is the second of a two-part article by Martha Orton on the role of the body in the Integral Yoga. Martha brings out the important role that the body plays in the spiritual evolution and in the Integral Yoga specifically. We find how the awakening of the body consciousness can greatly facilitate the development of the psychic being, and help to compress into a few years lifetimes of progress. We see how the health of the body reflects the inner consciousness, and learn why the Mother placed so much importance on exercise, good hygiene, and proper eating. We learn how we must transform our view and treatment of our own body, so that it may take its proper place in the sadhana, and become a fit expression and vehicle of action of the Divine consciousness.

In Source Material we have excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings on fate and free will, and how to reconcile these two fundamental aspects of our human existence. We also have a selection of fine spiritual poetry, and we close the issue with a series of inspiring Apropos quotations.

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**Submissions:** *Collaboration* welcomes writing, photos, and artwork relevant to the Integral Yoga and spirituality. Submit material by email to: [editor@collaboration.org](mailto:editor@collaboration.org); or by post to *Collaboration*, 2715 W. Kettleman Lane, Suite 203-174, Lodi, CA 95242 USA. *Collaboration* cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of unsolicited material. Letters and articles may be edited for style and space considerations.

**About SAA:** The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville, and supports projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current members: Lynda Lester, president; John Robert Cornell, secretary; Ananda, treasurer; Margaret Phanes, director.

**Contributions:** Donations for the work of the SAA, Auroville, and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may be sent to SAA. Donations are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.



## Current Affairs

### New offerings of the Institute for Wholistic Education

by Santosh Krinsky

**T**he Institute, in collaboration with Lotus Press ([www.lotuspress.com](http://www.lotuspress.com)), is continuing its development and publishing of study guides for Sri Aurobindo's major writings, as well as development of e-books for a variety of platforms.

The major focus at present is converting books of Sri Aurobindo to additional formats besides just Amazon Kindle, including Apple itunes, Google Play, Barnes & Noble, KOBO, etc. While the major works have long been available on Amazon's platform, it is now time to expand the reach of the major writings of Sri Aurobindo as other platforms mature.

*Readings in Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita, Vol. 2* is now available as of 1/1/2015. This book covers the Second Series of Essays on the Gita and is around 534 pages. As a special offer to Sri Aurobindo study centers located in the USA, we are offering one copy to each center that requests one from us for your library and potential use as a study guide. This is the seventh book in the series, the prior books consisting of 3 volumes for *Readings in Sri Aurobindo's The Life Divine*, as well as one volume each of *Readings in Rebirth and Karma by Sri Aurobindo*, *Readings in The Mother by Sri Aurobindo*, and *Readings in Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita, Vol. 1, First Series*. Any center in the USA which has not yet requested and received their free copies for any of these seven volumes should contact us at [santoshk@msn.com](mailto:santoshk@msn.com). The book is available through distribution for sale as well. Kindle versions are being made available through Amazon for those who use either a Kindle Reader or Kindle APP on any other platform. The books are also available on Apple iPad, KOBO, Barnes and Noble and Google Books (epub) format for those who use Nook or ipad or other epub based readers.

The current book of Sri Aurobindo's being focused on is *The Synthesis of Yoga* with daily posts at <http://sriarobindostudies.wordpress.com>. Currently we are in the midst of Chapter 1 of Part 1, The Yoga of Divine Works, of *The Synthesis of Yoga*. All prior posts remain archived and accessible for those who want to study earlier chapters, as well as any of the earlier volumes in the series.

The Institute also sponsors regular classes on reiki, levels 1, 2 and 3, conducted by Karuna Krinsky. The schedule is regularly updated and can be found at [www.reikiteacher.org](http://www.reikiteacher.org).

For more information, contact: Institute for Wholistic Education, 3425 Patzke Lane, Racine, WI 53405. Ph. 262-619-1798; [www.wholisticinstitute.org](http://www.wholisticinstitute.org)

### Recent activities at the East-West Cultural Center

by Anie Nunnally

**T**he EWCC—Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles saw many visitors for the year 2014 for talks and presentations. Among those visiting: Our friend from Paris, Veronik Menanteau, who facilitates a Study Group in her home; Michael and Madhavi Miovic and their son; Joss Brooks from Auroville, involved in afforestation and land conservation, who visited along with Deborah Lawlor; Patrick Bel Dio, Sufi and sculptor from Washington, D.C., who spent many months in Pondicherry gathering information on arts and beauty in the Integral Yoga for his Ph.D. thesis; Rod Hemsell's 3rd Savitri Intensive was held in June; our Russian friend, Nika, who has visited us several times and is translating *Savitri* into Russian language; Mikael Spector who has relocated from Auroville to Los Angeles and teaches two classes here now: *The Life Divine* at Saturday satsangs, and a meditation/movement class; Jeanne and Gordon Korstange who were here in October, when Gordon graced us with a beautiful South Indian flute concert.

Mikael Spector and Anie Nunnally represented the center at the AUM Conference in Taos, New Mexico in August. The organizers were Paul and Tizia O'Connor offering their Auroresma Community as the venue. Mikael was a presenter there giving morning meditation/movement sessions. The clarity and beauty of the sky and clouds were remarkable and we were at a 7000 foot altitude in Pueblo Indian country. There were wonderful presenters and happy connections with old friends and the meeting of new ones.

Our regular programs continue of Darshan activities, Satsang with *The Life Divine* readings on Saturday, a new class in Sanskrit studies on Saturday with Harold Walker as the teacher. He has been teaching privately for years and also teaches classes at the Theosophical Society in downtown Los Angeles.

Savitri classes are held on Thursday evenings, facilitated by Vikas Bamba, and the continuation of book sales and incense and ongoing beautifying of the center with recent new carpeting throughout the house.

Dorian continues with his magic touch in the garden, with new grass lawns and a specific focus on California's severe drought situation. The lawn will be enhanced with some roses and other flowering plants but mostly with newly purchased succulents in unique designs and forms to be planted around the periphery of the lawn.

Our greatest accomplishment this year was the setting up of a Wikipedia biography of Dr. Judith Tyberg, (Jyotipriya), our founder, that was reworked to accommodate Wiki rules from a biography written by Mandakini Lucien-Brun serialized in *Mother India* in the 1980's. Mandakini received help from Frenchman and writer Pushan (who once worked in Ashram



Archives) on all the many rules of Wiki. So it is a very professional and lovely tribute to our founder. Mandakini has researched new findings on Jyotipriya's life and work, so please check it out. Soon we will add photos and some of her Sanskrit chants.

It has been a busy year and we are looking forward to more progress and more visits in 2015. We wish all of you a Happy New Year and may you receive many Blessings.

## Briefs

**Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center and AVI-USA are hosting a joint All USA Meeting and Auroville International Meeting** at the Menla Center for Health and Happiness near Woodstock, NY August 20th-23rd, 2015. Menla is nestled in a beautiful mountain valley of the Catskill Forest Preserve, about three hours north-west of New York City. It is a full-service retreat and conference center offering a variety of accommodations and gourmet vegetarian cuisine. Please reserve the dates and start saving for the trip. Information on accommodations and travel is online at the retreat website: [www.menla.org](http://www.menla.org). Schedule details, prices and speakers will be posted at [www.collaboration.org](http://www.collaboration.org) and [www.facebook.com/aumconference](http://www.facebook.com/aumconference).

**The Foundation for World Education (FWE)** invites grant applications from individuals, programs and groups who share the vision for a transformed world espoused by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Our aim is to provide a continuous stream of funding for current and future generations through responsible management of the endowment, receipt of donations and bequests, and discerning selection of grant recipients. The FWE also aspires to be instrumental in transmuting financial energy to its true purpose in the unfolding evolution and manifestation of a greater consciousness on earth. All proposals must be presented to the FWE through the auspices of a nonprofit organization and are subject to review by members of the board before a decision is taken. Please email your proposal to the Secretary, Margo MacLeod at [info@foundationforworldeducation.org](mailto:info@foundationforworldeducation.org). For further information such as application guidelines and submission dates, please go to [www.foundationforworldeducation.org](http://www.foundationforworldeducation.org).

**Auromesa** has recently started a Wednesday evening study circle that is opened to the community for the study of Tibetan Buddhism Bon Teachings. We are exploring ways to fully open to the light of the Mother through this very ancient teaching. The community has been moved and is showing an amazing perseverance for the past eight months. We are planning to start the new year with a continuation of the teachings. Auromesa Ayurveda is preparing for a busy year of teachings and healing and the opening of the water therapies with our new Watsu pool in late spring. Other plans are to be disclosed when fully agreed upon with other members. On August 15th and 16th we will be having a Savitri immersion and celebration of Sri Aurobindo's birthday. Also in 2015, Tizia is hoping to return to Auroville for sharing, teaching, healing, and learning more. See: [www.auromesa.com](http://www.auromesa.com)

## Recent Publications

*Reprinted from SABDA Recent Publications, December 2014. Available from the Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency, Pondicherry.*

### Landscapes and Gardens of Auroville

#### *The transformation of the land*

Concept: Franz Fassbender

Publisher: PRISMA, Auroville

171 pp. ISBN 978-81-928152-2-0, Rs. 650

Binding: Soft Cover

This book, printed entirely on art paper, presents Auroville's gardens and landscapes in 310 photographs, with accompanying text from various sources. Many of the gardens featured in the book are inspired by Japanese garden design. The book contains essays and pictures on such themes as the creation of the Matri-mandir gardens, Auroville's afforestation work, and the water challenge facing the community. The first sixty pages depict the history of the development of the Auroville's landscape.

### Transforming Lives

#### *An Introduction to Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga*

Larry Seidlitz

Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research

204 pp, ISBN 979-81-901891-5-5, Rs. 250

Binding: Soft Cover

This introductory book on the Integral Yoga is based on the author's talks and papers, most of which have appeared in Ashram-related journals. The chapters highlight the basic teachings of the Integral Yoga, its contributions to the Indian spiritual tradition, some of its methods and practices, and its concept of an integral psychological perfection. Other essays examine the nature of human emotions and how they are to be transformed to serve a higher truth, discuss the true foundations of a spiritual activism, and provide glimpses of the Mother's work on the supramental transformation of the body. The book includes a glossary of yogic and Sanskrit terms.

### Sunil: The Mother's Musician

Clifford Gibson

Publisher: Kolilaben Mehta

361 pp., Rs. 275

Binding: Soft Cover

This portrait of Sunil Bhattacharya as composer, teacher, *sadhak*, and friend consists of his correspondence with the Mother on his music, and his exchange of letters, dating from the early 1960s to the late 1990s, with the many friends all over the world who admired his music. Interspersed throughout the story told in these letters are reminiscences by residents of the Ashram that serve to highlight Sunil's character and talents. In the first few pages of the book, Sunil describes his early childhood in Krishnagar, West Bengal, and his life in Calcutta, where he learned to play the sitar.



## AV almanac

### Caring for Auroville—the Auroville Health Services

by Alan

*Reprinted from Auroville Today, December 2014 issue.*

*Auroville Health Services (AVHS), a team of 8 members, is a non-profit service in the area of public health and health care for seniors.*

Auroville Health Services was set up by Dr. Beena in 2001. Rebecca, a member of the original team who is still working with AVHS, remembers that Dr. Beena's experience with treating villagers in the Multi-Purpose Health Clinic in Bharat Nivas made her realize that preventive work in the villages was essential. So AVHS set up education programmes in hygiene. It also raised funds for the Aquadyn project to provide free clean drinking water in 24 public places in Auroville, and for the first ambulance for the Auroville Health Centre.

When Dr. Beena stepped back, Manfred took up her work. "Initially, we continued the work in the villages," says Manfred. "AVHS, together with the Palmyra Centre for Rural Development, constructed 19 compost toilets and provided training in using them in Thenkopakkam village. We also ran a clinic in Morattandi for some years. After closing this clinic the AVHS team decided to again focus upon Auroville instead."

The present team also continued this work of improving hygiene in Auroville units. Today they advise and monitor about 40 units weekly, including Auroville farms, restaurants, schools and units that provide food products. Among other things, they ensure that people cooking food for the public are wearing proper headgear, and that the sanitation and waste disposal facilities of the units are clean and operating correctly. The standards they adhere to are the ones specified by the Government of India. In 2007 AVHS organized a contest between all the units. The winners were awarded prizes. In the following years, the units fulfilling the conditions were issued certificates. Two members of the team, Veeramani and Chitra, also provide training on request for start-up units.

"We have seen a huge improvement in hygiene standards over the years we have been running this scheme," says Alice, another team member. Now the Government of India makes their own inspections. "However, we will continue with our inspections," says Alice. The names of the units that fulfill the conditions are published in News and Notes.

Has there been a 'knock-on' effect? Have villagers working in these units taken over what they have learned about hygiene and waste disposal and practice that in their own homes? The



team hopes that this is happening but no survey has been done to ascertain this.

AVHS also organizes hospital care for Aurovilians. Indian hospitals insist that a patient is accompanied 24 hours a day. "Sometimes family and friends take up this responsibility for the short-term but finding volunteers to take up this work on a shift basis for longer hospital stays is a big job for a small team like ours," says Alice. "For the past six months we have had at least one Aurovilian hospitalized at any one time."

#### Medical care for senior Aurovilians

At present 20 percent of Auroville's population is over 65 years old and this proportion is likely to grow. The challenge of caring for the aging population is another one of the functions of the Auroville Health Services (AVHS) team.

They were pitched into this some years ago when an older Aurovilian developed dementia. Initially there were plans to send him back to his home country, but some Aurovilians decided they would find a way of caring for him in Auroville. AVHS became involved and organized not only 24 hours nursing care but also took over his financial, administrative and social care.

When a hired nurse proved too expensive, the team started experimenting with volunteers. Aurovilian Friederike, who is a professional geriatric nurse, coordinated and trained additional caregivers for a number of years.

Today there are 360 people over the age of 65 in Auroville and this figure is projected to increase to 440 by 2018. At present six seniors over the age of 85 years are receiving full-time home-care and this number will surely increase in the future. So is the team capable of taking on such a responsibility?

"The main problem," says Manfred, "is to find skilled attendants to work with us in homecare for elder patients."

"People have limitations in their time and energy. This is one factor. But I also think some people are scared to work with old people," says Dany, the professional geriatric nurse who replaced Friederike one year ago. "Not only because they lack the skills, but



also because they are afraid they will become like that themselves. Even when people are asked to pass by daily for a few minutes to check on someone in their own community, often they don't do it."

Personal relationships also play a part here. If someone lacks friends, it is harder to find people to visit them. However, it is a fragile support system when homecare is dependent upon the patients having many friends with the energy to care for them for what may be months, or even years.

### Medical home care

The new team member, Dr. Amarnath, provides medical treatment around the clock. Kailash Clinic offers a 24 hours ambulance service with emergency doctors on call, while the Auroville Health Centre and Kailash Clinic provide out-patient consultations in the daytime.

But neither the Health Centre nor Kailash Clinic has an in-patient room for intensive care patients. "As in the past, palliative care for dying patients has to be improvised in the patient's home," says Dr. Amarnath.

And then there is the financial aspect. Senior healthcare, when it involves professional outside help and specialized equipment, can be expensive. Who will pay the bills?

Manfred says that in the past, it was a struggle to get financial help from Auroville, and even today professional help is not paid for by the Auroville health insurance. "However the attitude has changed in our financial services and now the BCC gives us some financial support. But when an Aurovilian receiving homecare has financial means, we ask for a personal contribution towards the expenses."

Does the change in attitude of our financial services reflect an increased awareness in the larger community of the need to care for our older people? The team is skeptical. "It is still only the people who are personally involved or who have friends in this situation who are concerned."

### Responding to the challenges

One of the problems in the past was that volunteer caretakers lacked proper training. Recently AVHS started a training programme. At present, six trainees are being taught skills like how to give a bed bath, how to lift a patient from a bed to a chair, and what to do in an emergency. "It is also important to stress good communication," says Dany, "like talking to the patient and explaining what you are going to do for them." "Every Auroville community should have at least once member, ideally trained in first aid, to care for community members who need medical help," says Manfred.

The team is aware, however, that there will not be enough volunteers to provide homecare for individual patients in their own houses in the future. "This is where the assisted living home for seniors comes into play," says Manfred. This project is for elders who need some assistance and who wish to live together.

Permanent accommodation for 10 seniors would be provided in a complex where they can be cared for on a 24 hour basis. Such a set-up would require less carers per person and medical resources could be shared.

The project has not been without its difficulties, however. When AVHS made a survey in 2008 to ascertain how many seniors might wish to use such a facility, it proved an unpopular option. Perhaps it smacked too much of "Old Aurovilians' Nursing Home" and many people did not like the prospect of moving out of their own homes. However, when the team ran another survey in 2011, there was a more positive response to the idea. What caused the change? "I think some people became more aware of what they would need when they got older," says Alice. The assisted living project, (estimated to cost Rs 200 lakhs) has been allocated a site in Arka and has a limited seed money. They have site permission, but the building permission is still pending.

Regarding the financial aspect, Manfred's 'dream' is that all Aurovilians pay extra into the Health Fund, or into a Seniors Fund, so that homecare has a more secure financial basis. When somebody is hospitalized and needs specialized treatment or equipment, this can be very expensive. Intensive care in a hospital like Apollo, Chennai, can cost up to one lakh rupees a day (approximately \$1,500). However, if Auroville purchased certain medical equipment, this could lessen costs dramatically. "Recently a senior Aurovilian was hospitalized in PIMS. His one week stay cost Rs. 1,50,000, mainly because he needed oxygen," says Manfred. "But to purchase an oxygen-producing machine costs only 1 lakh rupees. Auroville needs additional equipment like this."

At present Arka community prioritizes two rooms with bathrooms for convalescent but not for permanent care. In the future more rooms will be needed for medical care for seniors. The new Integral Health Centre is being constructed nearby. Will rooms be available there? "There are two tiny rooms planned for in-patients," says Alice, "but they are not really appropriate for our needs. We have to explore the options further."

### Psychological care for the elderly

AVHS is not only focused upon physical medical care. The AVHS team is also concerned with providing psychological care for all senior Aurovilians. One of the issues here is loneliness. "We know of people who are alone in their communities, who have nobody to visit them or accompany them in a taxi. I'm very saddened by this," says Manfred. "There have been people who have been sick or hungry but we don't know about them because they don't contact us. So we plan that someone from our team will visit all the older people in Auroville in order to find out how they are doing. But, once again, this takes time and energy, and we are a very small team."

Meanwhile, AVHS has organized computer classes and lectures for older Aurovilians so that they feel more involved and less isolated. "Transport is fundamental to allow older people to



attend films, and enjoy activities,” says Franca, another member of the team, “so we have organized a taxi service for seniors which is proving popular. Our larger vision is to promote collective transport which will benefit everybody in the community.”

Another issue is mental health problems, which afflicts not only some seniors. “These problems are getting bigger and bigger,” says Manfred. “In the past we had a group who looked after these issues, but the group disbanded. Now we would like to set up a helpline for any Aurovilian or Newcomer who needs psychological help. We started this work with a guest who had experience in this specialized work but he left and we are looking for a replacement.”

While AVHS is clearly facing many challenges, perhaps one of the key ones is attitudinal. As Alice points out, “the concept of ‘eternal youth’, a ‘youth that never ages’, is a big thing in Auroville.” Does this make it more difficult for some people, particularly those pioneers who came here in their 20s, to acknowledge that they are aging and will require help in their later years? Does a community dedicated to physical transformation find it difficult to face up to the realities of aging? Whatever the reasons, it is time that the dedicated efforts of the AVHS team receives more full-hearted support from the community.

## Sri Aurobindo – Selected photos

by Michael Bonke

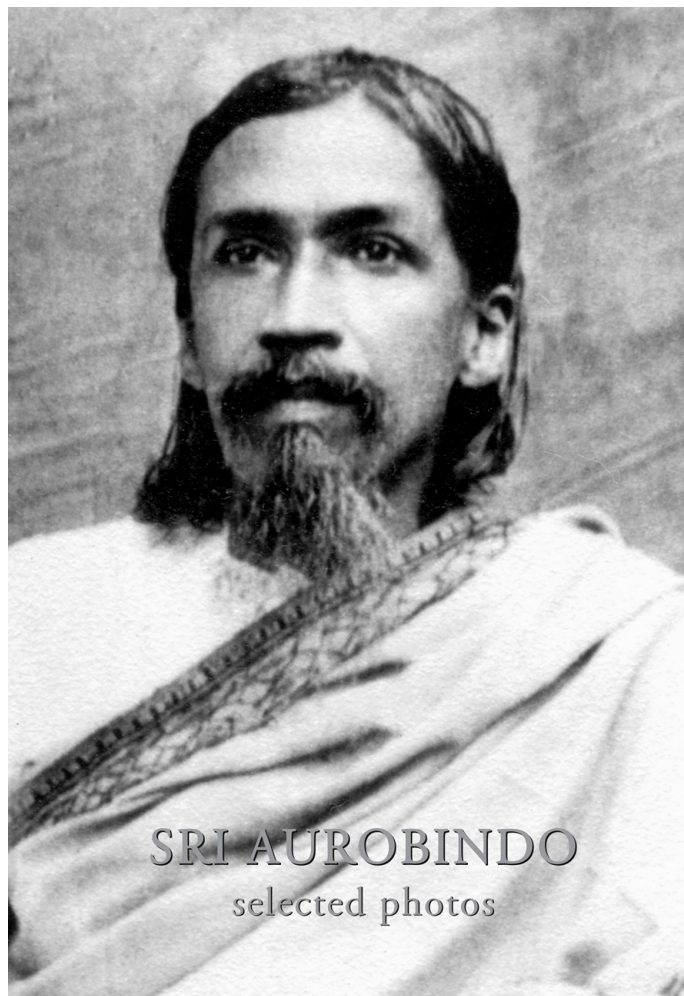
*Reprinted from Auroville Today, December 2014 issue.*

**F**our years after publishing a book with selected photos of the Mother, we are happy to present the companion book with pictures of Sri Aurobindo. The basic concept of both publications is the same. We aim at giving access to the depth of spiritual vibration which radiates from Sri Aurobindo’s photos. We are not trying to provide a pictorial biography or satisfy intellectual curiosity. Therefore we have purposely refrained from using a chronological sequence to the pictures.

Many of Sri Aurobindo’s photos, which are now being sold, have been touched up or restored from the material that was available. Sometimes the expression of Sri Aurobindo is thereby distorted and not much is left of his original aura, which is the thing we are hunting for in this book. We have avoided as much as possible to repair or improve on the old negatives that we had as the base for this book. Whenever we had several versions of an old picture, we have chosen the less altered one.

There are four categories of pictures. The “historical” pictures of Sri Aurobindo’s youth in England and of his political period before his imprisonment; pictures of his prison-time in Alipore and his early stay in Pondicherry; the pictures taken by Cartier-Bresson within a period of just three days in April 1950; and pictures of his Mahasamadhi.

We had the great good fortune to receive a full set of nega-



tives (there exist three or four such sets) of the Cartier-Bresson photographs; scanned them in Germany; and used them as one of the main materials for this publication. During his short stay in Pondicherry, Cartier-Bresson had not only taken pictures of Sri Aurobindo, but also of the daily Ashram life. Some of those pictures we have reproduced in this book, to let Sri Aurobindo appear in the context of the environment he lived in at that time.

A hint of the timeless planes in which Sri Aurobindo lived inwardly transpires from his physical expression. To capture this hint from beyond, and the message it carries, is what we are aiming at. We have had the courage to subordinate all other aspects and compose the material available in such a manner that it gives this element full freedom to manifest itself. The pictures are of a size and quality which will allow the reader to catch something of the profound impact of Sri Aurobindo’s physical appearance.

*Sri Aurobindo – Selected photos* is published by Mitra, Auroville. Hardbound, 200 pages. Price in India approximately Rs. 1900, excluding packing and mailing charges. Available from bookshops in Pondicherry and Auroville and from the Auroville online store [www.auroville.com](http://www.auroville.com).



## Essays

### Land and spirit: An American yoga for the 21st Century

by John Robert Cornell

*Continued from the last issue...*

#### 3. Behind Navajo eyes

*It is lovely indeed, it is lovely indeed.  
I, I am the spirit within the earth,  
The feet of the earth are my feet,  
The legs of the earth are my legs,  
The bodily strength of the earth is my  
bodily strength....*

##### The heart of their land

A big raven just passed a few feet behind me and then north under the branches of the pygmy junipers beside our campsite. Late afternoon sunlight slants through limpid air at Navajo National Monument on the Navajo Reservation in northern Arizona. Altitude 7300 feet. Nearest city—none. White cumulus clouds float overhead so clear and close you could nab one with a butterfly net.

Our camper is set up. Karen is lounging under the awning with her feet propped up. In this clean and comfortable setting, images from the last few days catch up with me.

This morning we left Canyon de Chelly (pronounced deh shay), another national monument on the reservation. Canyon de Chelly is a multi-fingered gorge cut into the sandstone of Defiance Plateau, a hundred miles from our current camp. Navajo people consider de Chelly the heart of their land. You can drive to viewpoints along the north or south rim of the canyon and its tributaries to see sheer cliffs plunge a thousand feet to miniature trees and fields along a winding wash in the canyon bottoms.



Photo courtesy John Robert Cornell.

But what you see depends on the stories that you attend to. At Canyon de Chelly stories collide.

Geologists tell us one story about these canyons. How they started as streams meandering lazily across a flat plain, as a creek will do in a meadow. But below the topsoil of the plain was sandstone, the beautiful and relatively soft product of ancient sand dunes. Geologists have found clues that the American Southwest was a Sahara-like desert of high, wind-built dunes 200 million years ago. These dunes became raw materials for the rock-building phase that followed. Overlying deposits of earth gradually compressed the dunes into stone.

When the plain began to rise with the rest of the Colorado Plateau, the streams of the Canyon de Chelly complex sliced down through the layers of earth and stone. Water is the great sculptor. It cuts efficiently into sandstone. It dissolves the weak cement that

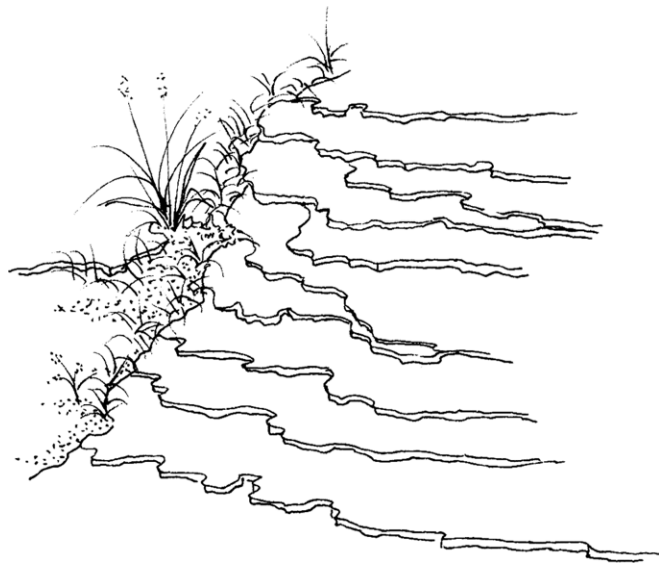
binds the sandy grains together and washes them away during the rains. As they cut down through the layers, the streams froze their original wanderings in place and gradually chiseled them into immense, ageless stone sculptures.

To call water a sculptor and the canyons a timeless sculpture, however, is to allow a play of the imagination entirely incidental to the geological story. Strictly speaking, geology knows nothing of intent or purpose or art. Instead it chronicles great blind inanimate forces, drivers of nature's formidable machinery, scouring out this Navajo heartland without regard to the Navajo people, without regard to the people or animals who lived here before them, without regard to anything living or conscious or purposeful.

It is one story about Canyon de Chelly. Truth be told, it is a European story, or at least a story with roots deep in European science.

But what story do the Navajo people tell, they who have lived in intimate and respectful communion with Canyon de Chelly since at least the 1700s? They who speak not only about the earth but to the earth as Grandfather, the living and conscious land?

Karen and I spent two days in the canyon—on Tuesday morning with a group tour and all day Wednesday alone with a Navajo guide. I remember both of these days like a Navajo dream....





## Canyon De Chelly

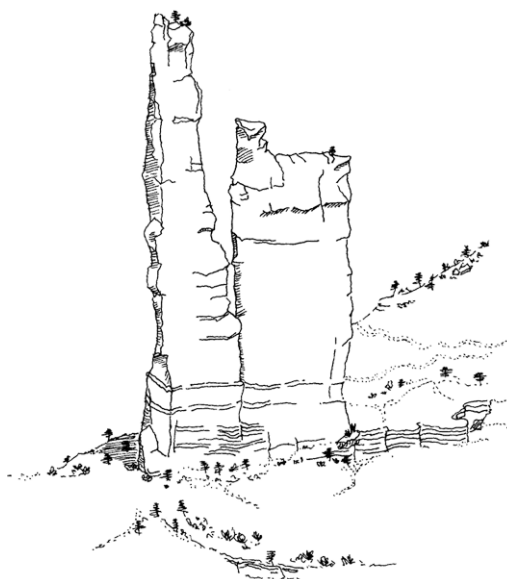
Raven was the camp crier this morning, flapping low over the campground croaking. I looked out the unzipped corner of the camper window. Pink was seeping into the eastern sky. The air lay mild and calm in the arms of the dawn.

But now, an hour later, RV generators all around are shuddering and grinding out electricity for air conditioners that will battle the desert sun all day. One can glimpse how these RVs, huge steel beetles of ingenuity, apply the stories of geology and other Western sciences, harnessing earth resources for comfort and convenience, shielding their inhabitants from the naked force of desert and sun.

A 35-foot Airstream on the eastern side of the campground pulls forward. People circle around it. I hope this is a departure signal for the armada of RVs that have arrived here over the last few days. But now the driver is backing into a site. Instead of departure it is one more arrival.

Yesterday we, too, were among the arrivals after nearly a month on the road. Looking back at Zion, we marveled that the tiny Virgin River had sliced through 2,500 feet of sandstone by itself. At Capitol Reef, much of the original uplift has eroded away leaving a wild jumble of bony splits and cross canyons. At de Chelly the human element takes its place among the massive landforms and the slow turning of the seasons. Whereas human habitation seems incidental or alien at the first two places, de Chelly is not set aside in its "natural" state. The Navajo people live here. So any visit to the canyon bottom is mediated through the eyes and stories of a Navajo guide. With one exception, you must enter the canyon by going into Navajo dream time.

Now it's 7:30, time to prepare for the morning adventure. Karen is up, worrying about what shoes to ruin. We can join a group tour into the Canyon this morning at 9 if we get to the visitor center on time. Much of the walking will be in the stream



that wanders wide and shallow across the lower canyon floor. Neither of us thought of bringing wading shoes to the desert.

After a short personal introduction in English that is obviously a second language, our guide, Oscar, leads us up to the trailhead at the canyon's edge.

Oscar is a substantial man, about six feet tall and 180 pounds. His red baseball cap shades an open brown face. He smiles easily, even when I mispronounce his last name. Thirteen foreigners piled into his pickup for the ride to this trailhead from the visitor center. About half are German, but I count myself among the foreigners. We are clearly in a different country—different language, different customs, different dress, different way of life. They call it Dinétáh, Navajo Nation.

Now, as we follow Oscar down the switchbacks that cling to the side of the canyon, we also slip imperceptibly behind Navajo eyes. Oscar stops and gestures toward a large spiky succulent.

*Navajo people use this plant. We call it yucca, these Navajo people call it yucca. They use the strings from the leaves to make rope, this yucca plant. We make rope with it.*

With a rhythmic, repetitive cadence to his voice, Oscar guides us not only down the trail but also down into the beliefs and traditions of the Diné (the People), as the Navajo call themselves.

It is as if we are slipping into some liquid, more like mist near the top but heavier and more substantial as we descend. At the bottom we are hardly walking at all. We are dream-walking or swimming. The change is not something obvious that you notice immediately like the cottonwood or the yucca plant. It's more like someone else, more silent and aware inside you, records the sensations and waits for you to notice that you are breathing something else besides air.

This canyon is setting and anchor for the Navajo way. Oscar says that it is the heart and center of the reservation. Over the next 48 hours, we get to feel a little of how the Navajo way, their story of reality, is enmeshed with the landforms of this place.

Did I see a sacred place in the Navajo dream of Canyon de Chelly? It is obviously sacred to the Diné, at least to those who follow the traditional way. There are places of ceremony throughout the canyon. The old ways are still alive here. You can hear the emotion in Oscar's voice when he talks about his grandfather.

*"Go to school," he told me.  
"Learn to read and write.  
But remember the old ways.  
Remember who you are.  
Then you will be all right."*

Our first destination in the canyon is White House Ruins. The remains of stone buildings crowd together on a ledge under the overhanging cliff and spill down to the edge of the valley floor. White House gets its name from a long wall on the ledge covered with white plaster.

Navajo people did not build this stone village. It is one of 1200 large and small sites abandoned in the canyon long before the Navajo began arriving in this area sometime in the 18th century. They call



these ancient builders the Anasazi, a word that means the ancient ones. Archeologists believe that these Anasazi people were the ancestors of the modern Pueblo tribes. By the time the Navajo arrived, the Anasazi had long left Canyon de Chelly and many of their other villages and cliff dwellings throughout the Southwest to settle on the Hopi Mesas of Northern Arizona and in the Pueblo stone villages along the Rio Grande in New Mexico.

Traditional Navajos say that touching the Anasazi ruins can bring disease or bad luck. Consequently, the ruins remained

on the canyon floor in the afternoon sun, children shouting and running.

Suddenly I remember an Austrian woman who took a class on a California university campus in the late 1970s. After a long, silent walking meditation on the campus grounds, she asked if there was a burial site nearby. It was the first time in America, she said, that she had experienced that sense of otherworldly presence that was common around the great cathedrals of Europe, many of which were built on sites sacred to the pre-Christian peoples of the area....

At this point Karen's "Hi!" breaks into my reverie. Oscar is calling his group together. We follow him down canyon.

Unlike other national parks, this canyon is not wilderness. It is pasture and farmland framed by sandstone and light. It is the Diné's history, their work, their shopping center, their cathedral. This ledge—we are looking up at it from the canyon bottom a mile from White House—is where the Navajos received corn from Black Stone god, Oscar tells us. That immense monolith of cliffs rising from the canyon floor over there is Navajo Fortress, where a handful of the Diné's warriors held off the US Army for three

months. The only way the army could defeat them was to starve them out. Right there, Oscar points out, is where a mother jumped off the cliff with her baby to avoid being captured and deported by the soldiers.

*They say you can still hear the sound of their cries as they fell.*

*If you listen at night you can still hear the cry of those voices.*

Every turn in the creek, every zig of the canyon has a meaning, a story, a memory. This wall we are now passing, with "1878" chiseled into the sandstone face,

is where four bands of Navajos agreed to join into a single nation. That bend is where the Diné first saw the Spanish explorers when they entered the land from the south. Oscar points to a cliff with pictographs of horsemen holding long rifles.

The land is twined into their mythology like yarn in a Navajo rug. And these are not disconnected stories meant only to amuse, unrelated to the circumstances of life. The dream of the Diné lives here. The currents of their beliefs and views bathe every cliff, every field, every plant from its seeds to its root as much as the sunlight and the rain. Oscar and Kelvin, who will be our guide tomorrow, grew up in this canyon. It was their playground and world of exploration when they were boys.

And we are here, walking, listening and watching, and then walking some more. The movement of our legs not only carries us down the canyon but also works the stories, the Navajo ambiance of the canyon, into our bodies.

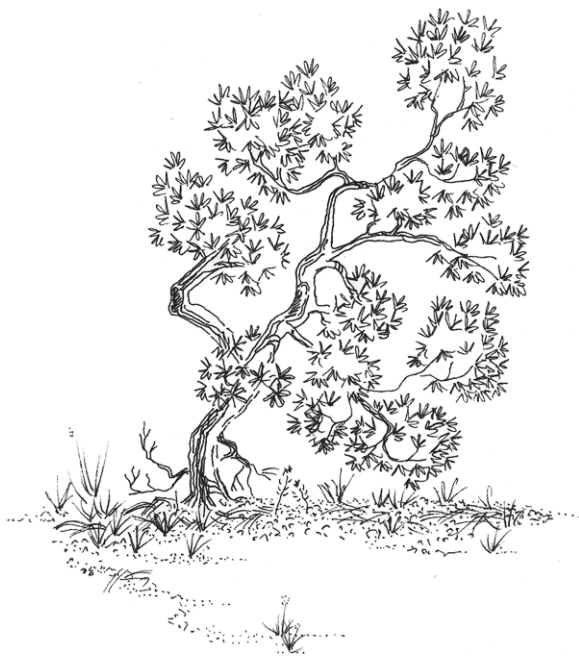
This afternoon, after our hike with Oscar, Karen and I walked over to the visitor center to arrange another trip into the canyon for tomorrow.

I spoke to the man behind the desk about it. I told him that I was looking for quiet moments, solitude, time to sit and listen to the song of the stone. As he filled in the paperwork I slowly realized that he was signing up himself as our guide. I introduced myself and we shook hands. His name is Kelvin.

What time did I want to leave tomorrow morning? Seven? OK, he would be here at the visitor center at 6:45 but I didn't have to be here until seven. Was it just me? I wasn't sure if Karen was going or not. That was OK with him. We would arrange the car lift in the morning.

## Canyon Del Muerto

At 7:25 a.m. we are riding along the north rim in Kelvin and Margaret's hatchback. Fifteen minutes ago we dropped off our pickup at Tsegi Overlook, where we will emerge from Canyon de Chelly at the end of the day. I managed to squeeze my walk-



relatively undisturbed for centuries, until non-Indians began visiting the canyon in the twentieth century. In the visitor center, you can see pictures of White House Ruins before the Park Service put up the six-foot chain link fence to prevent damage and looting by visitors.

Now, standing outside the fence at White House, I feel that rising consciousness overhead and the opening in the chest, despite the presence of a hundred tourists and the native vendors selling jewelry and snacks to them. For a moment or two, all that vanishes and I seem to see and hear a people from another time. It's like a dim, worn video, women working



ing stick into the hatchback along with lunch, water and a journal. Karen has decided to join us.

Kelvin and Margaret spent a few years in Phoenix, until their house burned down. Then they decided to return to the reservation to raise their children. They are happy to be back, both of them say. City life is exciting, but one has no roots there. Without roots, people...

Margaret's voice trails off. They shake their heads.

Soon we turn off the pavement and meander through a maze of steep and deeply-rutted clay backroads. It's hard to see how any vehicle could navigate this red clay when it rains. After 10 minutes Margaret pulls up in a space wide enough to turn around. The brink of the canyon is nowhere in sight. The three of us climb out and hoist our packs. Kelvin carries only a fanny-pack. We wave goodbye to Margaret.

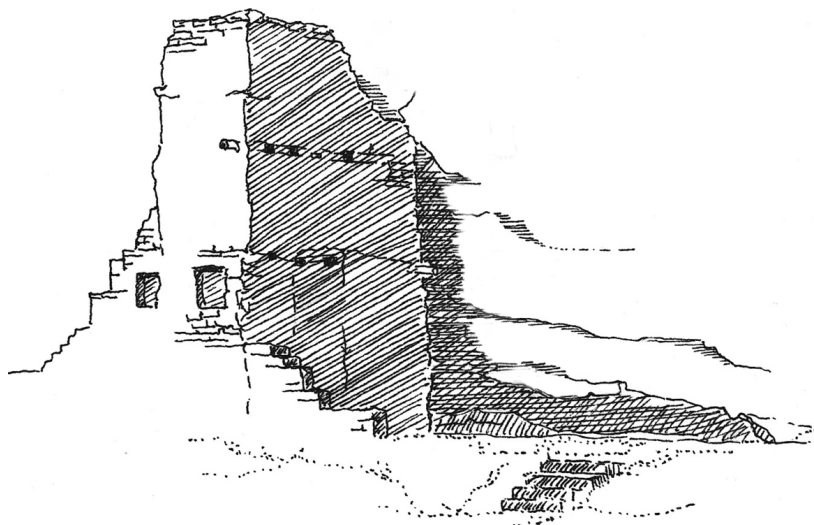
A short walk brings us to Twin Trails at the lip of Canyon del Muerto, north arm of the Canyon de Chelly system. Kelvin leads the way down. It's about 700 feet to the bottom. We don't talk much. A dog barking at the rim pierces the enclosing silence. The sound echoes down the canyon like the reverb on an electric guitar.

Now at the bottom, our senses come alive to this place. The canyon floor is wide and spacious, two miles across here where several minor canyons converge. The gurgle of running water bounces off the cliffs and fills the canyon and the spaces between thoughts. The smell of plowed earth sweetens the air. A big cottonwood lounges near the creek, fields crowd on either side. The creek drills down 10 feet below the valley floor along this stretch.

We walk down the canyon, sometimes following the stream, sometimes leaving it to skirt a field.

Kelvin pauses near a hogan, the traditional Navajo dwelling. This one is round, made from logs and sun-dried mud. Kelvin tells us that this is a female hogan. In contrast, the male hogan is built with a forked log and shaped like a tipi—but made of earth and stones instead of poles and animal skins like the tipis of the Great Plains.

The doorway in the female hogans, the round ones, always faces the east, he continues. This physical shape and orientation represent arrival on three different levels of reality: the emergence of the People into this, the fourth world; the individual's birth from his mother; and the birth of the day. Each morning one goes



out this door to greet the rising sun and give thanks for being born again to a new day.

It must be very stabilizing to have cosmology, geography, ancestry, architecture and daily ritual so interwoven. I get a glimpse of the rootedness of which Margaret spoke.

Still, there are many forces pulling against the stability of the old ways. It is hard to see how they will survive against the assault of the majority culture and its pervasive media. Like Christian fundamentalism, the old ways seem to be locked into a literalism, in this case specific cultural and historical associations with the landscape.

But these worries may represent only

my own European-based misunderstanding of the significance of land in Native American cultures. Margaret and Kelvin came back, despite the saturating propaganda of the majority media with its commitment to an alien cosmology and utilitarian values. Moreover, a sustained and dedicated intimacy with certain landscapes has brought some people of European ancestry full circle to an insight common to the native peoples living here when the Europeans first arrived: That the land is not merely commodity, not something only to be possessed and mined for its wealth. Not something merely to be carved up and "developed" willy nilly.

That it is alive and conscious. That it is possible, even for us,

*to approach [it] with an uncalculating mind, with an attitude of regard. To try to sense the range and variety of its expression—its weather and colors and animals. To intend from the beginning to preserve some of the mystery within it as a kind of wisdom to be experienced, not questioned. And to be alert for its openings, for that moment when*

*something sacred reveals itself within the mundane, and you know the land knows you are there.<sup>1</sup>*

Kelvin may have traced his own full circle by returning. He was born into the old ways. When he was 18, he was paralyzed in an accident with a horse he was trying to break. He found himself in a wheelchair for six months, his legs a useless dead weight. I try to imagine this quiet, wiry man confined to a wheelchair at the height of youthful exuberance.

The feeling in his legs began to come back to him only after many healing ceremonies. We are listening to someone for whom the ceremonials of the old way are a matter of walking or not walking.



And a matter of ancestry. Kelvin's grandfather was a medicine man, one of the practitioners of those ceremonials. The knowledge of a medicine man is ordinarily passed down within the family, he tells us. If none in the family takes it up, it dies. Neither Kelvin's father nor his uncle wanted to follow the medicine way. His grandfather started teaching him the knowledge, but did not complete it before he died.

Now Kelvin is the Walking Guide, preferring his legs to the jeep or horseback tours that many other guides prefer. Easily he outpaces Karen and me.

As we walk down the dirt road beside the wash, Oscar drives up in his pickup and stops for a chat. An old woman in a faded dress sits beside him in the passenger seat. Oscar and Kelvin converse in Navajo. I watch the woman's face. A singular beauty of old age lies there, lining her face with dignity, humility, gentleness, humor.

Then she smiles.

Did I see the sacred in Canyon de Chelly? Unmasked from that old face, a heart-stunning lightning flashes out for a moment from that smile! It's as if a momentary crack in the earth released such an intense pulse of unselfconscious joy that you know there must be an immense

reservoir of grace back there waiting for an opening. Or for a fleeting instant you were simply seeing through the veil to the inexhaustible well of calm, natural radiance that must underlie everything.

Having used dramatic terms like lightning and immense trying to describe it, I must say once again that outwardly it was "just" a smile, not even a broad and sustained smile. I don't think she was even looking at us. Karen and I were the only

witnesses. Nobody else noticed. The surface layers of my being didn't notice immediately either. Something inside did, and then it was gone.

Still I say that, surrounded by magnificent cliffs of glowing sandstone with ancient Anasazi ruins around every bend, we were treated to the glance of grace from a wrinkled, 80-year-old face framed in the window of a weathered pickup.

Then they were gone around the bend in the road, and we are walking again. I speculate that she was Oscar's grandmother.

We don't get to see Kelvin's grandmother, but he talks about her. She is 97. She has been tending sheep and cornfields here for nearly a century. Kelvin tells us that her mother was pregnant with her on the long walk from Fort Sumner in New Mexico back to Navajo country when the government in Washington finally allowed the People to return home.<sup>2</sup> He says that he and his brother visited the

cliff dwellings when they explored the canyons as boys. The People say that touching the ruins is bad for you, he explains. You could get arthritis or another sickness later if you put your hand in one of the Anasazi hand prints on the walls or handle the broken pottery still lying on the ground in the cliff dwellings. But the two brothers did it anyway. They explored all of the ruins. Kelvin points to an example, a water tank hidden in a

stone shelf above Ledge Ruin. And she always knew where they had been. "How did you know?" they asked her. "Do you follow us?"

Kelvin smiles.

"What did she answer?" I ask him.

"She didn't say anything. She just said, 'I know.'"

Like yesterday, this is a stories walk. Everywhere there are stories, practically echoing off the walls. We pass fortresses where they made last stands or ambushed

their enemies. Kelvin says that many of the goods and skills of the Navajo culture came from this canyon. The stories say that someone planted some seeds found in one of the ruins, and that's how the People got corn. Almost every turn in the canyon has a story. I can see how the people would die if they could not live here in the midst of their stories. Their links would start to dissolve and break. Isn't it the stories that hold a group of people together, the remembered experiences that carry the group meaning?

Kelvin tells us that when a Navajo has trouble, he may come into the canyon to be alone for a while and to try to get answers. Some people say it is the spirits of the Anasazi people that give this help.

Some come here for answers and stay.

We are walking along a wide green field just up-canyon from Antelope Ruin. The man who owns this field lives in the canyon year round. Most residents live here spring and summer only. Kelvin says that man started living down here when his wife left him. Today, however, he doesn't seem troubled or alone at all. He jokes with Kelvin. He grew up with Kelvin's father and likes to tease his friend's son. The young women and children with the jewelry and snacks for sale near the ruins are his children and grandchildren.

We stop for lunch. A girl of seven or eight rides her tricycle over to a cottonwood stump serving as a jewelry display and chats with us for a while. Abundant black hair sets off a round face and clear, smooth skin. Her English is very clear and easy, like a first language. Karen buys a juniper seed necklace that they say wards off bad dreams.

After lunch, Kelvin and I talk quietly while Karen draws Antelope Ruin, a prominent cliff dwelling three stories high. A massive inward-slanting cliff of coral sandstone hangs over it. That cliff must be flaking continually, because there are few water stains on it.

Hazy clouds filter the sun. Voices and laughter from the vendors echo off the wall above the ruin. Across the stream a Ford pickup sits under three big cotton-





woods. The wind picks up. Three more large cottonwoods a little way down canyon shake their leaves.

We move on, too. Kelvin sets a brisk pace. There is not much time for lingering and absorbing. I lag behind. Sometimes I look up from the Navajo dream to listen for the singing walls of the canyon. As before, the walls and trees and sky leap into clarity and that overhead consciousness seeps through the cracks in my thought. Some of the cliffs chant skyward, like the palisades of Zion. But one long dark-stained cliff over an emerald field has a deeper rumble. It is more like a mother chant—here am I—than an aspiration arising to somewhere beyond.

Here: to be always surrounded by containing walls framing a slash of sapphire sky. Those vast sandstone scarps that sweep up toward sun and stars in coral curves from ruins nested on a ledge. Cottonwood leaves rattling and shimmering in the breeze. Groves of fruit trees. Tracks of bear, deer, beaver, and raccoon pressed into wet sand beside the stream. The ripple-prints of the water on the stream bottom—the dark red-brown washes of fine silt settle between wavy tan ridges in an inch of water that sometimes stretches from wall to wall in the lower canyon.

There must be Navajo people who also hear this singing. Maybe that is one thing that draws them to this place. Maybe that is one of the teachings that Kelvin's grandfather gave him before he died. Byrd Baylor offered it to the children of the world when she wrote *The Other Way to Listen*.

*All I can say is it came straight up  
from those dark shiny lava rocks humming.  
It moved around like wind.*

*It seemed to be the oldest sound in  
the world.<sup>3</sup>*

## Space Between the Rocks

### Monument Valley

Yesterday Karen and I arranged for an afternoon jeep tour of this famous valley.

Anyone who has seen early John Wayne Western films would recognize it instantly. It has taken on a separate life in the celluloid imagination as an icon of the American West.

It is also a Navajo Tribal Park. The Diné live here. Some of them call it the "Space between the Rocks."

Paul is our guide for this trip. He pulls up to the visitor center in a weathered blue jeep. At 51 he is already white-haired. He gets out and comes around to the other side of the vehicle to open the door for Karen. He is about five foot eight, slim wiry build, sparse mustache like Kelvin. We climb in and introduce ourselves and our hopes for the tour.

"This is our first time here. We'd like to spend some quiet time in out-of-the-way places listening to the rhythms of the cliffs."

He looks at the camera. "You want good place for pictures?"

"Maybe a few, but we are more interested in absorbing the feeling of the place than in taking pictures."

He is quiet for a moment until he notices Karen's sketch pad.

She holds it up. "I'd like to stop some places with interesting things to sketch." She laughs. "Just about anywhere you turn here."

Paul wants to see the drawings in her pad. He speaks English softly, with effort, more in phrases than sentences. Looking through the drawings, he nods. He tells us that he grew up here and has spent most of his life here. As a boy he herded sheep at his sister's place in the valley. He waves a hand toward the west.

Bouncing over a sandy track, we wind past towers, battleships, and castles of sandstone that dwarf the jeep and humble the imagination. We must have time-traveled to the ruins of some prehistoric civilization of gods. The Diné also see the mythic figures of their origins in these fairy tale fortresses of stone.

Our first stop is Thunderbird Butte, its vertical face of black and orange. It roars. Behind it the desert floor alternates between mounds of wind-rippled sand and masses of yellow wildflowers singing the bounty of a wet spring all the way to the horizon.

Amazing things come out of the dried mud and gold sand at Eye of the Sun Arch. One fleshy green-stemmed plant sprouts six-inch blue leaves coated with a white film. Older leaves shade gradually into green. The cracked mud below the opening in the arch high above us tells of a waterfall that comes to life only during a hard rain.

With so much touring and movie history here, I'm hard pressed to sense anything else, even from the Eye of the Sun. This land is hard—hot, parched, and unforgiving. There must be sacred places here, I tell myself. Maybe you need more than a four-hour jeep tour to recognize them. No doubt the sacred voices do not come easily to the Diné either. And why would the Navajo Nation want to open up its sacred places to tourists anyway?

Paul doesn't ask much of us, only a bit of imagination. With a twinkle, he nods toward a long, sloping butte ahead. "Sleeping dragon," he murmurs. Karen sees it first; the contours of the butte resolve into the massive back, sloping neck, and finally the monster's head resting on the sand.

The sun warms my back. A breeze cruises in from the west. Filmy cirrus soften a cobalt sky. When I ask the question, consciousness rises and widens, plants glow more richly in the afternoon sun, but nothing intimate appears. I feel impatient for it. Paul, however, is quietly scanning a flock of sheep strung out in the shade of Sleeping Dragon Butte.

"They belong to Susie."

We watch for a while in silence. A lone sheep dog follows them, ears alert, tail flicking. The ewe in the lead has a lamb back at the corral, Paul offers. They went to Sand Springs this morning and are nibbling their way back to Susie's place. The water at Susie's place and the lamb waiting there are pulling that lead ewe like a magnet. Paul looks for the ram with 4 horns. He seems to know each one individually.

Back in the jeep we snake deeper into the monumental landscape. One can easily imagine walking among the pyramids and monuments of Egypt. Navajo stories tell of holy dancer monoliths that hold up the sky and warriors frozen into stone towers.



Karen has taken out the camera, and Paul stops the jeep at likely viewpoints. At one stop a big, black-stained mesa looms on the left. Two more mesas pause on the right, huge ships of sandstone with a sandy gap caught between them. Straight ahead another opening reveals more of the valley behind these nearby formations. Massive domes and arches form a border at the far end, and pinnacles reach up to the tableland beyond. A bank of clouds leans down to the tableland with the sun's late rays catching the rain falling from them. Sun and clouds alternately silhouette and set afire the spires and red cliffs as the afternoon fades into twilight.

In three days of walking and riding with native guides, we had no reasonable expectation of understanding the Navajo view of Canyon de Chelly or Monument Valley. We don't understand the technicalities and intricacies of the geological story either. Still, it's clear that they are very different tales of the same landscape. The story of geology has no concept of the sacred and no room for the other way of listening suggested by some of the Navajo stories that we heard or by the singing cliffs themselves. Instead of the Native American perception of the land as the living, conscious repository of power to be revered, it describes a complex puzzle of purely mechanical, time-bound, physical processes to be solved. And the cultural tension between the two ways of understanding is growing as the RVs and televisions born of the Western story reach deeper into the backwaters of the Indian lands.

Karen and I would see this tension in the face of a young Pueblo mother at Taos a week later. After a tour of the Pueblo compound, we were buying a tape of Indian chanting recorded by the woman's father when Karen burst into tears. The music viscerally summoned Karen's own Indian heritage and created a sudden bridge across the cultural divide. Together the three of us wondered how the old ways, preserved for 500 years against the most violent and repressive European intrusions, would survive the next century. This mother sends her children to a

public school in town so that they can enjoy the advantages of the majority culture as adults. They want the Big Macs, Barbie dolls, and cell phones, evoked in sensuous visions and captivating rhythms by the media wizards of the majority culture, as the natural and obvious rewards of modern life. Who will make sense for these children of the clashing values and practices of these two different cultures that they are internalizing by living in both?

As we said goodbye to her, an anguished look came over her face. "Don't forget us!" she cried fervently as we turned to leave the reservation compound. "Don't forget us!" Karen called back as we crossed back into the other culture.

### The yearning

When we left the Navajo Reservation, I tried to assess our journey so far. Despite our normal distance from the Navajo culture, we felt a palpable immersion into a different way during our three days with Navajo guides. They led us gently to the doors of their story of the land. We were free to listen and learn and dig deeper if we would. And all three of our guides had an earthy authenticity to them. They were quiet men, no attempt to get us excited or impress us that I could see. They seemed willing to share something of what they knew and saw and then to let the land speak for itself.

Did we find the sacred in Navajoland?

A sacred place is a refuge, a place that puts one into alignment, one's outside surface with something precious and lasting inside. A place that opens the heart and makes seeing and compassion more accessible. It leans toward the mystical experience, the recovery of that which was lost when we came here. It is an intrusion into the present of the past and the future, of where we came from and where we are going. It calls the soul to the surface of the personality.

Many Native Americans in this area still believe in the sacredness of the land. Still there has been a dichotomy between my idea and my experience. Although there have been hints and eruptions of the sacred in this land, it remains the ex-

ception, the culmination rather than the everyday experience for us. It remains a discipline, an effort, mainly out of reach, even in these extraordinary settings.

And the settings can be a two-edged sword. I remembered an evening walk out to Bright Angel Point on the north rim of the Grand Canyon under a full moon. The path from the rim to the point balances on a knife's edge of land, with abysmal drop-offs on either side. The air was cold but still. I ventured a look over the edge and recoiled. One slip and you are in the abyss. You are the abyss, a tiny blackness, one clump of broken matter among millions on its sides or bottom. You are part of this abyss, this vastness, but your precious "I" is gone.

There must be some other way. So you defend yourself from the vastness. You look away from the edge, you back away. It's that or me. The separateness remains.

People walk up the Bright Angel Trail from the bottom of the Grand Canyon talking about computer glitches in the office or the pizza they ate last week in town! The grandeur becomes the background. The promise of the sacred recedes. Ordinarity comes to the foreground as a relief and a protection.

But then the sun turns the failing sky into a molten call and a promise of something more, some glory to come. And the promise reaches inside and draws me back, over and over. I can't stay away. I yearn for it when I am back "safe" in the dream of Western city life.

Evidently many other people yearn for it—the vastness, the trail of the Other through the forests and canyons, the deep singing simplicity of stone cliffs and mountains. We headed for Taos, New Mexico, where we began to look to these other voices to deepen our own.

### References and Notes

1. B. H. Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, p. 228.
2. The Navajo returned from Fort Sumner in 1868, so perhaps it was another generation back.
3. B. Baylor and P. Parnell, *The Other Way to Listen*, p. 26.



# The composition of Savitri

by Richard Hartz

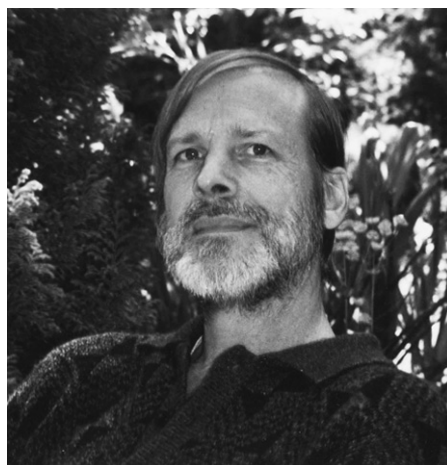
*Author's note: This study of the process of Sri Aurobindo's writing of Savitri began to appear in Mother India: Monthly Review of Culture in October 1999. Its publication continued without interruption for fifty instalments. In November 2003, due to the pressure of other work, the writer was compelled to suspend the series for the time being. These articles were intended in the beginning to be merely a rewritten presentation of a talk given at the Savitri Bhavan, Auroville, on 15 November 1998. Initially it was thought that the substance of that talk might be expanded into three or four articles. However, it was gradually found that the subject deserved a deeper and more extensive treatment. Being written serially, month by month, the plan as well as the scope of the study underwent considerable changes which had not been foreseen at the outset. At present it is not known when it will be resumed or how long it will take to complete.*

*Editor's note: The present version has been abbreviated and rearranged based on the longer version which appeared in Mother India. Part 1, presented in the previous issue of Collaboration, gave an overview of the composition of Savitri. It was essentially the same as that published in Mother India at the start of the series. Part 2, which is presented in this issue, discusses in greater depth and detail the composition of books 3-12. It has been compiled by the editor of Collaboration from a selection of material in the original series of articles.*

## Part 2 The composition of individual books

### Book Three: The Book of the Divine Mother

The power that can transform life and conquer death is embodied in Savitri, the



heroine of Sri Aurobindo's epic, who in Book Ten reveals herself as an incarnation of the Divine Mother and achieves the work for which she was born. But in early versions of the poem, there was nothing corresponding to the passage that now forms the last half of Book Ten. This passage was written in 1947 and contains an explicit description of the planes from Higher Mind to Overmind and Supermind. It is based, therefore, on a knowledge that goes beyond what Sri Aurobindo had realised when he began to write *Savitri*.

According to his own statement, he had not distinguished Supermind from Overmind when he was publishing the *Arya*. (*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, p. 145) A study of the revision of *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* confirms that the references to Overmind occur in passages that were revised or newly written in the 1930s and 1940s. Though much was said about "supermind" in the *Arya*, the meaning of this word there was not exactly the same as what it later came to signify in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, where it is considered essential to differentiate it clearly from other planes beyond the mind up to Overmind. Sri Aurobindo clarified that the true Supermind, as he knew it by the 1930s, is "quite above" (*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, p. 144) what was described in the *Arya* and did "not enter into the scheme" (*Savitri*, p. 729) of the first versions of *Savitri*.

This calls for further discussion in relation to the composition of Part One. For in the passages that developed into Part

One, Sri Aurobindo began to introduce Overmind and Supermind—the former by name, the latter without using the word—in the late 1920s, long before he described these planes in Book Ten.

Sri Aurobindo realised progressively the nature of the power that could effect the transformation he intended to symbolise in *Savitri*. To see how his revision reflects the development of his realisation is undoubtedly the most interesting aspect of a study of the composition of the poem. Nowhere is the revision more significant than in the process that led to the creation of Book Three, "The Book of the Divine Mother." This and other revision of Part One fills in the long gap between the first and last phases of Sri Aurobindo's work on the later books of *Savitri*.

The consciousness and force that descend into a human form in Savitri and act through her at the decisive moment evidently belong to the world reached by Aswapati at the end of his untiring search for "the almighty source of cosmic change." (*Savitri*, p. 298) In the final version, it seems clear that this world must be the supramental, though the word "Supermind" does not occur in "The Book of the Divine Mother." It is because Aswapati establishes an initial contact between human nature and the supramental Light and Force that Savitri, incarnating that Light and Force, can cancel the decree of Death and change man's destiny by the intervention of a higher principle in earthly life.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, each step forward in evolution is accomplished "by two co operating forces, an upward tending force from below, an upward drawing and downward pressing force from above" (*The Life Divine*, p. 821). In the passage from mind to supermind, unlike the previous evolutionary transitions, the interaction of these two forces can become entirely conscious. In the symbolism of *Savitri* it is primarily Aswapati, "the traveller of the upward Way" (p. 210), who represents the aspiring movement. Near the summit of his ascent he has the vision of the Divine Mother, whose "upward-drawing and downward-pressing force" has sustained him all along. For she is



The magnet of our difficult ascent,...  
The Might of all that never yet came  
down. (*Savitri*, p. 314)

The first appearance of lines for what eventually became Book Three, Canto Two, "The Adoration of the Divine Mother," from which I have just quoted, can be dated 1927, based on its relationship to drafts in another notebook which Sri Aurobindo used in that year for *The Mother* and other writings. In view of its date, one might expect it to show signs of the results of Sri Aurobindo's intensive sadhana in the early 1920s which culminated in his Siddhi on 24 November 1926. A study of the revision marked on the page reproduced here does suggest that a new element was making its entry into *Savitri* at this time.

*Savitri* looks towards the future, though its story is set in the distant past. It is concerned with the destiny of all mankind, though it has a small cast of characters and its main events seem to take place in remote isolation from the human world. But the cosmic scope of Sri Aurobindo's conception emerged gradually. It was only after 1926 that this poem began to occupy the central place among his works as the vehicle of his highest realisations and most prophetic visions.

"The House of the Spirit and the New Creation" is among the most important cantos in this respect. Here the Yoga of Aswapati ceases altogether to be an individual sadhana and becomes a quest for the manifestation of a new world. The middle sections of this canto began to take shape in the late 1920s. Along with other revision of what grew into the present Book Three, these passages gave a more far-reaching significance to *Savitri*'s birth and mission in fulfilment of the Divine Mother's boon to Aswapati. This change would be reflected in Sri Aurobindo's rewriting of the later books of the epic when he eventually returned to them in the 1940s.

After Aswapati has the vision of the Divine Mother "as in a thunder flash of God" (*Savitri*, p. 315; Book Three, Canto Two), he undergoes a "last and mightiest transformation" in the first section of the next canto (p. 318). His sense of separate being is abolished, even his physical consciousness is universalised and he is prepared to experience the supramental consciousness.

In the third and fourth sections of Book Three, Canto Three, Sri Aurobindo describes what we can understand to be the future supramental creation. It is called "a world to be" (p. 330), indicating that from a temporal standpoint it is in the future. In another sense we must take it to be already in existence, "eternal in unrealised Time" (*Savitri*, p. 46), otherwise Sri Aurobindo as Aswapati could

*In the third and fourth sections of book Three, Canto Three, Sri Aurobindo describes what we can understand to be the future supramental creation. It is called "a world to be" (p. 330), indicating that from a temporal standpoint it is in the future.*

not have participated in its tremendous movements which are evoked with such an overwhelming sense of reality. Neither the word "supermind" nor its equivalent "gnosis" occurs in Book Three, though a "vast Truth Consciousness" (p. 326) is referred to. But nothing short of the supramental can be meant by lines such as these:

Incalculable outflowing infinitudes  
Laughing out an unmeasured  
happiness  
Lived their innumerable unity....  
(p. 323)

According to Sri Aurobindo, infinity is the very stuff of the supramental consciousness, whose nature is an inalienable unity expressed in illimitable diversity. Thus it differs in a subtle but important way from overmind,

for the overmind knows the One as the support, essence, fundamental power of all things, but in the dynamic play proper to it it lays emphasis on its divisional power of multiplicity....  
(*Letters on Yoga I*, p. 139)

Close parallels can be found if one compares passages about the supermind in Sri Aurobindo's later writings with lines depicting the "new and marvellous creation" in Book Three, Canto Three of *Savitri*.

In the penultimate chapter of *The Life Divine*, for instance, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the inseparable relation in the supermind between what to the mind are pairs of opposites, such as oneness and diversity:

Our mental rendering of oneness  
brings into it the rule of sameness;...  
but the greatest richness of diversity in the self expression of oneness would be the law of the gnostic life. (p. 1046)

Evidently, it is to this characteristic of the supramental or gnostic existence

that Sri Aurobindo refers in these lines in *Savitri*:

There Oneness was not tied to  
monotone;  
It showed a thousand aspects of  
itself.... (p. 324)

Similarly, the supramental relation between the individual being and the totality is captured in a concise formula in *Savitri*:

Each soleness inexpressibly held the  
whole. (p. 324)

Sri Aurobindo elaborates on this in *The Life Divine*:

The gnostic existence and delight of existence is a universal and total being and delight, and there will be the



presence of that totality and universality in each separate movement: in each there will be, not a partial experience of self or a fractional bit of its joy, but the sense of the whole movement of an integral being and the presence of its entire and integral bliss of being, Ananda. (p. 1012)

The “sense of the whole movement of an integral being” in each apparently separate person is expressed in the same passage in *Savitri* where Sri Aurobindo says that “all were being’s secret integers” (p. 324) and that each

Recognised in himself the universe.  
(p. 323)

The presence of an “entire and integral bliss of being” in every individual is likewise conveyed in the most vivid possible terms:

A splendid centre of infinity’s whirl  
Pushed to its zenith’s height, its last  
expanse,  
Felt the divinity of its own self bliss  
Repeated in its numberless other  
selves.... (p. 323)

In the final version of *Savitri*, this description of the supramental consciousness and supramental creation, including mind, life and matter in their supramentalised forms, is the culmination of Aswapati’s ascent through the planes of being. However, this passage began to appear in the manuscripts of the poem at a stage when there was almost no hint of what is now “The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds.” Though “The Book of the Divine Mother” is the shortest book in Part One, it is the most essential of the first three books both for the story and for the deeper meaning of the epic. The passages that constitute it were among the first to receive Sri Aurobindo’s concentrated attention when he came back to *Savitri* after 1926 and began to express through it some glimpses, at least, of the highest knowledge he had attained, so far as that was possible through the medium of human speech.

In Book Three, Canto Three of *Savitri*, Aswapati has experienced the supramental world whose descent must one day transform life on earth. But the actualities of the material world contrast starkly with the Truth-creation that has to manifest here. There is a hiatus between the two, a gulf between what is and what must be, that seems unbridgeable. Only the heart’s faith can persist in believing that this darkened world could change into an image of that luminous one in the not too distant future.

In the next canto, the Being whom Aswapati has glimpsed on the spiritual summits as the universal Mother appears and speaks in the chambers of his heart. She asks him to go on helping the world with his “great lonely days” and to live for “the slow-paced omniscient purpose.” (pp. 335-336) But she seems to discourage, at least initially, the hope of an early victory of the Spirit over the opposing forces. It is only in response to Aswapati’s impassioned plea that she consents to incarnate her force for an action that will “change all future time.” (p. 345)

In Sri Aurobindo’s symbolic interpretation of the legend of *Savitri* and Satyavan, the boon given to Aswapati comes to represent the direct intervention of the supramental Force to accelerate the advent of a divine life on earth. But this can be granted only when the psychic presence in the human heart can invoke it with a sincerity and intensity which show that the time has come for a higher working to begin.

Sri Aurobindo’s early typescript of “Book I: Quest” shows how the Goddess’ speech took shape during the period up to 1920. There it began:

“O son of Fire who climbst to me  
from Time,  
Armed with my light return to being’s fields  
And bear desire the troubled seed of things....

The first line later became

“O Son of Strength who climbst creation’s peaks,

while the idea of the second line has been preserved near the end of the speech:

My light shall be in thee, my strength  
thy force.

The line about desire has also been shifted to the conclusion of the speech, but with a significant change to the past tense which was made when Sri Aurobindo inserted, a few pages earlier, the lines:

Then lest a human cry should spoil  
her Truth,  
He plucked desire up from its tortured roots  
And offered to the Gods the vacant place.

Aswapati is now ready for an untroubled desireless action under a divine impulsion. His spirit when it came into the world had “housed desire, the troubled seed of things,” since this was an inevitable consequence of accepting a human body. But the Karmayogi finally transcends the need for desire as a motive-force. Aswapati is asked to exemplify this higher possibility when he returns to action in the world.

The longest part of the Goddess’ speech was already, in the early typescript, a commentary on man’s enigmatic position and challenging role in the immensity of an unconscious universe. Eventually this passage would grow to several pages. In its present form it leads up to the prospect of the splendid destiny that awaits our afflicted humanity. But it also dwells strongly on the factors responsible for the slow pace at which the hidden purpose in things is worked out.

If one were to search for a single line that sums up the meaning of *Savitri*, a possible choice might be a line in Book Three, Canto Two, where Sri Aurobindo uses one of those “symbols more veridical than fact” (*Savitri*, p. 30) with which *Savitri* abounds—the dragon:

Alone her hands can change Time’s  
dragon base. (p. 314)



The inner significance of Savitri's victory over Death is the descent of the supramental Force into Matter to transform the Inconscient and give "a secured basis for a continuous divine or gnostic evolution" (*The Life Divine*, p. 989), the consummation foreshadowed in Book Eleven. From 1926 onwards, Sri Aurobindo strongly emphasised the role of an incarnation of the divine Shakti in bringing this about. The fact that Savitri could be represented as such an incarnation partly explains why a poem that had been a relatively minor work up to 1920 was growing by the 1930s into his magnum opus.

Sri Aurobindo first inserted the above line in the late 1920s or early 1930s in his fifth version of what was then "The Book of Birth." The words "dragon base" relate it unmistakably to two lines in the sentence in Book Three, Canto Four, whose origin at a slightly earlier stage in the composition of *Savitri* we have already discussed. In the final text, these lines read:

The Dragon of the dark foundations  
keeps  
Unalterable the law of Chance and  
Death.... (p. 336)

We have seen the connection between these lines and a phrase in an entry in Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga* on 27 January 1927: "the Dragon of the nether foundations who preserves the old Law intact till the will of the Supreme is manifested." (*Record of Yoga*, p. 1261) Another sentence in the same entry sheds light on what is meant by the Sphinx, Dragon, Rock and Night, mentioning the "four Powers that resisted" in that order without employing the symbols:

The attack of obscurity, resistance of the universal inconscience, refusal of the universal inertia, obstruction and conservatism of the material negation are beginning to lessen and even

where they persist and intervene, cannot resist the progress. The past effects may still continue for a time, the future is not theirs. (p. 1261)

But in spite of his certainty that the forces of darkness could not prevail against the growing light, Sri Aurobindo's struggle with these forces was far from over. Indeed, it would intensify when he began to cross the line between overmind and supermind.

For the integral power of the supermind could not be content with a circumscribed spiritual creation in a world left otherwise to its ignorance and misery. The very basis of material existence had to be transformed—the "dragon base" of the in-

*The record of Sri Aurobindo's contact with the lower extreme of the spectrum of consciousness is no less significant than the revelation of the supernal planes he had reached in the ascending movement of his Yoga.*

conscience. Sri Aurobindo found himself before long in the situation he described in 1936:

No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy: I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of things; it is in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two. But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it. (*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, p. 360)

The Dragon and the Sphinx are two of the ominous creatures of the Abyss that start to appear in various passages of *Savitri* during this period. The record of Sri Aurobindo's contact with the lower extreme of the spectrum of consciousness is no less significant than the revelation of the supernal planes he had reached in the ascending movement of his Yoga. For the nature of his work on earth left him little leisure for basking in the glory of the supramental Sun. Aswapati and Savitri alike

must descend into Night and journey into the black Void for the accomplishment of their mission.

The "Dragon of the dark foundations" is evidently the Vedic Vritra, "the personification of the Inconscient." (*The Secret of the Veda*, p. 322) In *The Life Divine*, in a passage not found in the *Arya* but added by Sri Aurobindo when he revised the book for the first edition published in 1939-40, we come across the image of the dragon in a passage that speaks of the Inconscient as the apparent foundation of mind, life and matter:

All these three lower powers of being build upon the Inconscient and seem to be originated and supported by

it: the black dragon of the Inconscience sustains with its vast wings and its back of darkness the whole structure of the material universe; its energies unroll the flux of things, its obscure intimations

seem to be the starting-point of consciousness itself and the source of all life-impulse. (p. 692)

In *Savitri* as well, in lines that make their first appearance in the late 1930s, it is said clearly enough that the dragon is a symbol of the Inconscient:

Opponent of that glory of escape,  
The black Inconscient swung its  
dragon tail  
Lashing a slumbrous Infinite by its  
force  
Into the deep obscurities of form....  
(p. 79)

In the last two lines, the "inert Soul" and "somnambulist Force" that are mentioned along with the Dragon in Book Three, Canto Four, appear as a "slumbrous Infinite" and a creative force of the Inconscient such as is described in *The Life Divine*, whose blind energies "unroll the flux of things."



In 1946 Sri Aurobindo introduced the dragon at the end of the opening section of Book Ten. This passage shows the persistence of the Inconscient as a disturbing background even after the realm of eternal Night, partially conquered by the light of mind and spirit, has made room for the “dream twilight of the ideal.” The final version runs:

But on a failing edge of dumb lost  
space  
Still a great dragon body sullenly  
loomed;  
Adversary of the slow struggling  
Dawn  
Defending its ground of tortured  
mystery,  
It trailed its coils through the dead  
martyred air  
And curving fled down a grey slope  
of Time. (p. 601)

The sullenness of the dragon and its “tortured mystery” suggest not only a negation of consciousness, but a perversion of the intrinsic delight of being. Since consciousness and bliss are inseparable aspects of Sachchidananda, we may conjecture that the black dragon of the Inconscient is also the inverse of

The white fire dragon bird of endless  
bliss (p. 16)<sup>1</sup>

who is Savitri’s “playmate in the sempiternal spheres.” Its role as the guardian of “the law of Chance and Death” may be explained on this hypothesis as due to a tamasic rasa in the mindless repetition of the established habits of world-force. Perhaps this also gives a clue to what we can expect “Time’s dragon base” to be changed into, when the transfiguring touch of the Divine Mother’s hands restores it to its true and original nature and Time becomes

The quivering of the spirit’s endless  
bliss. (p. 684)

But the comparatively few explicit mentions of the dragon in *Savitri* give only a faint idea of how the idea so symbolised

grew in importance as Sri Aurobindo continued to work on the poem from the late 1920s onwards. In the early manuscripts up to 1920, despite the vividness of the canto or book called “Night” and the power of many passages in Savitri’s debate with Death, there was as yet no mention of “the Inconscient;” only as an adjective did the word “inconscient” occur a few times. In the final text of the epic, on the other hand, there are several dozen references to “the Inconscient.”

In a letter of 1946, Sri Aurobindo commented on such repetition of “key ideas, key images and symbols, key words or phrases” (*Savitri*, p. 742), defending it as part of the technique of mystic poetry in general and *Savitri* in particular. Admitting that to the ordinary mind the Inconscient and the Ignorance “may be mere empty abstractions” and acknowledging that these terms “can be dismissed as irrelevant jargon if one has not come into collision with them or plunged into their dark and bottomless reality,” Sri Aurobindo pointed out that to him these things were “realities, concrete powers whose resistance is present everywhere and at all times in its tremendous and boundless mass.” (*Savitri*, p. 737)

This being his constant experience, it is not surprising that by the early 1940s we find it expressed in unambiguous terms in *Savitri*. The following lines are all found in the 1944 manuscript of Part One. In the last three lines, which were introduced a little later than the others, Sri Aurobindo does not speak of Aswapati but shifts to the first person. Here one feels the appalling difficulty of the task he had undertaken. The coils of the dragon seem to sprawl interminably, as if darkly imitating the infinitude of the divine Consciousness itself:

In the texture of our bound human-  
ity  
He felt the stark resistance huge and  
dumb  
Of our inconscient and unseeing  
base....  
For the Inconscient too is infinite;  
The more its abysses we insist to  
sound,

The more it stretches, stretches end-  
lessly. (pp. 317-318)

## Book Four: The Book of Birth and Quest

The story of the composition of Part Two, Books Four and Five is related to the history of Part One. The first five books grew out of the canto called “Love” with which early versions of *Savitri* began when it consisted of six cantos. The opening passage of that canto, a prologue to the birth of Savitri, was the seed of Part One. As we have seen, the development of this short passage into the first three books occupied Sri Aurobindo for many years. Meanwhile most of the later books lay dormant. But the rest of the original first canto, and especially the passages that turned into Book Four, shared in the process through which Part One took shape from the late 1920s to the mid 1940s.

The present Part One was designated as such only at an advanced stage, when *Savitri* was divided into three parts. Until the early 1940s there were two parts, “Earth” and “Beyond”, the first of which extended to “The Book of Death.” Book One eventually turned into Part One of a three part scheme. The rest of “Earth” became Part Two, while “Beyond” became Part Three. But for a long time, even Book One included portions of the present Part Two.

When Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1934 that he was “concentrating on the first book and working on it over and over again,” the “first book” was “The Book of Birth.” As this title suggests, it included much that is now in “The Book of Birth and Quest.” Only the description of Savitri’s “quest,” now the last canto of Book Four, was then part of “The Book of Love.”

Earlier, the first book had been called “Quest” and extended to the end of the present Book Four, or even beyond to Savitri’s arrival at the destined meeting-place. Several complete drafts of “Quest” and “The Book of Birth” are found among the *Savitri* manuscripts of the late 1920s and early 1930s. During most of this period, there is no sign of the other books, except “The Book of Love.”



By the late 1930s, the sections on Aswapati had grown out of proportion to the rest of “The Book of Birth.” A rearrangement was needed, and Book One became “The Book of Beginnings.” At this point, “The Book of Birth and Quest” came into existence as Book Two in the scheme of the poem. Sri Aurobindo referred to it by this name in 1937, but he does not appear to have worked on it at that time.

The last to be set aside, this was the first of the later books to be taken up again. In the notebook that contains the 1942 version of “The Book of Beginnings,” we find a complete version of “The Book of Birth and Quest,” with four sections corresponding to the present cantos. There is also a fragment of a third book, “The Book of Love and Fate.”

In 1943, “The Book of Beginnings” was divided into the three books that now form Part One. “The Book of Birth and Quest” thus became the fourth book. Sri Aurobindo wrote out a complete version of it, which he later revised by dictation. Typed copies of the revised manuscript received further dictated revision. The separate cantos of Book Four were first published in instalments in the quarterly *The Advent*, beginning in April 1950.

### Book Five: The Book of Love

Love conquering death is the theme of the legend of Savitri and Satyavan. But what kind of love has the power to overcome death? In the Mahabharata, Savitri armed with intelligence, virtue and strength of character wins boons from Yama, but does not defeat the principle of death. Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of the myth starts from a deeper Vedic symbolism which points to a more radical conquest. But the characters of his epic are living beings, not figures in an allegory. Moreover, his treatment of the story goes beyond even the Vedic symbolism on the basis of his own realisations.

To make the victory of Love artistically convincing and spiritually inevitable was perhaps the greatest challenge Sri Aurobindo faced in writing *Savitri*; for almost the whole of human experience points to

the opposite conclusion, that Death is more powerful. Therefore Book Five, “The Book of Love,” though it is one of the shortest of the twelve books, is of central importance. Passages in it received Sri Aurobindo’s attention in every phase of his work on the poem, even during the period when he had set aside most of the later books to concentrate on what is now Part One.

Unlike Book Four, which Sri Aurobindo brought to its present form by revising a single final manuscript and typed copies of it, the published text of Book Five is based on manuscripts from different periods. Sri Aurobindo began to write out a fair copy of this book around 1943 in the notebook he had already used for Book Four. But this version breaks off after the first hundred lines of the second canto. When he dictated the revision of the fifth book around 1945, Sri Aurobindo reverted at this point to his last version of “The Book of Love” from the 1930s. But this also was incomplete. He had to go back to a manuscript from before 1920 for most of Canto Three. This canto still needed substantial work and he drafted new passages for it in the chit pads he was using in the mid-1940s. Book Five was first published, after further light revision of typescripts and proofs, in the 1950 issue of *Sri Aurobindo Circle*.

Sri Aurobindo’s account of the meeting of Savitri and Satyavan contained inspired lines even in its earliest form. But it took years for his description of what happened at that moment to attain its full amplitude and inevitability of expression. The immortality of love, in the sense of its survival of death, was briefly but memorably evoked from the beginning. But the transformative power of love was brought out only gradually.

### Book Six: The Book of Fate

After dictating the revision of his manuscripts of Books Four and Five, Sri Aurobindo turned to Book Six, “The Book of Fate.” In a letter written in 1946, he described this book as “almost complete.” In that year he must have done much of the work of bringing Book Six close to its present form. But it was not until late in 1950

that he would finish “The Book of Fate,” the last book of *Savitri* to be completed.

A notebook Sri Aurobindo used in 1927 contains three pages of what was then the third book, called “Fate.” Otherwise, almost no evidence has been found that he worked on any book after “The Book of Love” between 1920 and 1945. When he took up “The Book of Fate” and the later books for revision in the last phase of the composition of *Savitri*, he started from versions that he had written at least 25 years earlier.

During this long gap, Part One had taken shape and Sri Aurobindo’s conception of the scope of the poem had altered radically. When he set about revising what he had written so many years before, he transformed some passages almost beyond recognition by making changes and additions which he drafted in chit-pads and dictated to his scribe. Not infrequently he would reject a passage altogether and replace it by something quite different. But at other times, pages of the early manuscripts were incorporated into the final version with little modification.

The dramatic dialogue that now forms Book Six, Canto One, has remained similar in many ways to what Sri Aurobindo had worked out in his first few versions of the poem. Some of the most important differences are connected with the introduction of the queen. In the early versions, some of Aswapati’s speeches had voiced the ordinary reactions of the human mind and heart to the blows of fate. By the 1940s, this would have been inconsistent with the spiritual stature Aswapati had attained in Part One. Accordingly, this part of his role was assigned to the queen and the speeches in question were transferred to her.

The most important result of the work on Book Six in the 1940s was the elaboration of a short passage on pain into one of the longest cantos in the epic, “The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain.” Sri Aurobindo’s final revision of this canto was the last work he did on *Savitri*, shortly before his passing.

Even before *Savitri* was divided into cantos or books, the scene in which Narad foretells the death of Satyavan had grown rapidly from the first draft, where it was



not much more than a hundred lines, to the “first fair copy,” where it was almost three hundred. Its length had nearly doubled again by the time Sri Aurobindo wrote out “Fate” as “Canto II.”

### Book Seven: The Book of Yoga

Just as in the early versions there was virtually no Yoga of Aswapati, likewise Savitri’s Yoga was not part of the conception of the poem until quite late in its formation. Except for its first canto, the Book of Yoga was added only in 1947, three years before the completion of *Savitri*...

This included fairly extensive rewriting of the passage from the old “Book III: Death” that became the first canto of Book Seven with the long title “The Joy of Union; the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death and the Heart’s Grief and Pain.”

Under the heading “Death,” he had originally narrated not only the day of Satyavan’s death, but also Savitri’s year in the forest leading up to this event. Savitri’s Yoga had not yet been introduced, but the description of her life with Satyavan later became the first canto of “The Book of Yoga.”

### Book Eight: The Book of Death

After 1945, much of Sri Aurobindo’s work on Parts Two and Three consisted of revising what he had written nearly thirty years earlier. His suspension of literary activity during the 1920s had been followed by a long period when most of his attention to *Savitri* was concentrated on what eventually became Part One. The sections that developed into Books Four and Five were also included to some extent in his work during this period. But it was only around 1946 that Sri Aurobindo began to take up again the books or cantos he had previously entitled “Fate,” “Death,” “Night,” “Twilight” and “Day.”

We have seen that he took the second canto of an old six-canto version of *Savitri* as a starting-point for “The Book of Fate.” After revising the manuscript of “Fate,” Sri Aurobindo must have asked his scribe to read to him the next section of the early poem. It was probably at this time that he

dictated some revision of the last part of a manuscript of “Canto III: Death,” which was used for Book Eight, “The Book of Death.”

The last manuscript of this section of “Death,” which was revised to become Book Seven, Canto One, is incomplete. This version, called “Book III,” stops before reaching the day when Satyavan dies. At this point, Sri Aurobindo went back to an earlier “Canto III,” whose second half became the manuscript for “The Book of Death.”

His dictated revision of the manuscript of “Canto III” is much lighter than his revision of the manuscripts of the books that precede and follow it. It was evidently intended to be only the first step towards the final text of Book Eight. It was, in fact, about “The Book of Death” and the Epilogue [Book Twelve] that Sri Aurobindo reportedly said, in the last session of his work on *Savitri* in 1950, “We shall see about that later on.” (*Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, p. 266).

Other evidence also suggests that “The Book of Death,” in the form in which Sri Aurobindo left it, was not finished. A letter written in 1946 provides a glimpse of his plans for Books Seven and Eight. Here he outlined the structure of Part Two and summarised the progress he had made with it. After referring to the first three books of this part as completed or almost complete, he continued:

Two others, the Book of Yoga and the Book of Death, have still to be written, though a part needs only a thorough recasting. (*Savitri*, p. 733)

...But the passage that was renamed “The Book of Death” remained similar to what it was in 1917-18. Though Sri Aurobindo made minor stylistic changes in a few places and added a number of lines near the beginning and the end, this revision seems to fall far short of the “thorough recasting” he had said this passage needed.

Sri Aurobindo’s reference to “The Book of Death” as having “still to be written” implies that he wanted to do much more with it. One can only speculate about what he had in mind. But as a result of his leaving it substantially as in the orig-

inal narrative poem, sensitive readers may feel that there is an abrupt change between Books Seven and Eight. The discontinuity is due to the juxtaposition of passages written thirty years apart.

It is partly for this reason that “Death in the Forest” has been called “Canto Three” in editions of *Savitri*, though Book Eight has no other cantos. The designation of it as “Canto Three” can be taken to refer to the origin of the passage as part of the third canto of an early version of the poem in six cantos.<sup>2</sup> The footnote necessitated by the anomalous numbering serves to alert the readers to the fact that Sri Aurobindo did not fully work this canto into the final text...

“The Book of Death” is the shortest of the twelve books of *Savitri*. Yet the problem of death, representing the ultimate negation of the Spirit’s freedom to express itself in Matter, is central to the theme of the epic. We do not know how much or in what way Sri Aurobindo would have expanded Book Eight if he had come back to it. But even as it is, its brevity does not contradict its importance in the scheme of the poem.

It is not inappropriate that “The Book of Death” simply presents, through a straightforward poetic narration, the fact of death as it affects the surface human consciousness. It is left to Part Three to explore the deeper questions raised by this “Unreal, inescapable end of things.” (*Savitri*, p. 588) Book Eight serves as a gateway to realms beyond, where Savitri’s confrontation with the force behind death takes place.

### Book Nine: The Book of Eternal Night

To win back the soul of Satyavan, Savitri must first follow Death into his own realm, the Night of the Inconscient out of which our world has emerged. There Death is king. From there the destroying force derives its hitherto uncontested right to impose its law on all that exists in the material universe. But Savitri was born to challenge the omnipotence of Death and the reign of material laws and to assert the freedom and power of the embodied spirit. To do this, she must pursue the spirit of



Death into regions from which none has returned alive.

It is in Books Eight, Nine and Ten that Savitri encounters, debates with and triumphs over Death. Sri Aurobindo's first draft of the passages that developed over the years into those three books seems to have been written with extraordinary fluency during a period of three days, from the 17th to the 19th of October, 1916. These dates in the earliest known manuscript of *Savitri* are among the few precise dates that can be given in the long history of the composition of the epic. The fact that Sri Aurobindo dated these particular pages suggests that he was observing the rapid progress of the poem at this stage with special interest.

On 8-9 August 1916, he had written a draft of the opening of *Savitri* consisting of a little more than a hundred lines. Then he started again from the beginning, a couple of pages later in the same notebook, but did not date this version until he reached the twelfth complete page on October 17th. Where the first draft of the opening breaks off, work on the poem may have been interrupted, perhaps accounting for the gap between August and October. Nothing in the manuscript suggests a discontinuity between the undated portions of the longer version and the dated passages that follow. So it seems likely that Sri Aurobindo's first almost complete draft of *Savitri* was written more or less continuously in the month of October, 1916.

It is not certain exactly where in the manuscript the passage written on October 17th begins. The notation "Oct 17. 18—1916" is found at the bottom of a page below lines that are almost the same in the final version of Book Eight:

Sometimes her eyes looked round as  
if their orbs  
Might see the dim and dreadful god  
approach.

The two dates evidently mean that the passage which ends with these lines was written on the 17th and revised on the 18th. Possibly what was written and revised on those days began about fifty lines earlier, where there is a blank space in the manuscript after the line:

Swiftly the fatal day came striding on.

Supposing this to be where Sri Aurobindo began on 17 October, the second occurrence of that date a few pages after its first occurrence would seem to indicate that on this day he wrote nearly a hundred and fifty lines, the first draft of what was to become Book Eight and the first canto

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of Book Nine. On the 18th, he rewrote the last hundred or so lines of what he had drafted on the previous day and wrote almost two hundred new lines which he revised the next day.

The dates "Oct 18, 19" occur at the end of this draft of Savitri's debate with Death in the worlds symbolised by night and twilight—the present Book Nine, Canto Two, and Book Ten. Below these dates, there are two lines that break off abruptly:

Even as she spoke, they left the twilit  
world.  
It ended not; it vanished. Savitri

After this, instead of continuing and finishing the first draft, Sri Aurobindo returned to passages he had already written and began the process of rewriting, expanding and perfecting that was to go on during the next thirty-four years. The last part of the notebook includes some passages related to the eventual Book Eleven, "The Book of Everlasting Day," but these

were not connected together and there is nothing that corresponds to the Epilogue. The first draft of the poem thus remained incomplete. Extending to about eight hundred lines, it proved to be the first sketch of an epic that grew ultimately to thirty times that length.

Within a year or two, the length of this portion of the poem had quadrupled and "Night" had become the fourth of six cantos into which *Savitri* was then divided. In 1946, Sri Aurobindo took an early manuscript of "Canto IV: Night" and, dictating extensive revisions and insertions in some places, but leaving other passages almost as they were, turned it into Book Nine in two cantos. Subsequent revision

marked on the fair copy and the typescript was relatively light. Finally, in November 1949 and February 1950, Book Nine (misnumbered "Book Seven" for some rea-

son) came out in *The Advent* and in separate fascicles. In the second canto, three new lines not found in the typescript, as well as half a dozen changes in wording, show that Sri Aurobindo had given it a last revision before it appeared in print.

If one compares "The Book of Eternal Night," as published, with what Sri Aurobindo had written before 1920, one discovers that here he left his early version intact in an unusual number of places. When he came back to this part of the poem in the 1940s, evidently he found that his original inspiration had often achieved almost from the start a perfection that could hardly be improved upon, though it might be expanded. A typical example will illustrate the relationship between the earlier and later versions.

By the time Sri Aurobindo wrote the version entitled "Canto IV: Night," Savitri's last two-line speech in the passage from the first draft quoted above had become eight lines. When that manuscript was read to him in 1946, Sri Aurobindo did



not make any change in these lines he had written so many years before. However, he inserted six new lines. In the early version, the speech began:

“When I have loved for ever, I shall know.  
Love in me knows the truth all changings mask.  
I know that knowledge is a vast embrace:

The lines dictated in the 1940s enlarge upon this. They answer the life-negating Vedanta ascribed to Death with the integral God-vision of Sri Aurobindo’s no less Vedantic life-affirming realisation, expressed in the impassioned language of the heart:

I know that every being is myself,  
In every heart is hidden the myriad One.  
I know the calm Transcendent bears the world,  
The veiled Inhabitant, the silent Lord:  
I feel his secret act, his intimate fire;  
I hear the murmur of the cosmic Voice.

Savitri’s reply to Death concludes memorably with lines that, like so many lines in Book Nine, are already found in their final form in a manuscript dating from the first year or two of Sri Aurobindo’s work on the poem:

I know my coming was a wave from God.  
For all his suns were conscient in my birth,  
And one who loves in us came veiled by death.  
Then was man born among the monstrous stars  
Dowered with a mind and heart to conquer thee.”

### Book Ten: The Book of the Double Twilight

The first round of Savitri’s debate with

Death has taken place in Book Nine, Canto Two, against the background of the everlasting Nothingness that appears to be the source and destiny of all things. In that dead realm, the soul of a living being was an intruder. Death’s voice was “a fatal iron hearted roar” (*Savitri*, p. 585) and his power seemed unchallengeable. He did not hesitate to resort to intimidation, threatening the mortal woman with a terrible retribution for her trespass on his forbidden domain:

Dread lest in skies where passion hoped to live,  
The Unknown’s lightnings start and, terrified,  
Lone, sobbing, hunted by the hounds of heaven,  
A wounded and forsaken soul thou flee  
Through the long torture of the centuries.... (p. 591)

Yet Savitri has not turned back. She is rewarded with a first victory, insufficient in itself, but setting the scene for a more decisive confrontation. In the eternity of night, Death was in his natural element and the unconscious Void seemed the one all swallowing reality. Now the darkness gives way to a twilight full of the dreams and ideals of the mind that has, after all, emerged out of the inertia of Matter. Among these intangible visions, Death is a formidable intruder whose alien figure enhances by contrast “this beauty as of mind made visible:”

The sombre Shadow sullen, implacable  
Made beauty and laughter more imperative.... (p. 605)

Death changes his tone and tactics, arguing philosophically in an attempt to expose the hollowness of all idealism. The thunder of his voice becomes subdued and seductive, so that Savitri can even compare it to a flute:

“A dangerous music now thou findst,  
O Death,  
Melting thy speech into harmonious pain,

And flut’st alluringly to tired hopes  
Thy falsehoods mingled with sad strains of truth....” (p. 612)

Do human ideals and aspirations point beyond themselves to a realisation on earth of the dreams of the spirit, as Savitri maintains? Or are these ideals, as her opponent insists, the fantasies of a self-deceiving mind, inevitably falsified in practice because they are contrary to the nature of things? This is the issue in the next round of the debate.

It was on 18-19 October 1916 that Sri Aurobindo wrote and revised the hundred-line section of his first draft of *Savitri* that ultimately expanded to twenty-five times that length and became Book Ten, “The Book of the Double Twilight.” Already, he had a clear vision of what he would later call “the dream twilight of the ideal.” He described it in much the same manner as in the final text, though more briefly:

And now into a misty twilit world  
They came; vague fields, vague hedges, rainy trees,  
White cattle vague roamed glimmering through the mist,  
Vague spirits wandered with a bodiless cry,  
Through vague ideal lands roamed happily  
Forms of half luminous cloud. Yet in it all  
A strange consistency of shapes prevailed,  
A victory of initial light, a spirit Of faery beauty and ungrasped delight  
That sweeter seemed than any ecstasy  
That either earth or heaven can hope to seize,  
Strange sweet beginnings of perfection, first  
Happy desires of a heavenly world.  
Here through its magic lanes that fled the feet  
Past vanishing hedges, moved she silently  
Assailed by sweetness of its voices dim.



After two more lines, Death begins to speak. This passage had more than doubled in length by the time Sri Aurobindo wrote it out again three weeks later near the back of the same notebook, dating it "Nov 9." It underwent slight further expansion in what has been called his first fair copy of the earliest version of *Savitri*. This is undated, but was probably written soon after the previous version.

When Sri Aurobindo divided *Savitri* into six cantos, and then into six or later seven books, he enlarged the description of this dream world gradually through ten or so manuscripts of the canto or book entitled "Twilight." But in all these versions, written between 1916 and 1920, the transition from night to twilight was made in a few lines at the most. Only in the 1940s did Sri Aurobindo write the opening section of the present Book Ten, Canto One, where the inner logic behind the movement out of darkness into light is developed with a strong sense of spiritual inevitability.

But even in the first few drafts, though they passed from night to twilight with almost no bridge, there was a phrase that indicated the precise significance of twilight in the scheme of the poem's symbolism. As we have seen, those versions referred to the twilight as a "victory of initial light." The phrase implies that twilight is a first stage in the victory of consciousness over the Inconscient which is the divine event depicted in *Savitri*. But since this is only an "initial light," the victory is partial, even if it carries in itself the promise of a total conquest. Death is put on the defensive, but is not defeated by the soul's survival of the ordeal of night and by the invasion of the darkness with the half light of the dreaming mind. However beautiful these dreams, Satyavan is still in Death's grip and the debate must go on.

In the second and third cantos of Book Ten, *Savitri* defends the irrepressible idealism of the dreamer in man against Death's cynical realism. Her adversary

supports himself alternately by arguments drawn from scientific materialism and ascetic spirituality, besides appealing to the discouraging facts of common experience. *Savitri* answers him with a deeper interpretation of the nature of man, the truth of love, the purpose of evolution and the relation between the world and the Divine.

Most of the longer speeches in these two cantos were written in 1946-47. In these pages, a major part of the history of life and thought is summed up in its essence and re-evaluated with reference to fundamental questions about the meaning of existence. The setting of this debate is "the dream twilight of the ideal," an elusive region which corresponds to the higher yearnings and formations of the heart and mind that are perpetually baffled when they seek concrete realisation.

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But in the tenuous domain of mental ideals, there could be no decisive outcome. Death can show the element of illusion in these formations, but cannot disprove the truth to which they point. *Savitri* vindicates that truth, yet declares that she herself does not belong to this realm:

... Advance, O Death,  
Beyond the phantom beauty of this  
world;  
For of its citizens I am not one.

The manuscript [in which these lines were written] is an early version of "Twilight," the fifth of six cantos that formed, along with an epilogue, the text of *Savitri* half-way through the initial period of its composition (1916-20). Sri Aurobindo dictated the final revision of this passage probably in late 1946 or early 1947. He left this particular speech almost as it was, only adding some lines and chang-

ing a few words here and there. But how much the final form of Book Ten differs, as a whole, from the early manuscripts of "Twilight" is suggested by the fact that the next lines seen in the facsimile eventually came to be separated from this speech by twenty five pages.

Sri Aurobindo revised the concluding line of the speech by dictation. In the line he had written in the manuscript, Death was addressed as "god:"

I cherish, god, the fire and not the  
dream.

The revision consisted merely of changing the punctuation and the capitalisation and substituting "not God" for "and not." But these small alterations had a dramatic effect. The line became:

I cherish God the  
Fire, not God the  
Dream.

K. D. Sethna  
has commented  
on the conse-  
quences of this  
revision:

The full potentiality of the penetrating revelatory idea is released, the expression acquires the utmost intensity, the rhythmic movement an absolute concentration. And in the closing phrase, with its capitalised "G" and the term "God" ringing out twice, the speaker's soul at its profoundest is laid bare and startlingly suggests without the least veil that even in spirituality there can be a crucial choice between divine truths, on which may hinge the entire destiny of man the evolutionary aspirant. (*Mother India*, August 1981, p. 426)

In the early manuscript, *Savitri*'s insistence on the fiery authenticity of the spirit's Truth, rejecting the illusory dream-aspect of human ideals, led directly to a phase of the dialogue that is now found in



Book Ten, Canto Four, “The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real.” Choosing the fire rather than the dream as the symbol of her aspiration, she compelled Death to see her as a force to be reckoned with. Consequently, he shifts his ground. He no longer disputes the intrinsic validity of her aims, but questions the wisdom and practicality of seeking to impose them on this imperfect world, now or in the foreseeable future.

In Death’s speech on the next page of the manuscript, he dwells on the danger of disturbing the established order with ideas and forces for which the earth is not ready:

See how all shakes when the gods  
tread too near!

He advises patience and caution, warning against any premature attempt to change things:

Be calm and tardy in the slow wise  
world.<sup>3</sup>

The very sound of Death’s voice is altered as he abandons his former aggressive posture. No longer the thunderous roar that had filled with dread the kingdom of eternal night, it loses also the sharp edge of irony that assailed the mind’s idealism. Death takes on now the voice of life itself in the endless cycles of its frustrated endeavour. But behind the new note of resignation that is heard, there is still a formidable resistance to the acceptance of a higher law.

The manuscript page ... shows a stage in the composition of *Savitri* when no change of setting yet corresponded to the change in Death’s tone and the shift in the focus of the dialogue. Only a single twilight was described, not the double twilight found in the present Book Ten. But already there were some lines that later developed into the transitional passage at the end of Canto Three. (They were cancelled during the dictated revision of the manuscript..., since a subsequent expanded version was used for the final text.) The vague twilight of half-enlightened ideals is depicted here as slipping away from the clear vision of Savitri, who at this point is effectively in command:

She ceased and all compelled went  
gliding on.  
Still was the order of those worlds  
reversed,  
The mortal led, the god and spirit  
obeyed;  
For she behind was leader of their  
march  
And they in front were followers of  
her will.  
Onward they journeyed through the  
drifting ways  
Vaguely companioned by the glim-  
mering mists.  
Around her the pale magic twilight  
moved,  
But faster now all fled as if perturbed,  
Escaping from the clearness of her  
soul.

The final turning-point approaches, when Death will be defeated or transformed and mind’s twilight fade into the spiritual sunlight already radiating from Savitri’s soul. But it would take Sri Aurobindo some thirty years from the time when he wrote these lines until he formulated the definitive account of this victory. His revision of Book Ten, Canto Four in the 1940s will be discussed shortly. There it will be shown how the distinction between Overmind and Supermind, which had not yet been made when Sri Aurobindo began to write *Savitri*, was introduced in the middle and later phases of the composition of the epic. It figures most prominently in this canto where it is essential to the spiritual truth of the culminating event.

First, the origin and significance of “the dream twilight of the earthly real” itself must be explained. As has already been indicated..., there was no such second twilight in the version of “Canto V: Twilight.” After the lines quoted above, we find a passage introducing a speech of Death that in the final text occurs several pages into Book Ten, Canto Four. Here only a change in Death’s voice is described, not a change of scene. But in the creative process of poetry—as in the process of cosmic creation according to the Sankhya theory—sound arises first,

images and forms afterwards. What was heard first in the tone of Death’s voice, as he identifies himself with the toiling spirit of life on earth, came to be visualised by the poet as a dreamlike panorama of fleeting forms in the twilight of the “earthly real.” Most of the description of this twilight was written soon after the manuscript [described] here.

The remainder of the page ... can be transcribed as follows:

Then rang again a calmer cry of  
Death.  
It bore no more its first tremendous  
sound,  
But seemed like Life in its enormous  
field  
Toiling for ever and achieving  
nought  
Because of birth and change, its  
mortal powers  
By which it lasts: around old term-  
posts fixed  
It turns in a wide circling race and  
seems  
As if its course for ever wheeled  
unchanged.  
Assured of the vanity of the gains she  
won,  
Pressed by the load of ignorance and  
doubt  
Which knowledge seems but to  
increase, growth to enlarge,  
The earth’s mind sinks and it de-  
spairs and looks  
Old, weary and discouraged on its  
work.  
Yet was all nothing then or vainly  
achieved?  
Some great thing has been done,  
some light, some power  
Delivered from the huge Inconsci-  
ent’s grasp.  
It has emerged from night; it sees its  
dawns  
Circling for ever though no dawn  
can stay.  
This change was in the godhead’s far  
flung voice....

The “foiled cinema of lit shadowy shapes” that unrolls in the opening para-



graph of Book Ten, Canto Four, illustrates in the manner of a stupendous motion picture this aspect of life “Toiling for ever and achieving nought.” The sense of futility it induces is mitigated by the perception that perhaps, after all, “Some great thing has been done....” Yet in the end, Death’s pessimism may seem overwhelmingly justified by the spectacle that is summed up in the concluding lines of the first section of “The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real:”

The rolling cycles passed and came  
again,  
Brought the same toils and the same  
barren end,  
Forms ever new and ever old, the  
long  
Appalling revolutions of the world.

Against this awesome backdrop, the issue between Savitri and Death has finally to be decided.

Like “the dream twilight of the ideal,” this too is a “dream twilight.” Exactly what kind of reality should be ascribed to these twilight realms is difficult to say, in the absence of an explicit commentary by Sri Aurobindo. The description of them as “dream twilights” and “symbol worlds” and their close resemblance to aspects of earthly life suggest that these are not typical planes that exist in their own right in the hierarchy of the worlds, as do the subtle-physical, vital and mental planes that Aswapati passes through in Book Two. A clue to their status in the scheme of things may perhaps be found in Sri Aurobindo’s recognition of the capacity of man’s image-creating faculty to produce “environments of a half-unreal character which are rather self-created envelopes of his conscious mind and life than true worlds.”<sup>4</sup>

If the dreamlike nature of the “twilight of the earthly real” deprives it of a certain kind of objective reality, it makes it all the more symbolic and therefore significant for the purposes of poetry. Being a dream representation of what are usually considered concrete realities, it expressively figures the crux of the problem

faced by those who, like Savitri, claim to bring a higher principle into play in the obscure rigidity of material existence.

### Book Eleven: The Book of Everlasting Day

The phrase “slave of God” occurs in a speech of the Godhead into whom Death is transformed after Savitri’s victory, a passage that is now part of Book Eleven, “The Book of Everlasting Day.” But this passage in its original form, which already included the line in question, was written as early as 1916. It is found in the notebook used by Sri Aurobindo for his first known draft of the poem, consisting of some eight hundred lines and not yet divided into books or cantos. This nearly complete draft of what would evolve into an epic of thirty times that length is preceded in the small notebook by a three page draft of the opening—dated, on the second page, “August 8th 9th 1916”—beginning with the lines:

In a huge forest where the listening  
Night  
Heard solitary voices and a tread  
That had no sound for the rich heart  
of day....

After breaking off on the third page, at the point where Savitri arrives at the place where she will meet Satyavan, Sri Aurobindo started again in almost the same way, possibly a couple of months later. This time he continued and, after some time, began dating the draft every few pages. It was perhaps due to the unusual flow of inspiration he was experiencing that he became interested at this stage in recording the progress he was making with the poem from day to day. The dates in the margins of the manuscript—October 17, 18 and 19—show that on three days in 1916 he drafted much of what eventually became Books Eight, Nine and Ten of the epic, “The Book of Death,” “The Book of Eternal Night” and “The Book of the Double Twilight.” However, there was no double twilight as yet, but only something like “The Dream Twi-

light of the Ideal,” where much of Savitri’s debate with Death took place. The draft stops abruptly at the point where the twilight vanishes:

Even as she spoke, they left the twilight  
world.

It ended not; it vanished. Savitri

The remainder of the notebook was used mostly for the rewriting of passages that had already been drafted. This was the beginning of the long process of revising and expanding *Savitri*, which would continue until 1950. But there are also some passages for the concluding section of the poem, where Death is transfigured into a luminous God. Among these passages is a speech of this God to Savitri, a flight of sustained inspiration which, as we can see from a study of Sri Aurobindo’s *Record of Yoga*, has an exact relation to his state of consciousness at the time when it was written. Here is a substantial part of this extraordinary passage:

Mirror of Nature’s secret spirit made,  
Thou shalt not shrink from any  
brother soul  
But live attracted helplessly to all,  
Drawn to me on the bosom of thy  
friend  
And forced to love me in thy enemy’s  
eyes.  
Thou shalt drink down my sweetness  
unalloyed  
And bear my ruthless beauty un-  
bridged  
Amid the world’s intolerable wrongs,  
Mid the long discord and the clash  
of search,  
Thou shalt discover the one and  
quivering note  
And be the harp of all its melodies  
And be my splendid wave in seas of  
love.  
Insistent, careless of thy lonely right,  
My creatures shall demand me from  
thy heart.  
All that thou hast shall be for others’  
bliss;  
All that thou art shall to my hands  
belong.



I will pour delight from thee as from  
a jar  
And whirl thee as my chariot  
through the ways  
And use thee as my sword and as my  
lyre  
And play on thee my minstrelsies of  
thought.  
And when thou art vibrant with all  
ecstasies  
And when thou liv'st one spirit with  
all things,  
Men seeing thee shall feel my siege  
of joy,  
And nearer draw to me because thou  
art.  
Enamoured of thy spirit's loveliness,  
They shall embrace my body in thy  
soul,  
Hear in thy life the beauty of my  
laugh,  
Know the thrilled bliss with which I  
made the world.  
This shalt thou henceforth learn  
from thy heartbeats  
That conquering me thou art my  
captive made,  
And who possess me are by me pos-  
sessed.  
For ever love, O beautiful slave of  
God.

This passage was ultimately expanded by twenty lines or so, with a number of changes in the order and wording of the lines. But compared with the drastic mutations undergone by many other passages in *Savitri* in the course of Sri Aurobindo's quest for a spiritually revelatory perfection, it came relatively close to its final form at what seems to have been the first writing.

The reason for this must be that what is expressed here is something Sri Aurobindo had realised in its full intensity fairly early in his sadhana and, moreover, something that was essential to his original conception of *Savitri*. The *Record of Yoga* supports the first part of this explanation. Sri Aurobindo began *Savitri* during a long gap in the *Record* extending from March 1916 up to January 1917. (In one sense, this is unfortunate for us, because if the *Record* had continued through that period

there might have been some mention of the poem Sri Aurobindo was then beginning to write.) When the diary resumes on 9 January 1917, we read in the first entry: "Shakti on the basis of dasya is well founded."

Now, *dāśya* is the term used in the *Record of Yoga* for the state described in *Savitri* as being a "slave of God." *Dāśya* is, literally, the condition of being a slave, a *dāsa* (masculine) or *dāsī* (feminine); the latter word, *dāsī*, is used by Sri Aurobindo when he wishes to make the image of the slave explicit. Submission and surrender are English equivalents of *dāśya*, but they occur only occasionally in the *Record*, while *dāśya* occurs hundreds of times.

The "slave of God" passage in *Savitri* is a vivid description of what is called in the *Record of Yoga* "the dasya of the supreme degree which obeys helplessly the direct impulse of the Master." Paradoxically, this slavery is the key to liberation in action, this defeat and surrender of the ego are the victory of the spirit and this helplessness is the secret of omnipotence.

## Book Twelve: Epilogue

Outwardly, the principal events in the story of *Savitri* are the death of Satyavan at the end of Part Two and his resuscitation at the end of Part Three. These events are recounted in "The Book of Death" and the Epilogue, the shortest of the twelve books of the epic and the only books that did not receive the final revision Sri Aurobindo apparently intended to give them. His relative lack of attention to these two books suggests that neither the common fact of death nor the rare phenomenon of the return to life was what interested him most, but the forces behind these surface happenings.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>This line originally appeared in a somewhat different form in a version of "Book I: Quest" that seems to have been the first to be written after November 1926. This is the earliest known occurrence of the word "dragon" in the manuscripts of *Savitri*.

<sup>2</sup>At the place in the manuscript where the present Book Eight begins, a roman numeral "III" was written by the scribe under the heading "Book of Death", as if "Death in the Forest" was meant to be the third canto of that book. It is possible that when Sri Aurobindo revised this manuscript, he had begun to envisage a description of the Yoga of Savitri, but had not yet conceived of "The Book of Yoga" as a separate book. "The Book of Death" would then have become an expanded version of the whole of the old canto entitled "Death", and would have been numbered Book Seven. Its first canto might have been similar to the present Book Seven, Canto One. The second canto could have been an account of Savitri's Yoga much shorter than what was eventually written, while "Death in the Forest" would have been the third canto. But this explanation is purely speculative.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *Savitri* (1993), p. 651, where "calm" has been replaced by "still" in Sri Aurobindo's final version of this line. On the same page, "See" has become "Lo," in the previous line.

<sup>4</sup>This passage in *The Life Divine* (1970, p. 790), was first published in the *Arya* in July 1918, around the time when Sri Aurobindo was working on the versions of *Savitri* discussed here.

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# The role of the body in the Integral Yoga

by Martha Orton

continued from the previous issue...

## Part 2

**H**aving established that it is central to the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that matter must be transformed in order for the spiritual journey of humanity and life in the world to be complete, that only in the full divinization of the world will the Truth-Consciousness be completely established in the manifestation, let us look more closely at issues related more specifically to the transformation of the body. One compelling point regarding the body is that the awakening of the consciousness in the body actually serves to advance the progress of the inner being. This is the absolute reverse of what human beings would generally expect, especially in view of the traditional resistance to including the body in the spiritual life. In this regard, the Mother states:

The psychic, when it has an influence on the outer life, brings to it light, order and quietude and the joy of the divine contact. But also the physical being, the body-consciousness, if it is identified with the psychic consciousness, and through that learns what kind of experience the psychic being wants to have, can help it to have these experiences in a very brief time, and not only save time but save many lives for the psychic being. It is a mutual help.

In brief, this is what yoga means. Yoga helps you to become fully conscious of your destiny, that is, your mission in the universe, and not only at the present moment but what it was in the past and what it will be in the future. And because of this knowledge you can gather by a



concentration of the consciousness all these experiences in a very short time and gain lives, do in a few years what could take a fairly considerable number of lives to achieve. The psychic being goes progressively through all these experiences towards its full maturity and complete independence, its liberation—in the sense that it no longer needs any new life. If it wants to come back to the physical world, it returns, because it has something to do there and it chooses freely to return. But till then, till this liberation, it is compelled to return to have all the experiences it needs. Well, if it happens that once the physical being is developed and conscious enough and has enough goodwill to be able to become fully aware of the psychic being, it can then and there create all the circumstances, the outer experiences necessary for the psychic being to attain its maturity in this very life. (*The Mother's Vision*, 447-448)

This statement describes a wonderful collaboration of the body with the psychic being and, therefore, offers a fuller description of the integral nature of the yoga. With body and soul supporting each other towards the goal, all aspects are incorporated in the sadhana. The soul becomes master of nature, leading the individual's spiritual evolution with

its increasing consciousness and, with the awakening of consciousness in the body, the body becomes a conscious, willing and active participant in the yoga. It is thus the best of all possibilities and enables the spiritual seeker to advance on the path as completely and swiftly as possible.

Furthermore, with the awakening of the consciousness in the body, the body's aspiration becomes a force in itself, as the Mother states:

There comes a moment when the body itself finds that there is nothing in the world which is so worth living for as this transformation; that there is nothing which can have as great an interest as this passionate interest of transformation. It is as though all the cells of the body were athirst for that Light which wants to manifest; they cry out for it, they find an intense joy in it and are sure of the Victory. (*The Mother's Vision*, 587)

With this intensity of yearning and collaboration of the body at the cellular level, the goal of transformation is greatly enabled.

Life in the body therefore has a mission to be transformed and also has a role which, in and of itself, supports the transformation of consciousness. This is the reason for the existence of a physical life on the earth, the reason for this state of existence in the universe. The Mother tells us that "...what adds to the interest of the thing is that this kind of work, this harmonisation and organisation of the being around the divine Centre can only be done in a physical body and on earth. That is truly the essential and original reason for physical life. For, as soon as you are no longer in a physical body, you can no longer do it at all." (*The Mother's Vision*, 518) Contemplating this statement leads to considerably greater respect for the body and greater understanding of the opportunity that human life on earth provides. Even with all the torments of human life considered, it is a unique and precious opportunity, since it is therefore only in the form of life in a human body that beings



have the opportunity to participate in the evolution of consciousness. The Mother describes this further:

And what is still more remarkable is that only human beings can do it, for only human beings have at their centre the divine Presence in the psychic being. For example, this work of self-development and organisation and becoming aware of all the elements is not within the reach of the beings of the vital and mental planes, nor even of the beings who are usually called “gods”; and when they want to do it, when they really want to organise themselves and become completely conscious, they have to take a body. (*The Mother’s Vision*, p. 518)

Therefore the body is central to spiritual evolution and transformation, for without it there would not be the opportunity to organize the parts of the being around a

center of divine consciousness, the psychic being, and without the organization and harmonization of the being, spiritual growth and progress would not be viable. Interestingly, this is quite the opposite of the traditions which hold that the body is an obstacle to the spirit. Instead it can be a true instrument of the spirit, not only providing the initial opportunity and basis for the spirit’s advance, but also becoming its active instrument. Ultimately, with the awakening of the body consciousness, the body is also the active collaborator of the spirit and then spirit and body mutually support each other in their growth of consciousness and transformation.

Consequently all aspects of the being participate in its spiritual seeking, aspiration and growth of consciousness. In doing so they achieve integral realization. In the words of the Mother: “If we are to be total, complete beings, to have an integral realisation, we should be able to express our spiritual experience mentally, vitally and

physically.” (*The Mother’s Vision*, p. 304) This statement provides additional indication of the significance of the body, both as an essential component of integral yoga and the spiritual realization sought in this process and also as a means of spiritual expression. This can be regarded as the body and matter expressing their divine qualities through harmony and beauty, further enriching life and giving evidence of the Divine in the world. Expression of spiritual experience through the body can also be seen as the fully surrendered body becoming more completely the instrument of the Divine in the world, becoming a means of furthering the general transformation according to the individual nature of the being. The Mother asserts that “the physical should be disciplined, organized enough to be able to express the deep ex-

perience, in the movements of each day and each moment, and live it integrally.” (*The Mother’s Vision*, p. 304) Accordingly, Sri Aurobindo writes of the body’s role as both instrument and manifestation of the Divine: “I put a value on the body first as an instrument, *dharmasadhana*, or, more fully, as a centre of manifested personality in action, a basis of spiritual life and activity as of all life and activity upon the earth, but also because for me the body as well as the mind and life is a part of the Divine Whole, a form of the Spirit and therefore not to be disregarded or despised as something incurably gross and incapable of spiritual realisation or of spiritual use.” (*Letters on Himself and the Ashram CWSA*, pp. 497-498)

*...with the awakening of the body consciousness, the body is also the active collaborator of the spirit and then spirit and body mutually support each other in their growth of consciousness and transformation.*

While we read of the transformation of the body, of its divinization, made possible by the advent of the supramental consciousness, we necessarily must acknowledge that this is something completely outside human experience and that it is quite

unclear to us what this actually means. We know that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have brought down this new consciousness, the supramental consciousness, to earth, enabling it to be active in the life of the world, offering the promise of the transformation of matter and transcending death. We know that they themselves manifested it. We can read of the marvelous event of 29 February 1956, when the Mother had the concrete experience of the supramental upon earth, and contemplate its meaning. We also read that the Mother was working on the transformation of the cells in her own body. Nevertheless what this means to human beings in their own individual lives can seem uncertain and possibly confusing. The following statement by the Mother gives clarification on many central points of the matter:

We speak of transformation vaguely, in this way; it gives us the impression of something that is going to happen which will see to it that all is well—I

think it comes to that approximately. If we have difficulties, the difficulties will disappear; those who are ill—their illness will vanish; and again, if there are physical shortcomings, these will disappear, and so on. But it is all very hazy, it’s just an impression. There is something quite remarkable: the physical consciousness, the body-consciousness, cannot know a thing with precision, in all its details, except when it is on the point of being realised. And this will be a sure indication when, for instance, one can understand the process: through what sequence of movements and transformations will the total transformation come about, in what order, in what way, to put it thus. What will happen first? What will happen later?—all that, in all its details. Each time you see a detail with exactitude, it means that it is on the point of being realised.



One can have the vision of the whole. For instance, it is quite certain that the transformation of the body-consciousness will take place first, that a progress in the mastery and control of all the movements of the body will come next, that this mastery will gradually change (here it becomes more vague), gradually, into a sort of transformation of the movement itself: alteration and transformation—all that is certain. But what must happen in the end, what Sri Aurobindo has spoken about in one of his last articles [i.e., “The Divine Being” in *The Supramental Manifestation*] in which he says that even the organs will be transformed, in the sense that they will be replaced by centres of concentration of forces (of concentration and action of forces) of different qualities and kinds which will replace all the organs of the body—that, my children, is much more distant, that is, it is something which... one cannot yet grasp the means of doing it. Take, for instance, the heart: by what means is this function of the heart which makes the blood flow through the whole body going to be replaced by a concentration of forces? By what means will the blood be replaced by a certain kind of force, and all the rest? By what means will the lungs be replaced by another concentration of forces, and what forces, and with what vibrations, and in what way?... All that will come much later. It cannot yet be realised. One can have an inkling of it, foresee it, but...

For the body, to know is to have the power to do. I shall give you an example that's just at hand. You do not know a gymnastic movement



except when you do it. Don't you see, when you have done it well, you know it, understand it, but not before that. Physical knowledge is the power of doing. Well, that applies to everything, including transformation.

A certain number of years must pass before we can speak with knowledge of how this is going to happen, but all that I can tell you is that it has begun. (*The Mother's Vision*, 543-544)

From this statement we gain the understanding, most relevant in our present lives, that the action of the transformation has begun, that it is sure, even though it may not be apparent to us, and that we can have faith that it will manifest in time. We also learn that the human body will eventually become extraordinarily different from what it is today. The difference will be so significant that a considerable length of time is imagined. Mother speaks to this point: “So, if one has resolved to transform the body, well, one must wait with all the necessary patience—three hundred years, five hundred years, a thousand years, it does not matter—the time needed for the change. As for me, I see that three hundred years is a minimum. To tell you the truth, with the experience I have of things, I think it is truly a minimum.” (*The Mother's Vision*, p. 544)

In considering both the how and why of the divinization of matter, the answers can be found in the descriptions which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother give of the involution of the Divine in matter. Through these descriptions we learn that the Divine has placed Himself in matter, is involved, inherent in matter, in order to awaken matter to consciousness and enable its return to its divine origin. Therefore the divinization of matter is preordained, since the Divine is inherent in matter and matter is not alien to the Divine in its nature. With the Divine already existing in matter, it can be awakened and reveal its innate divinity. The Mother explains this beautifully:

But I could speak to you of a very old tradition, more ancient than the two known lines of spiritual and occult tradition, that is, the Vedic and Chaldean lines; a tradition which seems to have been at the origin of these two known traditions, in which it is said that when, as a result of the action of the adverse forces—known in the Hindu tradition as the Asuras—the world, instead of developing according to its law of Light and inherent consciousness, was plunged into the darkness, inconscience and ignorance that we know, the Creative Power implored the Supreme Origin, asking him for a special intervention which could save this corrupted universe; and in reply to this prayer there was emanated from the Supreme Origin a special Entity, of Love and Consciousness, who cast himself directly into the most inconscient matter to begin there the work of awakening it to the original Consciousness and Love.

In the old narratives this Being is described as stretched out in a



deep sleep at the bottom of a very dark cave, and in his sleep there emanated from him prismatic rays of light which gradually spread into the Inconscience and embedded themselves in all the elements of this Inconscience to begin there the work of Awakening. (*The Mother's Vision*, pp. 52-53)

Therefore deep within the inconscience itself are the seeds of light which will awaken it to consciousness and enable matter to manifest its inherent divinity. This action of the Divine imbuing matter with a part of Himself is only one way in which the Divine has given himself to the creation in order to help it along its path. For the Mother tells us that the Divine in the form of the Being described above is the origin of the avatars on earth. She states: "He is, so to say, the first universal Avatar who, gradually, has assumed more and more conscious bodies and finally manifested in a kind of recognised line of Beings who have descended directly from the Supreme to perfect this work of preparing the universe so that, through a continuous progression, it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety." (*The Mother's Vision*, p. 53)

Thus the Divine has given greatly of Himself to the manifestation, sacrificing Himself in coming to earth in human form as well as imbuing matter with divine light, enabling life and the world to manifest fully its divine nature one day and complete its cycle of return to its origin in the Divine. The Mother describes the progressive fulfillment of the Divine in the world:

In every country, every tradition, the event has been presented in a special way, with different limitations, different details, particular features, but truly speaking, the origin of all these stories is the same, and that is what we could call a direct, conscious intervention of the Supreme in the darkest matter, without going through all the intermediaries, in

order to awaken this Matter to the receptivity of the Divine Forces. The intervals separating these various incarnations seem to become shorter and shorter, as if, to the extent that Matter became more and more ready, the action could accelerate and become more and more rapid in its movement, more and more conscious too, more and more effective and decisive.

And it will go on multiplying and intensifying until the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme. (*The Mother's Vision*, pp. 53-54)

Therefore this great sacrifice of the Divine in matter takes place on all levels of creation, on a small individual basis and a vast universal basis, becoming completely pervasive in its ultimate fulfillment. As the Mother tells us, "...the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself." (*The Mother's Vision*, p. 605)

The Mother also describes a succession of involutions: "So, there have been what might be called 'successive involutions' in Matter, and a history of these involutions. The present result of these involutions is the appearance of the Supermind emerging from the inconscience; but there is nothing to indicate that after this appearance there will be no others... for the Supreme is inexhaustible and will always create new worlds." (*The Mother's Vision*, p. 31) In contemplating this, one cannot but be struck by a sense of the immensity of the divine play and of the Divine's commitment to transforming the manifestation.

Sri Aurobindo, writing in *The Life Divine*, describes the involution of the Divine in life and matter and the evolution which follows:

...The manifestation of the Spirit is a complex web and in the design and pattern of one principle all the others enter as elements of the spiritual whole. Our material world

is the result of all the others, for the other principles have all descended into Matter to create the physical universe, and every particle of what we call Matter contains all of them implicit in itself; their secret action, as we have seen, is involved in every moment of its existence and every movement of its activity. And as Matter is the last word of the descent, so it is also the first word of the ascent; as the powers of all these planes, worlds, grades, degrees are involved in the material existence, so are they all capable of evolution out of it....

Nor can this evolution end with the first meagre formulation of life, mind, Supermind, spirit conceded to these higher powers by the reluctant power of Matter. For as they evolve, as they awake, as they become more active and avid of their own potentialities, the pressure on them of the superior planes, a pressure involved in the existence and close connection and interdependence of the worlds, must also increase in insistence, power and effectiveness. Not only must these principles manifest from below in a qualified and restricted emergence, but also from above they must descend in their characteristic power and full possible efflorescence into the material being; the material creature must open to a wider and wider play of their activities in Matter, and all that is needed is a fit receptacle, medium, instrument. That is provided for in the body, life and consciousness of man. (*The Life Divine*, pp. 272-273)

In this statement Sri Aurobindo succinctly describes the very purpose for humanity's existence in its role as medium for the evolution of matter to manifest its innate divinity. In contemplating this one necessarily concludes that the inclusion of the body in the integral yoga is essential and one can find inspiration for collaborating in this process.

Having therefore recognized that the body has an essential role to play in the



integral yoga, next one can consider how to include it. Two steps can be seen in the process, the first of which is the attitude one takes towards the body. The second is how one treats and uses the body, based on one's attitude towards it. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo explain to us that the body is not only the instrument of the spirit and therefore precious in this way, but that it is also imbued with the spirit and divine in its essence, since the Divine is involved in all matter. We have seen that they regard the body as essential in the process of the evolution of consciousness, that without life in a body on earth the soul cannot evolve. We have also seen that the ultimate destiny for the body is its divinization and transformation. Therefore the significance of the body indicates that it should be valued highly and treated with great respect. Consequently one has the responsibility of maintaining good health in the body as well as the mind, attending to the body as well as aspects of oneself and one's life which are more generally associated with spiritual aspiration and practice. In this way the yoga becomes more truly integral, incorporating all the parts of the being, the physical as well as the mental, vital and psychic.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo give practical advice related to caring for the body and emphasize the importance of doing so. For example, the Mother states: "Do not forget that to succeed in our yoga one must have a strong and healthy body. For this, the body must do exercise, have an active and regular life, work physically, eat well, and sleep well. It is in good health that the way towards transformation is found." (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 145) Along with proper care of the body, receptivity to the divine force and influence is emphasized. The body itself must awaken in consciousness and aspire to realize the Divine. Emphasis is given in the yoga to the physical development of the

body through exercise intended for this purpose, for the Mother explains: "Physical culture is the best way of developing the consciousness of the body, and the more the body is conscious, the more it is capable of receiving the divine forces that are at work to transform it and give birth to the new race." (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 205) The Mother also describes the importance of the body's aspiration: "It is good to do exercises and lead a simple and hygienic life, but for the body to be truly perfect, it must be subject only to the divine influence, it must aspire constantly to realize the Divine." (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 205)

The interaction of the body and the soul is mutual and reciprocal, as we have seen in Sri Aurobindo's explanation of how the growing consciousness of the individual awakens the body-consciousness and that once the body itself has become

*Our treatment of our body is determined by our level of consciousness and our body, as instrument of our consciousness, reflects the inner state of the being. We can regard the body as a living symbol of our consciousness.*

conscious it, in turn, can actively support and collaborate with the aspiration of the soul in its growth. The Mother explains further the application of the principle involved: "Here, it is very easy if we know one thing, that the method we use to deal with our body, maintain it, keep it fit, improve it and keep it in good health, depends exclusively on the state of consciousness we are in; for our body is an instrument of our consciousness and this consciousness can act directly on it and obtain what it wants from it." (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 146) Therefore the interrelation of soul and body is clear. Our treatment of our body is determined by our level of consciousness and our body, as instrument of our consciousness, reflects the inner state of the being. We can regard the body as a living symbol of our consciousness.

The body not only needs to be receptive to the influence of the Divine, but also strong in order to bear the force for which the aspiration calls. The Mother tells us that, "You must have a strong body and strong nerves. You must have a strong basis of equanimity in your external being." (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 206) This is important as well as strength and equanimity in the mind and vital, to be able to contain and make appropriate use of the force without developing disharmony or imbalance in one or more parts of the being.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother explain that disequilibrium of the inner being manifests as disharmony and illness in the physical body, giving further indication of the linkage between the consciousness and the body. Regaining health is seen as primarily a process of re-establishing harmony and equilibrium within oneself, establishing peace and calm within the being,

particularly in the part of the inner being wherein the disharmony lies, and calling on the Divine for assistance. The Mother describes this:

Each spot of the body is symbolical of an inner movement; there is there a world of subtle correspondences.... The particular place in the body affected by an illness is an index to the nature of the inner disharmony that has taken place. It points to the origin, it is a sign of the cause of the ailment. It reveals too the nature of the resistance that prevents the whole being from advancing at the same high speed. It indicates the treatment and the cure. If one could perfectly understand where the mistake is, find out what has been unreceptive, open that part and put the force and the light there, it would be possible to re-establish in a moment the harmony that has been disturbed and the illness would immediately go. (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 26)



In recognizing the interconnection and interdependence of spirit and body, one can see a process in the integral yoga which consists of pursuing the life of the spirit according to one's sense of what this is to be in terms of one's sadhana and incorporating an active awareness of the role of the body. The latter element then consists of having respect for the body as an instrument of the Divine's action in one's life and sadhana, as a temple of the Divine, and acting on this understanding by caring well for the body. The Mother gives force to the importance of this in her statement that "One must submit to the austerity of a sensible and regular life, concentrating all one's physical attention on building a body that comes as close to perfection as possible." (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 155) The Mother also emphasizes the higher reason for doing so: "A decisive choice has to be made between lending the body to Nature's ends in obedience to her demand to perpetuate the race as it is, and preparing this same body to become a step towards the creation of the new race. For it is not possible to do both at the same time; at every moment one has to decide whether one wants to remain part of the humanity of yesterday or to belong to the superhumanity of tomorrow." (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, pp. 158-159)

This statement implies a definite responsibility for making a choice. If one understands the significance of the body and its role in the integral yoga, there is necessarily a responsibility to respond to this knowledge through the decisions and actions one takes, making these expressions of the developing consciousness within. This consists of attempting to make the body receptive to the divine influence, to dedicate it actively to the divine work, both consecrating it in one's aspiration and caring for it and developing it through healthy use and exercise according to one's level of consciousness. In these ways the seeker can participate more fully and integrally in pursuing the path of the integral yoga and, ultimately, in the transformation.

Ideally the attitude of respect and

nurturance of the body follows the growth of the spirit and is informed and driven by this. The Mother explains that the process begins with purifying the mind and vital and then addressing changes in the body, reinforcing once again the integrality of the progress that is to be done:

Certainly it is better to purify one's mind and purify one's vital before thinking of purifying one's body. For even if you take all possible precautions and live physically taking care not to absorb anything except what will help to subtilise your body, if your mind and vital remain in a state of desire, inconscience, darkness, passion and all the rest, that won't be of any use at all. Only, your body will become weak, dislocated from the inner life and one fine day it will fall ill.

One must begin from inside, I have already told you this once. One must begin from above, first purify the higher and then purify the lower. I am not saying that one must indulge in all sorts of degrading things in the body. That's not what I am telling you. Don't take it as an advice not to exercise control over your desires! It isn't that at all. But what I mean is, do not try to be an angel in the body if you are not already just a little of an angel in your mind and vital; for that would dislocate you in a different way from the usual one, but not one that is better. We said the other day that what is most important is to keep the equilibrium. Well, to keep the equilibrium everything must progress at the same time. You must not leave one part of your being in darkness and try to bring the other into light. You must take great care not to leave any corner dark. There you are. (*Health and Healing in Yoga*, pp. 195-196)

Sri Aurobindo, in writing of the aim of the yoga, also describes the sequence of the action mentioned above:

It is quite true that the surrender and the consequent transformation of the whole being is the aim of the Yoga—the body is not excluded, but at the same time this part of the endeavour is the most difficult and doubtful—the rest, though not facile, is comparatively less difficult to accomplish. One must start with an inner control of the consciousness over the body, a power to make it obey more and more the will or the force transmitted to it. In the end as a higher and higher Force descends and the plasticity of the body increases, the transformation becomes possible. (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1234)

In this description Sri Aurobindo puts forth once again the movement of consciousness, with spirit becoming master of nature, the body, and in their union fulfilling the ultimate goal of the yoga. Throughout Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings which relate to matter and the body, we see that seekers on the path of the integral yoga are charged with including in their aspiration and progress all the parts of the being, with special emphasis being placed on the significance of the body. This unique aspect of the integral yoga offers extraordinary challenges and the possibility of extraordinary fulfillment.

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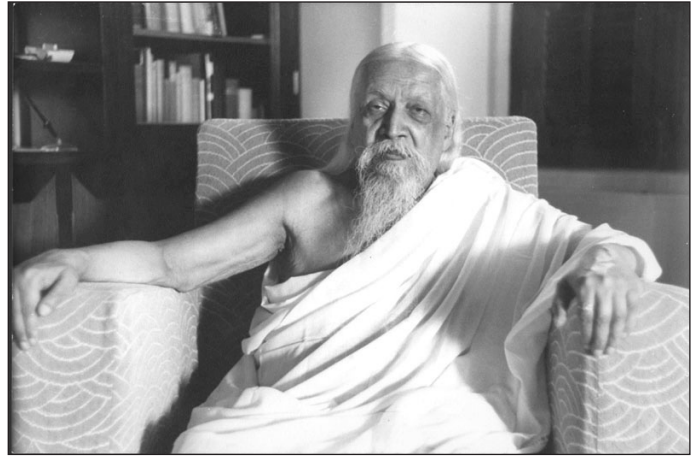
### Fate and free-will

by Sri Aurobindo

The will of man is the agent of the Eternal for the unveiling of his secret meaning in the material creation. Man's mind takes up all the knots of the problem and works them out by the power of the spirit within him and brings them nearer to the full force and degree of their individual and cosmic solutions. This is his dignity and his greatness and he needs no other to justify and give a perfect value to his birth and his acts and his passing and his return to birth, a return which must be—and what is there in it to grieve at or shun?—until the work of the Eternal in him is perfected or the cycles rest from the glory of their labour.

This view of the world is the standpoint from which we must regard the question of man's conscious will and its dealings with life, because then all things fall into their natural place and we escape from exaggerated and depreciated estimates. Man is a conscious soul of the Eternal, one with the Infinite in his inmost being, and the spirit within him is master of his acts and his fate. For fate is *fatum*, the form of act and creation declared beforehand by a Will within him and the universe as the thing to be done, to be achieved, to be worked out and made the self-expression of his spiritual being. Fate is *adrsta*, the unseen thing which the Spirit holds hidden in the plan of its vision, the consequence concealed from the travailing mind absorbed in the work of the moment by the curtained nearnesses or the far invisible reaches of Time. Fate is *niyati*, the thing willed and executed by Nature, who is power of the Spirit, according to a fixed law of its self-governed workings. But since this Eternal and Infinite, our greater Self, is also the universal being, man in the universe is inseparably one with all the rest of existence, not a soul working out its isolated spiritual destiny and nature while all other beings are nothing but his environment and means or obstacles,—that they are indeed, but they are much more to him,—which is the impression cast on the mind by the thought or the religions that emphasise too much his centre of individuality or his aim of personal salvation. He is not indeed solely a portion of the universe. He is an eternal soul which, though limited for certain temporal purposes in its outward consciousness, has to learn to enlarge itself out of those limits, to find and make effective its unity with the eternal Spirit who informs and transcends the universe. That spiritual necessity is the truth behind the religious dogma.

But also he is one in God and one in Nature with all beings in the cosmos, touches and includes all other souls, is linked to all powers of the Being that are manifest in this cosmic working. His soul, thought, will, action are intimate with the universal soul, thought, will and action. All acts on and through him and mixes with him and he acts too on all and his thought and will and life



mix in and become a power of the one common life. His mind is a form and action of the universal mind. His call is not to be busy and concerned only with his own growth and perfection and natural destiny or spiritual freedom. A larger action too claims him. He is a worker in a universal work; the life of others is his life; world-consequence and the world-evolution are also his business. For he is one self with the selves of all other beings.

The dealings of our will with Karma and consequence have to be envisaged in the light of this double truth of man's individuality and man's universality. And seen in this light the question of the freedom of our individual will takes on another appearance. It becomes clear enough that our ego, our outward personality can be only a minor, a temporal, an instrumental form of our being. The will of the ego, the outward, the mentally personal will which acts in the movement cannot be free in any complete or separate sense of freedom. It cannot so be free because it is bound by its partial and limited nature and it is shaped by the mechanism of its ignorance, and again because it is an individualized form and working of the universal energy and at every moment impinged upon and modified and largely shaped by environing wills and powers and forces. But also it cannot so be free because of the greater Soul in us behind the mind which determines works and consequence according to the will in its being and the nature, its power of being, not in the moment but in the long continuities of Time, not solely by the immediate adaptation to the environment, but by its own previous intention which has shaped the environment and already predetermined in great part the present act and consequence. The inward will in the being which is in intimacy with that Power is the real will and this outward thing only an instrumentation for a working out from moment to moment, a spring of the karmic mechanism.

That inward will we find when we get back to it, to be a free will, not armoured in a separate liberty, but free in harmony with the freedom of the Spirit guiding and compelling Nature in all souls and in all happenings. This thing our outward mind cannot see easily because the practical truth which it feels is the energy of Nature at once working on us from without and forming too our action from within and reacting upon herself by the mental will, her



instrument, to continue her self-shaping for farther Karma and farther consequence. Yet are we aware of a self and the presence of this self imposes on our minds the idea of someone who wills, someone who shapes even the nature and is responsible for consequence.

To understand one must cease to dwell exclusively on the act and will of the moment and its immediate consequences. Our present will and personality are bound by many things, by our physical and vital heredity, by a past creation of our mental nature, by environmental forces, by limitation, by ignorance. But our soul behind is greater and older than our present personality. The soul is not the result of our heredity, but has prepared by its own action and affinities this heredity. It has drawn around it these environmental forces by past karma and consequence. It has created in other lives the mental nature of which now it makes use. That ancient soul of long standing, sempiternal in being, *purusah purāṇah sanātānah*, has accepted the outward limitation, the outward ignorance as a means of figuring out in a restriction of action from moment to moment the significance of its infinity and the sequence of its works of power. To live in this knowledge is not to take away the value and potency of the moment's will and act, but to give it an immensely increased meaning and importance. Then each moment becomes full of things infinite and can be seen taking up the work of a past eternity and shaping the work of a future eternity. Our every thought, will, action carries with it its power of future self-determination and is too a help or a hindrance for the spiritual evolution of those around us and a force in the universal working. For the soul in us takes in the influences it receives from others for its own self-determination and gives out influences which the soul in them uses for their growth and experience. Our individual life becomes an immensely greater thing in itself and is convinced too of an abiding unity with the march of the universe.

And karma and consequence also get a wider meaning. At present we fix too much on the particular will and act of the moment and a particular consequence in a given time. But the particular only receives its value by all of which it is a part, all from which it comes, all to which it moves. We fix too much also on the externalities of karma and consequence, this good or that bad action and result of action. But the real consequence which the soul is after is a growth in the manifestation of its being, an enlarging of its range and action of power, its comprehension of delight of being, its delight of creation and self-creation, and not only its own but the same things in others with which its greater becoming and joy are one. Karma and consequence draw their meaning from their value to the soul; they are steps by which it moves towards the perfection of its manifested nature. And even when this object is won, our action need not cease, for it will keep its value and be a greater force of help for all these others with whom in self we are one. Nor can it be said that it will have no self-value to the soul grown aware of freedom and infinity; for who shall persuade me that my infinity can only be an eternal full stop, an endless repose, an infinite cessation? Much rather should infinity be eternally capable of an infinite self-expression. (*The Problem of Rebirth*, In CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 352-355)

## Freedom and predetermination

by the Mother

*Can it be said in justification of one's past that whatever has happened in one's life had to happen?*

Obviously, what has happened had to happen; it would not have been, if it had not been intended. Even the mistakes that we have committed and the adversities that fell upon us had to be, because there was some necessity in them, some utility for our lives. But in truth these things cannot be explained mentally and should not be. For all that happened was necessary, not for any mental reason, but to lead us to something beyond what the mind imagines. But is there any need to explain after all? The whole universe explains everything at every moment and a particular thing happens because the whole universe is what it is. But this does not mean that we are bound over to a blind acquiescence in Nature's inexorable law. You can accept the past as a settled fact and perceive the necessity in it, and still you can use the experience it gave you to build up the power consciously to guide and shape your present and your future.

*Is the time also of an occurrence arranged in the Divine Plan of things?*

All depends upon the plane from which one sees and speaks. There is a plane of divine consciousness in which all is known absolutely, and the whole plan of things foreseen and predetermined. That way of seeing lives in the highest reaches of the Supramental; it is the Supreme's own vision. But when we do not possess that consciousness, it is useless to speak in terms that hold good only in that region and are not our present effective way of seeing things. For at a lower level of consciousness nothing is realised or fixed beforehand; all is in the process of making. Here there are no settled facts, there is only the play of possibilities; out of the clash of possibilities is realised the thing that has to happen. On this plane we can choose and select; we can refuse one possibility and accept another; we can follow one path, turn away from another. And that we can do, even though what is actually happening may have been foreseen and predetermined in a higher plane.

The Supreme Consciousness knows everything beforehand, because everything is realised there in her eternity. But for the sake of her play and in order to carry out actually on the physical plane what is foreordained in her own supreme self, she moves here upon earth as if she did not know the whole story; she works as if it was a new and untried thread that she was weaving. It is this apparent forgetfulness of her own foreknowledge in the higher consciousness that gives to the individual in the active life of the world his sense of freedom and independence and initiative. These things in him are her pragmatic tools or devices,



and it is through this machinery that the movements and issues planned and foreseen elsewhere are realised here.

It may help you to understand if you take the example of an actor. An actor knows the whole part he has to play; he has in his mind the exact sequence of what is to happen on the stage. But when he is on the stage, he has to appear as if he did not know anything; he has to feel and act as if he were experiencing all these things for the first time, as if it was an entirely new world with all its chance events and surprises that was unrolling before his eyes.

*Is there then no real freedom? Is everything absolutely determined, even your freedom, and is fatalism the highest secret?*

Freedom and fatality, liberty and determinism are truths that obtain on different levels of consciousness. It is ignorance that makes the mind put the two on the same level and pit one against the other. Consciousness is not a single uniform reality, it is complex; it is not something like a flat plain, it is multidimensional. On the highest height is the Supreme and in the lowest depth is matter; and there is an infinite gradation of levels of consciousness between this lowest depth and the highest height.

In the plane of matter and on the level of the ordinary consciousness you are bound hand and foot. A slave to the mechanism of Nature, you are tied to the chain of Karma, and there, in that chain, whatever happens is rigorously the consequence of what has been done before. There is an illusion of independent movement, but in fact you repeat what all others do, you echo Nature's world-movements, you revolve helplessly on the crushing wheel of her cosmic machine.

But it need not be so. You can shift your place if you will; instead of being below, crushed in the machinery or moved like a puppet, you can rise and look from above and by changing your consciousness you can even get hold of some handle to move apparently inevitable circumstances and change fixed conditions. Once you draw yourself up out of the whirlpool and stand high above, you see you are free. Free from all compulsions, not only you are no longer a passive instrument, but you become an active agent. You are not only not bound by the consequences of your action, but you can even change the consequences. Once you see the play of forces, once you raise yourself to a plane of consciousness where lie the origins of forces and identify yourself with these dynamic sources, you belong no longer to what is moved but to that which moves.

This precisely is the aim of Yoga,—to get out of the cycle of Karma into a divine movement. By Yoga you leave the mechanical round of Nature in which you are an ignorant slave, a helpless and miserable tool, and rise into another plane where you become a conscious participant and a dynamic agent in the working out of a Higher Destiny. This movement of the consciousness follows a double line. First of all there is an ascension; you raise yourself out of the level of material consciousness into superior ranges. But this ascension of the lower into the higher calls a descent of the higher into the lower. When you rise above the earth, you bring



down too upon earth something of the above,—some light, some power that transforms or tends to transform its old nature. And then these things that were distinct, disconnected and disparate from each other—the higher in you and the lower, the inner and the outer strata of your being and consciousness—meet and are slowly joined together and gradually they fuse into one truth, one harmony.

It is in this way that what are called miracles happen. The world is made up of innumerable planes of consciousness and each has its own distinct laws; the laws of one plane do not hold good for another. A miracle is nothing but a sudden descent, a bursting forth of another consciousness and its powers—most often it is the powers of the vital—into this plane of matter. There is a precipitation, upon the material mechanism, of the mechanism of a higher plane. It is as though a lightning flash tore through the cloud of our ordinary consciousness and poured into it other forces, other movements and sequences. The result we call a miracle, because we see a sudden alteration, an abrupt interference with the natural laws of our own ordinary range, but the reason and order of it we do not know or see, because the source of the miracle lies in another plane. Such incursions of the worlds beyond into our world of matter are not very uncommon, they are even a constant phenomenon, and if we have eyes and know how to observe we can see miracles in abundance. Especially must they be constant among those who are endeavouring to bring down the higher reaches into the earth-consciousness below.

*Has creation a definite aim? Is there something like a final end to which it is moving?*

No, the universe is a movement that is eternally unrolling itself. There is nothing which you can fix upon as the end and one aim. But for the sake of action we have to section the movement, which is itself unending, and to say that this or that is the goal, for in action we need something upon which we can fix our aim. (*Questions and Answers 1929, Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 3, pp. 27-32*)



## Poetry room

### The bird of fire

Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went  
glimmering over a sunfire curve to the haze of the west,  
Skimming, a messenger sail, the sapphire-summer waste of  
a soundless wayless burning sea.

Now in the eve of the waning world the colour and splendour  
returning drift through a blue-flicker air back to my  
breast,  
Flame and shimmer staining the rapture-white foam-vest of  
the waters of Eternity.

Gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire, late and slow  
have you come from the Timeless. Angel, here unto me  
Bringst thou for travailing earth a spirit silent and free or  
His crimson passion of love divine,—

White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats  
brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,  
Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in  
Time from his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine?

White-rose-altar the eternal Silence built, make now my nature  
wide, an intimate guest of His solitude,  
But golden above it the body of One in Her diamond sphere  
with Her halo of star-bloom and passion-ray!  
Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul climbing  
the hard crag-teeth world, wounded and nude,  
A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase of  
moon-edged night and rising day.

O Flame who art Time's last boon of the sacrifice, offering-  
flower held by the finite's gods to the Infinite,  
O marvel bird with the burning wings of light and the  
unbarred lids that look beyond all space,  
One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of  
mind and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight;  
Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire  
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.

—Sri Aurobindo

### Shiva

#### *The Inconscient Creator*

A face on the cold dire mountain peaks  
Grand and still; its lines white and austere  
Match with the unmeasured snowy streaks  
Cutting heaven, implacable and sheer.

Above it a mountain of matted hair  
Aeon-coiled on that deathless and lone head  
In its solitude huge of lifeless air  
Round, above illimitably spread.

A moon-ray on the forehead, blue and pale,  
Stretched afar its finger of chill light  
Illumining emptiness. Stern and male  
Mask of peace indifferent in might!

But out from some Infinite born now came  
Over giant snows and the still face  
A quiver and colour of crimson flame,  
Fire-point in immensities of space.

Light-spear-tips revealed the mighty shape,  
Tore the secret veil of the heart's hold;  
In that diamond heart the fires undrape,  
Living core, a brazier of gold.

This was the closed mute and burning source  
Whence were formed the worlds and their star-dance;  
Life sprang, a self-rapt inconscient Force,  
Love, a blazing seed, from that flame-trance.

—Sri Aurobindo

### Fire on the mountain

It was him back there,  
he had come back for me,  
when I shattered the mountain rock with my cry.  
He was there on the mountain,  
while it trembled and burned,  
Sri Aurobindo,  
with bells on.

What precious little chance  
all this had to come to be.  
The precious little chance  
that he has come to me.  
To bless this bare semblant  
tinder of burnt offering.

The one some of his friends  
once called:  
Fire-Spark.

We met in the endless moment  
where mind is not  
and this living death never was  
and nothing one  
could ever want



would even matter.  
Only there, is the ardor of the Flame.  
Not the mind that thinks.  
Not the life that swims.  
But the soul that makes us Matter.  
*Where is this place?*  
Empty, and full of love.  
Standing in and out of time.  
Where an essence that doesn't change  
mingles with Existence  
that is only change,  
who art by Love forever changes.  
What am I here doing?  
What has been the work.  
It was building this soul into a being.  
But there were burning grades of light  
that would only begin  
after some Divine Will  
had seared me down  
to a divine spark.

Couldn't the Divine Will have gone in some other way?

Comfort's gone,  
plans crippled.  
Cruel, mindless family ghosts.  
Yet by his honorable magic  
I was graciously escorted  
into a respectable adulthood.

—Rick Lipschutz

### **A simple prayer**

The little that I give of me  
Shall by thy grace increase  
For I am meant for none but thee  
My labor shall not cease.

An instrument awakened now  
To all that must be done  
That truth may reign and night shall know  
The radiance of thy sun.

The ages called to thee, "Come down,"  
The earth in sorrow weeps,  
Evil's tenacity has grown  
And man unconscious, sleeps

Unknowing as the golden day  
Grows brighter in the east;  
Our hearts shall bear the brilliant ray  
That kills the raging beast.

When all thy work on earth is done  
Let me serve thee still,  
To live in thee, for thee alone  
Thy love my soul to fill.

—Narad Eggenberger

### **Infinite journey**

My self-actualization odyssey is infinite.  
With a smile and faith in my heart  
I wholly offer my being to Thee.

As thy loving hands remould me,  
I surrender sincerely to transform  
Discovering evermore myself as Thine.

Rishi Kutsa Angirasa  
Ascended to Heaven with Indra  
But nothing else changed.

I aspire for the descent of Supermind  
Fulfilling humanity's aeonian aspirations;  
Enable a collective divine life on earth.

I am Thine as Thou will.  
Reveal my true being and soul's quest  
Facilitate my oneness with Thee.

Let me become what Thou decree;  
Resonating with equanimity and harmony  
I am in Thy servitude with humility and delight.

Mythical Arun – charioteer of the Sun  
Inspiring others to Truth, Beauty and Bliss;  
Enable me, My Lord, to serve Thee on Earth.

—Arun Vaidya

### **Let me wake into your beautiful dream**

Let me wake into your beautiful dream  
And see the colors of that luminous day.  
Tune my hapless heart to harmonies of love,  
Carry me along like a sweetly-sung song.  
Speak to me softly your secrets of life,  
Visit me often in my visions at night.  
Take with me you on your travels above,  
Show me the magic of those wondrous worlds.  
Illumine my way with your diamond ray,  
Open my sight to your vast golden sun.

—Larry Seidlitz



## *Apropos*

By remaining psychically open to the Mother, all that is necessary for work or Sadhana develops progressively, that is one of the chief secrets, the central secret of the Sadhana. —Sri Aurobindo

There are no words that can explain the magnificence of the Grace, how the whole is combined so that all may go as quickly as possible. —The Mother

When your life is filled with the desire to see the holiness in everyday life, something magical happens: ordinary life becomes extraordinary, and the very process of life begins to nourish your soul! —Rabbi Harold Kushner

Every hardship, every joy, every temptation is a challenge of the spirit, that the human soul may prove itself. The great chain of necessity wherewith we are bound has divine significance, and nothing happens which has not some service in working out the sublime destiny of the human soul. —Elias A. Ford

Learn to get in touch with the silence within yourself and know that everything in this life has a purpose. There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from. —Elizabeth Kübler-Ross

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always hopes, always perseveres. —The Bible

Compassion...is an understanding of the unity of all things. It is an awareness that I is not separate from thou, that whatever is happening to the planet, or to another person, is happening to me. Compassion is total empathy, an absolute sense of connection. —Paul Rezendes

The heart is like a garden. It can grow compassion or fear, resentment or love. What seeds will you plant there? —Buddha

Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment. —Thich Nhat Hanh

To live a spiritual life we must first find the courage to enter the desert of our loneliness and to change it by gentle and persistent efforts into a garden of solitude. —Henri Nouwen

We need silence to be alone with God, to speak to him, to listen to him, to ponder his words deep in our hearts. We need to be alone with God in silence to be renewed and transformed. Silence gives us a new outlook on life. In it we are filled with the energy of God himself that makes us do all things with joy. —Mother Teresa

Silence of the heart is necessary so you can hear God everywhere—in the closing of a door, in the person who needs you, in the birds that sing, in the flowers, in the animals. —Mother Teresa

All wilderness seems to be full of tricks and plans to drive and draw us up into God's light. —John Muir

When we try to pick anything out by itself, we find it hitched to everything in the Universe. —John Muir

When we pay attention, whatever we are doing...is transformed and becomes part of our spiritual path. —Rick Fields

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. —William Blake

Those who are awake live in a state of constant amazement. —Buddha

You never change something by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. —Buckminster Fuller

And when he sees Me in all and he sees all in Me, then I never leave him and he never leaves Me. —Bhagavad Gita

Everyone is a genius, but if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. —Albert Einstein

I believe people are in our lives for a reason. We're here to learn from each other. —Gillian Anderson

How people treat you is their karma... how you react is yours. —Wayne Dyer

Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change. —Wayne Dyer

We would never learn to be brave and patient if there were only joy in the world. Think of all the beauty still left around you... and be happy. —Anne Frank

We tend to forget that happiness doesn't come as a result of getting something we don't have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have. —Frederick Koenig

A man is the facade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide....the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Beauty is not in the face. Beauty is a Light in the heart. —Kahlil Gibran

He is truly happy who makes others happy. Those who face that which is actually before them, unburdened by the past, undistracted by the future, these are those who live, who make the best use of their lives, these are those who have found the secret of contentment. —Alban Goodier

The words that enlighten the soul are more precious than jewels. —Hazrat Inayat Khan