

# Collaboration

Winter, 1993

Vol. XIX, No. 1

Savitri  
Part I -  
Book I  
The Book of Beginnings  
§ 19 The Symbol Dawn

It was the hour before the Gods awake.  
Across the fathoms of the divine event.  
The huge forboding, upward of all night, alone,  
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' moor.  
It mate unconscious, soulless of the unknown,  
Abyss of the unloved infinite  
Whose fatherless eyes occupied the world,  
Cradled the cosmic dream of ignorant force  
In noise, creative slumber, handling the suns,  
That came all things in its somnambulist wheel.  
Across the vast enormous traces of space,  
Its formless stirrer without mind or life,  
A shadow spinning through the endless vast,  
Earth, wheeled abandoned on the hollow gulfs,  
Forgetful of her spirit and her fate.  
The impassive skies were neutral, empty, still.  
Then a black presence yawned towards distant change.  
Along lone line of horizontals, here  
Like a congress, souls tempting a desert heart  
Tumbled the far ruin of life's obscure sleep.  
Apparent on some unseen eternal verge  
A haze of duty looked through the faint rift,  
Calling for the venture of consciousness and joy  
Compelled renewed consent to see and feel.  
A thought was sown in the unbounded void,  
A sense was born within the darkness' depths,  
A memory quivered with the least of time,  
As if a soul long dead were moved to live;  
So the oblivion that precedes the fall  
Blotted the crowded tablets of the past  
And all that was destroyed must be rebuilt  
And old endeavour laboured out once more.  
At first a habit that hardly dared to be  
Amid the night's furrow indifference,  
A slow, intricate, gesture's dim affair,  
The movement still of transfiguring touch  
Permeated the vast black quietude  
And beauty, and wonder, distributed the fields of God.

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### In the Next Issue: Is There Life After Auroville?

Auroville is 25 years old this year. Many *Collaboration* readers have been involved with the international community, either as residents, as fund-raising friends or both. We would like to hear your stories and reflections about life in and out of Auroville. Please call us at 802-869-2789 or write to the address below if you would like to contribute, either through an article or an interview.

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Larger contributions, all tax-deductible, are welcome for the work of the Association. In addition, contributions for Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may be made through Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc.

Subscriptions should be sent to Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc., 2288 Fulton St, Suite 310, Berkeley, CA 94704.

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Printed in the United States of America.

The expressed opinions of the authors are not necessarily those of The Sri Aurobindo Association or the editors.

# Off The Charts

By Gordon Korstange

**T**WO PEOPLE ARE reading *Savitri*. One is from the West, one from **India**. As they read, the westerner suddenly remarks, "That was a good line." The Indian looks up wonderingly. How could one line of *Savitri* be better than any other? Is not this epic poem a seamless vision of the journey toward the life divine? To judge it line by line is to judge it with the intellect that picks apart and classifies. The westerner reads on:

... Mid an obscure occult machinery,  
Capture the mystic Morse whose  
measured lilt  
Transmits the messages of the cosmic  
Force.

and stops: "... the mystic Morse ... !  
... the mystic Morse!"

The westerner looks up into the curious, slightly shocked eyes of the Indian. They have landed on one of those islands that E.M. Forster describes so well in *Passage To India*: "A pause in the wrong place, an intonation misunderstood, and a whole conversation went awry."

My readings of *Savitri* usually follow this pattern, since both readers **are** a part of me. I begin, often by concentrating and opening to a place in the text, just as I do now:

A mightier task remained than all he  
had done.  
To that he turned from which all  
being comes,  
A sign attending from the Secrecy  
Which knows the Truth **ungrasped**  
behind our thoughts  
In the unapproachable stillness of his  
soul,  
Intense, one-pointed monumental,  
lone,  
Patient he sat like an incarnate hope  
Motionless on a pedestal of prayer.

"A pedestal of prayer ..."? I stop. The sounds are pleasing, but the image doesn't connect. Never mind. Go on: "... This now he willed to discover and **exile**,/The element in him betraying God." Stop, yes, a good line. Read it again. Go on:

All Nature's recondite spaces were  
stripped bare,

All her dim crypts and corners  
searched with **fire**  
Where refugee instincts and  
unshaped revolts  
Could shelter find in darkness'  
sanctuary  
Against the white purity of heaven's  
cleansing flame.

**Oops**, lost again. No objective correlative here for me. Don't look up. Best not to stop. Best to read aloud. I've been here before.

And once I begin to read **aloud**, the words emerge from the page and **flow** out into space rather than linger in the left side of my brain; once the sounds of the lines reverberate in my body and propel me forward, I stop no more:

Overpowered were form and  
memory's limiting line;  
The covering mind was seized and  
tom apart;  
It was dissolved and now no more  
could be,  
The one Consciousness that made the  
world was seen;  
All now was luminosity and force.  
Abolished in its last thin fainting  
trace  
The circle of the little self was gone. .

I **began** writing poetry around the same time I began reading *Savitri*. I'm sure its sounds and rhythms stirred something inside me that gave birth to my first line of verse. But the words that came out were not "Force, Inconscient," or "Joy."

I had not been raised on those words. As Dana Gioia in his book, *Can Poetry Mutter*, **observes**, "... Romanticism's emphasis on intensity made poetry seem so 'fleeting and quintessential that eventually it dwindled into a mainly lyric medium. As verse-which had previously been a popular medium for narrative, satire, **drama**, even history and scientific speculation-retreated into lyric, prose usurped much of its cultural territory."

The poems I read by modern American authors followed **William Carlos Williams'** dictum, "No ideas except in things," and the result focused on a moment or a series of images, usually **from** the natural world, that opened up into a minor epiphany at the end.

The best of these poems can be (for they are still the predominant form today) both intense and very beautiful.

They begin with the writer's own experience and use the writer's own, natural language. They incorporate sound and rhythm in subtle ways. The would-be poet is not constrained by the rules of verse, nor must spend hours crafting that experience into a form that, to slang-conditioned American ears, seems artificial and distorting.

The worst of these poems could be written out as prose and it would be impossible to tell the difference. They attempt to convey an experience so narrow and private ("journal poetry," one might call them) that only repeated re-reading can open them up, and the reader usually prefers to pass on. They are "Macpoems," as Donald Hall says, since they tend to sound and read alike-and their taste is bland.

Nevertheless, these poems drew me in a way that *Savitri* did not. I couldn't relate to its capitalized, abstract words. Though I loved the narrative parts of the epic, I balked at the repetitive passages of philosophy with sometimes jarring metaphors:

For all we have acquired soon loses  
worth,  
An old disvalued credit in Time's  
bank,  
Imperfection's cheque drawn on the  
Inconscient.

Instead, I read the suggestive poetry of Denese Levertov:

An awe so quiet  
I don't know when it began.

A gratitude  
had begun  
to sing in me.

Was there  
some moment  
dividing  
song from no song?

(*Oblique Prayers*, New Directions, 1981, p.85)

And when I wrote, I took inspiration from her and others such as **Galway Kinnell**, poets who valued sound and rhythm, but who used language that I felt at home with. Even though I understood why Auro-poets would imitate the language and style of Sri Aurobindo; even though I agreed with the idea of mantric verse; even though I felt the power of that verse when I

continued on p. 16

# The Mother on Savitri

September 18, 1962

**I** DON'T HAVE FAR TO GO on my translation of *The Synthesis of Yoga* (it's going very quickly), and I have found what I'll do next. . . . It will be something like those notebooks [*Prayers and Meditations*]. I am going to take the whole section of *Savitri* (to start with, I'll see later) from "The Debate of Love and Death" to the point where the Supreme Lord makes his prophecy about the earth's future; it's long \_ several pages long. This is for my own satisfaction.

I am going to translate it line by line (not word by word—line by line), leaving a space between each line; and when I've finished I will try to recapture it in French (gesture of pulling down from above).

I am not doing it to show it to people or to have anyone read it, but to remain in *Savitri's* atmosphere, for I love that atmosphere. It will give me an hour of concentration, and I'll see if by chance. . . . I have no gift for poetry, but I'll see if it comes! (It surely won't come from a mentality developed in this present existence—there's no poetic gift!) So it's interesting, I'll see if anything comes. I am going to give it a try.

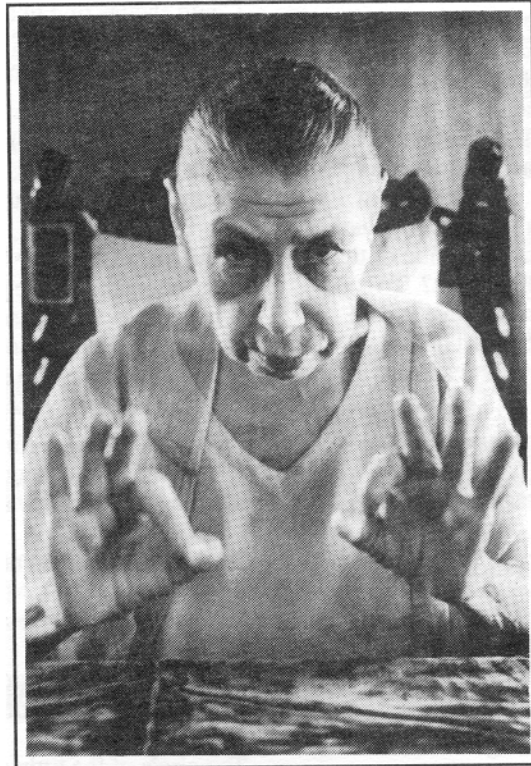
I know that light. I am immediately plunged into it each time I read *Savitri*. It is a very, very beautiful light.

So I am going to see.

First of all, I'll concentrate on it just as Sri Aurobindo said it in English, using French words. Then I'll see if something comes WITHOUT changing anything—that is, if the same inspiration he had comes in French. It will be an interesting thing to do. If I can do one, two, three lines a day, that's all I need; I will spend one hour every day like that.

I don't have anything in mind. All I know is that being in that light above gives me great joy. For it is a supramental light—a supramental light of aesthetic beauty, and very, very harmonious.

So now I don't mind finishing *The Synthesis*. I was a little bothered because I have no other books by Sri Aurobindo to translate that can help me in my sadhana: there was only *The*



"Decision"

*Synthesis*. As I said, it always came right on time, just when it was needed for a particular experience.

When this new translation is finished (because I know *Savitri*, I know what it is), I know that when it's finished . . . either I'll be there or else things will take a very long time.

All his other books that could help me are already translated. And with *Savitri*, the idea isn't to make a translation, but to SEE. To try something. To give me the daily experience of that contact.

I had some magnificent experiences when I read it the first time (two years ago, I believe). Wonderful, wonderful experiences! And since then, each time I read those lines, the same thing happens \_ not the same experience, but I come in contact with the same realm.

It will be an interesting thing to do.

It's more interesting than listening to everybody's stories! Oh . . . (Mother raps her head).

That's all.

## ADDENDUM

(These are the last lines of *Savitri*

Mother translated. They were found in her notebook under the date July 1, 1970:)

But how shall I seek rest in endless peace

Who house the mighty Mother's violent force,

Her vision turned to read the enigmaed world,

Her will tempered in the blaze of Wisdom's sun

And the flaming silence of her heart of love?

The world is a spiritual paradox  
Invented by a need in the unseen,  
A poor translation to the creature's sense

Of That which for ever exceeds idea and speech,

A symbol of what can never be symbolised,

A language mispronounced, misspelt, yet true.

(*Savitri*, Book X, Canto IV, Page 647.)

*Mother's Agenda* 1962, Volume 3; Institute for Evolutionary Research, N.Y., 1982.

# “Savitri Is A Gift Which Comes Wrapped in Words.”

A Talk By John E. Collins

*Editor's Note: This talk was given during the April 24, 1992 Darshan gathering in Greenville, South Carolina. Because of problems in the recording, portions of the talk were impossible to retrieve.*

IMAGINE HOW SURPRISED I was to learn that I was the guest speaker when I got here. It's quite an honor and I appreciate it. When I asked Jay what I should say he said, "Oh you can read your article" — which I wrote ten years ago! So at first I was afraid that I had nothing to say about *Savitri*, but as I thought about it I did decide to speak, and you can hear whatever the spirit wishes you to hear.

This is *Savitri* as I think about it now after about ten years. I spent a number of years reading and studying *Savitri*, and nothing could have been more joyful. I went to graduate school, and everybody who goes to graduate school has to write a dissertation. You write a dissertation on something upon which you have to become an expert. That means you have to spend hours every day for years to write a dissertation.

I was fortunate enough to be able to study *Savitri* for my dissertation. Can you imagine what a gift that was? Since I knew nothing about Sri Aurobindo or *Savitri* when I went to graduate school, I am happy to give back whatever I can of that spiritual gift. I thought about *Savitri* this morning and what I could say without preparing and believe me, a professor who is not prepared is frightened. So you pray for me.

As I think of *Savitri* now, just while I prepare to go to India, I want to explore the metaphor of a gift that is beautifully wrapped. So beautifully wrapped that if you give the gift to a **child—one** who is not knowledgeable about gifts—the child might just examine the wrapping and never unwrap the gift.

*Savitri* is like that. *Savitri* is a gift which comes wrapped in words. The words are beautiful. The words are

meaningful. The words are illuminating. But they are, as a matter of fact, just words. And the message, of course, is the gift.

As I talk at the level of the wrapping, that is, as I use words to talk about *Savitri*, I am as aware as you that this is just the wrapping. I am speaking to you at the level which Sri Aurobindo would call the lower mind. I would hope that some of the higher mind is in this, but I am **speaking** on the analytical level, on an intellectual level as a scholar looks at the subject.

## *Savitrias* a Gift

I think of *Savitri* as a symphony which has within it beautiful harmonies and beautiful singing. That's the metaphor I offer to you. Let's take the first line of *Savitri*: "It was the hour before the Gods **awake**." If we examine that line we can **find** many levels.

On one level it's poetry, it's beautiful poetry. It's describing the night before the dawn comes, and what a beautiful image it is to think of this as the hour before the gods awake. It's such a beautiful level. It's darkest just before the dawn. That isn't quite right scientifically, but in a psychological sense it is. So this is a moment in time when the darkness is most concentrated and we're waiting for that **first** burst of light. Just at that poetic level we have beauty and meaning.

At 'another level *Savitri* is a story, a drama about a spiritual quest. But at the human level it is a story about a woman in love who rescues her lover from death, as we in our romantic **relationships** rescue one another from the death of loneliness, which we all experience. So at that point this line reminds us that we as human beings can relate to one another in terms of relationships, or those moments when we are separated and alienated from those we love.

The most important level of meaning for me as I wrote my dissertation about *Savitri* was the **spiritual**—*Savitri* is, as you know, a spiritual

autobiography. Not every line, but most of the lines and certainly the outline and the story and the flow is a reflection of Aurobindo's response to his spiritual experience. That's why it was important to me. I was studying mysticism, and from that point of view *Savitri* is rare, because only a few mystics have written autobiographies and even fewer have written autobiographies from the overmental spiritual level.

**I think of *Savitrias* a symphony which has within it beautiful harmonies and beautiful singing. That's the metaphor I offer to you.**

*So Savitri* is a gift, a jewel, a treasure for those who wish to study mysticism. It's a **first-hand** story which is there for all of us who wish to understand the spiritual, as well as we can, at the intellectual level.

In this line I see reflected experiences in Aurobindo's life. If you remember when he came back to India after having been away for the first twenty years of his life. Even though he was physically in India for awhile at a very young age, he was mentally and psychologically in a western context, using the English **language**. As he came back to India he had an awakening experience, a realization experience.

This was the hour before the Gods awake—this **was** the time before he was aware of India and all the spiritual realities which that represented to him. And also before he was aware himself of spiritual realities. Before this time he was an atheist and agnostic. He had no thought of god. He was thoroughly

enmeshed in the intellectual and theoretical. It was quite an awakening to him to be given this gift of spiritual insight. And there was another awakening to come when he finally met The Mother.

So for Aurobindo there were times of darkness and then times of light. And as a matter of fact, as you look at the spiritual autobiography there is every level and every realm of consciousness, and reality has its own darkness and its own light. At the beginning of each level it is light, and towards the end it is darkness because you must break through to the next level, which then becomes even more light than the darkness of the level below.

Every spiritual level has its light and darkness, and every time there's motion in the spiritual realm there is the experience of this hour before the god awakes—before the breakthrough to another level.

Another level at which I can understand this line is the personal psychological development of each of us. There was a time in this body when we were in darkness in terms of individual consciousness, that wonderful time from about conception to eighteen months, when we make no separation in our consciousness between ourselves and our environment, particularly our parents.

It must be a time of darkness in terms of intellectual recognition of who we are as an autonomous individual self, but it is a time of light in recognizing our unity with others. When we pass from this first stage of our psychological development—the stage when we are in union with our environment—to the stage where we recognize our individual selves, we really pass in a sense from darkness to light as well as passing from light to darkness. And this is one of the things I see as genius about Aurobindo—he recognized that light and darkness go together, they're not in combat with one another.

There are other stages of development as each of us as individuals pass through life in this body. We develop cognitively and each of these stages is like a spiritual journey. For example, the stage of cognitive development where we as children understand things only a certain way, and then come to the point where we grow intellectually

and understand things in a broader more holistic context. All of us go through that kind of development. Each of us experiences these changes in our life, even though we may not note them.

We also note moral changes as we understand that as children we think of right and wrong as absolutes, and it is very clear, and later we find things are a bit more complex than that. Our moral consciousness develops. Every level of moral consciousness means that we have to leave what was so comfortable and wonderful for us at that point. And so it's as though we leave what we call an inner darkness which becomes the light.

**Every spiritual level has its light and darkness, and every time there's motion in the spiritual realm there is the experience of this hour before the god awakes**

This hour before the gods awake is also a metaphor for the evolution of consciousness within the human collective society. We have gone through levels of development much as the individual person goes through levels. And as we look at the history of human beings on earth we see that this development is on every level.

At the physical level I think what informs me most about Aurobindo and what I think of as his poetic genius, is that we are being tuned into many layers of the subtle physical. The overtones and undertones of this music which we may not hear vibrate within us.

Thus when we read this line, we might be unconsciously reminded of some physical events. "It was the hour before the gods awake" might refer to the moment before the Big Bang. It might refer to the moment before the explosion of a star. It might refer to the moment before some chemicals came together to unite to make

something. And so on, as we think about that physical level.

On the vital level, "The hour before the gods awake" might be the time on earth before life appeared, when existence on earth was dominated by matter. We might think of "the hour before the gods awake" as the moment before conception of a living being. Or the moment before gastrulation. Then finally, this "hour before the gods awake" is the hour before each of our deaths.

At the mental level it's a metaphor for passing from one state of consciousness to another. We all pass from sleep to the waking state. So we experience that transformation. We pass from ignorance to knowledge. We pass from confusion to clarity, and so on. So this sense of transition exists at all of these levels, and many more that I'm sure you could add if you think about it. As a matter of fact, Aurobindo himself did not believe that all of *Savitri* was overmental poetry. He said that some of it had not been transformed. But most of it certainly is, and the overmental poetry has all of these harmonics in it, all the time, whether we are aware of them or not.

**Aurobindo As Mozart**

It has been helpful to me in reading *Savitri* for meditation and devotion to think of *Savitri* as music. And I think of Aurobindo as a Mozart. Mozart, to me, is the musician who heard music better than anyone. His music is rare in the realm of creation though I don't know if it's overmental. When Mozart wrote music he was sure that he was being given the music from above. There was no doubt in his mind, and the way that he wrote you would think that it is true, for like Aurobindo he'd sit down and overmentally write it.

Now I hope you will respond and help me on this. I think of Aurobindo as having plugged into the overmental level of language. Language is something that is unique to human beings. All human beings have language. Their languages are very different, and so if Jay were to speak to me in Gujarati, I couldn't understand, and yet there are elements in that language that make it human language.

All human thought is made of certain concepts and certain connections between those concepts. I think

that what Aurobindo has done is to give us the music of all these concepts. How they play with one another and how they harmonize with one another. The genius is that Aurobindo sees these concepts as being not in conflict, not in debate with one another to see which can defeat the other, but he sees them as in dialogue with one another—he sees them as harmonic.

The harmony of all the levels between absolute darkness and absolute light sings in his poetry. This is the song. This is the harmony. And even if we don't understand it as we read it at an intellectual level, we will understand it at the level at which we are open, and as we read, *Savitri* will also open other levels.

### ***Savitri* as a Spiritual Journey**

So I see *Savitri* as poetry, yes, but also as a spiritual journey. I have only recently begun to read it again. As I pick it up and start reading it I can again hear the music. I can't locate all the notes, and I don't recognize all the concepts right away. I have to read it and read it and think about it and think about it before it comes. But it's there and so it's like listening to Mozart. It's well integrated.

**"It was the hour before the gods awake" might refer to the moment before the Big Bang. It might refer to the moment before the explosion of a star**

It's integrated in such a way that it would be better if each person could read it in their own language so they could read it and then recognize the elements that are in their own language. Aurobindo is a superb linguist because he recognizes what is above language—the metasytem which is the basis of language. Logicians and mathematicians tell us that human

thought, in order to understand itself and transcend itself, must always rely on a metasytem. It cannot have a system of thought, a system of mathematics, a system of logic which can explain itself. It is always self-contradictory in some way. I think that what *Savitri* does is plug us into this metasytem. That is at the level of the language, it lifts our minds.

I'm a novice. I went from graduate school in physics to religion. I was just learning. I wondered what I was going to do for a dissertation. How am I going to become an expert? One of my professors was a kind person, which is unusual for graduate professors, and he thought that I had to do something which was accessible to me in terms of language and something that wouldn't require me to learn a whole lot of things that I didn't already know.

He suggested that I do something in contemporary Hinduism and gave me a list of names to read. I started reading and came to Sri Aurobindo. I knew that I was biting off a lot with him, but I said I was willing to spend the time. One reason I did this was very practical: I thought that no-one in academia knew anything about Aurobindo. If I wrote on him, I would be pretty safe.

I didn't know what I was getting into, because I thought I would write on something in *The Life Divine*. I read it and thought that I understood it fairly well, but I said, "There's more." I picked up *Savitri*, read the first line, "It was the hour before the gods awake," and said, "Oh-oh, that's it."

I went to my professor and told him that I wanted to write on *Savitri*, and he discouraged me, saying that it was "muddled poetry," which critics call it because the metaphors are so complex that they appear to be confusing. They are confusing until you learn to hear the music. It's more like contemporary music than Mozart, to tell you the truth, because the themes don't mesh exactly—you have to be aware when he makes transitions, and the transitions are so quick sometimes.

I told my professor that I thought I could write on Aurobindo because *Savitri* is his spiritual autobiography, and I said that sort of intuitively. I told him that I'd learn more about mysticism, because this is "first-hand," and where am I ever going to get a first-hand report on mysticism if not here.

He said that I could try it.

I spent about a year reading through *Savitri*, trying to understand and come up with a paper that could be understood by academicians and still have some integrity, because what I really wanted to write wouldn't have been accepted.

**For over a year, every night from 7 to 11 p.m. I immersed myself in it, and while I was doing that, the other levels opened up in me.**

It was wonderful to me. It was like God led me to that, gave it to me as a gift which, the more I unwrapped the more it meant to me spiritually but also in a practical way. I went through the program very rapidly.

Having read *Savitri*, and having had some understanding of it (I'm not saying that I understand *Savitri* at every level because I'm sure I don't—I could read that line for the rest of my life), I would say that this is where the truth and light will speak to you. It has to me, and every time I read now I am transported into my higher self, my better self. For me that's not very high, but it's as high as my present consciousness allows.

I do it like music. In learning a new piece of music, if it's simple you can sight read it. A lot of poetry you can sight read. *Savitri* is not simple. I have to analyze it line by line, word by word. That's what I did. I thought of it as my meditation. For over a year, every night from 7 to 11 p.m. I immersed myself in it, and while I was doing that, the other levels opened up in me. I suspect the same sort of thing will happen to anyone who reads *Savitri* with the intention of hearing.

*John Collins is a Professor of Religion at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.*

# From A House for the Third Millennium

By Ruud Lohman

**E**VEN MORE THAN *The Life Divine*, the great epic poem *Savitri* is the book of the Mother-Creator—in all her roles and aspects and personalities, and not presented as theories or concepts, but in streams of pure love. When at this point we have already made the first leap by taking Love as the truth that integrates, then why not go straight to the warm heart of (the) Matter! *Savitri* too describes the "NO-NO," and right away places it in its deepest perspective:

Escape brings not the victory and the crown  
 Only the everlasting NO has neared  
 And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart:  
 But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes,  
 And immortality in the secret heart,  
 The voice that chants to the creator Fire,  
 The symbolled OM, the great assenting Word,  
 The bridge between the rapture and the calm,  
 The passion and the beauty of the Bride,  
 The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss ...<sup>1</sup>

Have we finally found it...? are we finally even building it, The Chamber where the glorious enemies kiss...? "This too is Truth at the mystic fount of Life." Who are these enemies who are lovers? We must now carefully track that secret, search all over creation and beyond, because something incredible tries to escape us the closer we get, still the last inviolate secret hides ... We always do our work half-way, undoing one disguise, but not the other:

A black veil has been lifted; we have seen  
 The mighty shadow of the omniscient Lord;  
 But who has lifted up the veil of light  
 And who has seen the body of the King?  
 The mystery of God's birth and acts



On top of Matrimandir

Photo by Veme Henshall

remains  
 Leaving unbroken the last chapter's seal,  
 Unsolved the riddle of the unfinished Play;  
 The cosmic Player laughs within his mask,  
 And still the last inviolate secret hides  
 Behind the human glory of a Form,  
 Behind the gold eidolon of a Name.<sup>2</sup>

Working at Matrimandir for the last fourteen years, I have thought I wanted only one thing in life, one thing which is three: the transformations of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: the psychic, the spiritual and the supramental transformation. But having a closer look at Matrimandir, and carefully lifting up a few more veils of darkness and of light, the perspective is slowly changing. To hell with all transformations, realisations, siddhis or whatever goodies are offered in the process, only one thing now: "the smile that saves," ... "the Passion and the beauty of the Bride," ... "A burning Love from white spiritual founts," ... "the radiant fountain of the world's delight," ... "the luminous rapture of her mystic breasts

and beautiful vibrant limbs," ... "the sunlit sweetness of her secrecies," ... "a sweet and violent heart of ardent calms." Having, in this boundless light, another look at Matrimandir, it reveals itself as "the Lover's everlasting Yes."

Where do I find Her, my Beloved? There are the long weeks and months one has to be content with a glimpse here, an intimation there. It is as if you turn around and you just catch Her hiding behind that tree, you approach Her in a dream and She evaporates. And then the days begin to crowd upon you in which there is no escaping Her. She is all over, all through, all around you, permeating, penetrating, upholding, embracing, a perfume, a scent, a vibration, an intensity, a Presence; and then you begin to realise there IS NOTHING ELSE, and you find yourself again in *Savitri*, where it is all spun out in Canto Four of Book I, The Secret Knowledge, catching Him and Her in their secret play. The basis of all knowledge and insight and meaning and love is contained in this one little sentence:

This whole wide world is only he and she.<sup>3</sup>



Henceforth we have to have a close new look at everything, really everything. Matrimandir is only he and she. Auroville is only he and she, I am only he and she—and so are you. The deepest knowledge of the world, the creation, the universe, the all, is the play of love between him and her.

This is the knot that ties together the stars:

The Two who are one are the secret of all power,  
The Two who are one are the might and right in things.

And:

There are Two who are One and play in many worlds;  
In Knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met  
And light and darkness are their eyes' interchange.  
Our pleasure and pain are their wrestle and embrace,  
Our deeds, our hopes are intimate to their tale;  
They are married secretly in our thought and life.<sup>4</sup>

There is nowhere to turn, the play is all-pervading, all-penetrating, in the most private and secret corners. The only "protection" from the power of Love is our shell, our ignorance, our ego, giving us the illusion of being separate. We have forgotten for a while what we really are, probably to make the Play ultimately more intense, the embrace of the finding-again more rapturous. Therefore do he and she withdraw a bit, making this world possible.

She has concealed her glory and her bliss  
And disguised the Love and Wisdom in her heart.  
Of all the marvel and beauty that are hers  
Only a darkened little we can feel.

He too wears a diminished Godhead here,  
He has forsaken his omnipotence,  
His calm he has foregone and infinity,  
He knows her only, he has forgotten himself.<sup>5</sup>

He and She, everywhere. Good for them; but what about this tiny little bubble 'me' floating somewhere in the mighty world-seas? At nine in the morning I climb the structure of Matrimandir to place one more beam in the outer shell, or bend a few more rods of steel, or add more shutterings of wood or cast some more concrete or write more letters to raise funds ... What's so great about it? Where is Her embrace in all this? Do we have to finish this massive House for Her to move into and settle there in some more or less tangible shape for us to worship and adore Her ... after the year 2000 ...?

**It is as if you  
turn around and  
you just catch  
Her hiding  
behind that tree,  
you approach  
Her in a dream  
and She  
evaporates**

NO! It must be simpler than that. More beautiful than that! Be here and now. Be everywhere. Be always. Here and now. We have to let something go. Let some shell around us crack and suddenly to leap out of it; to let ourselves fall, deep, deep down, or high, high up, let something open up in us, suddenly to remember! Remember where we came from, remember what we came for, remember what we were made for and remember that very ancient equation ... I am He! It is only the He in me that is capable of loving Her, of pursuing Her through the centuries:

All here where each thing seems its lonely self  
Are figures of the sole transcendent One:  
Only by him they are, his breath is their life;  
An unseen Presence moulds the oblivious clay.  
A playmate in the mighty Mother's game,

One came upon the dubious whirling globe  
To hide from her pursuit in force and form.<sup>6</sup>

He gives up his eternity to be with Her, He hides in forms and forces Her to rediscover and love Him. He hides in me, in you, in us, masks of His divinity. The secret is so obvious that it is hard to see it. The secret is that it is not behind, or beyond, or above all this, no, it IS all this. It is I and my brain cells, my hands and the steel I touch, and it is you and the things you eat and the thoughts you think and the people you communicate with. There are no two different realities. It is the same reality, His and Hers, and yours, and mine. It is not when the evolution is complete and full-grown that He and She will move into their palace; it is much more dramatic and more loving and more beautiful: the evolution with all its ups and downs, its steps back and little steps forward, history with all its wars and cultures and art and heroes and soldiers, IS their palace, their chamber of love in which They embrace. It is not when Matrimandir is ready that She will move in in some subtle or supramental form and inhabit it as a queen adored by her subjects. It rather is all the perspiration, all the aspiration, all the physical work, all the designs, all the money, all the steel, all the concrete, all the shapes and spirals and curves of the building that is He and She. There is nothing else. All is either He or She or, when fulfilled in love, both.

They are married secretly in our thought and life.  
The universe is an endless masquerade:  
For nothing here is utterly what it seems,  
It is a dream-fact vision of a truth  
Which but for the dream would not be wholly true,  
A phenomenon stands out significant  
Against dim backgrounds of eternity;  
We accept its face and pass by all it means;  
A part is seen, we take it for the whole.  
Thus have they made their play with us for roles:  
Author and act with himself as scene,  
He moves there as the Soul, as Nature she.<sup>7</sup>



Matrimandir Concreting

Photo by Verne Henshall

To unite with Their love-play, to be in it, to be of it, to feel it, to know it, must then be the sense of all this phenomenal show, and the sheer joy of it. For every WHY? there is only one ultimate answer: LOVE. And not even that fuzzy kind of ethereal love the preachers preach about of 'love thy neighbor ...' etc., but some robust straightforward, 'real' love down to your flesh and bones and glands and organs. Sri Aurobindo as usual doesn't beat about the bush: "To commit adultery with God is the perfect experience for which the world was created."<sup>8</sup>

"This whole wide world is only He and She." What a great perspective! Matrimandir is only He and She. But ... so is the White House, as well as the Kremlin. He and She in different sorts of embrace, in various types of knowing each other. This whole wide world, all the countries, all the people in it, all the cells in each one of us are chambers of their love-play. This whole wide world is their myriad play, in all situations, in all acts and scenes and actions, in all roles. Often it is He who hides behind Her, then again it is She who hides so He can find Her:

To her he abandons all to make her great.  
He hopes in her to find himself anew,  
Incarnate, wedding his infinity's  
peace

To her creative passion's ecstasy.

Sometimes He is totally Her slave, then again Her king and master. Now He is the material for Her works, then again He is Her guiding light.

This was his compact with his mighty mate,  
For love of her and joined to her forever  
To follow the course of Time's eternity,  
Amid magic dramas of her sudden moods  
And the surprise of her masked Idea  
And the vicissitudes of her vast caprice.<sup>9</sup>

A stone is almost purely Nature, She. He, the conscious principle and presence is very much latent, but in the plant and the animal He becomes slowly aware, rubs His eyes and yawns. In man a first real embrace becomes slowly possible, at least in potentiality, but a great amount of growth and development is needed before the Two can look into each others' eyes as equals, as the Lovers they are destined to be. Man chooses and excludes, opts for Him alone or for Her alone. The Materialist is the Mater-type, going for Her mainly, the all-embracing Mother of the Universe, and he explores the laws and idiosyn-

crasies of Her being dressed in Matter. The spiritualist takes only Him seriously, follows the Soul where it moves in ethereal realms, out of the embrace, out of the Chambers of Love. Always this dichotomy—because of a lack of love.

Each one of us, each chakra, each cell, are different formulations, different degrees, different settings of Their search for each other. And it is always something in us which keeps them separate, steps in between the two lovers and tries to prevent their embrace. It may be the selectivity and exclusivity of our minds, or the one-directedness of our vital, or the denseness of our physical, but a way must be found in which we become limpid to their love and allow them to embrace us. A double recognition is to be established, a double surrender to be made, a double identification to be realised. "I am He," is the age-old Mantra. "I am She," Sri Aurobindo adds: "After I knew that God was a woman, I learned something from far-off about love; but it was only when I became a woman and served my Master and Paramour that I knew love utterly."<sup>10</sup> And the final experience for a new type of humankind may well be when he or she can say: "I am the Chamber of Their play of Love."



*Ruud Lohman helped break ground for the Matrimandir in 1971 and worked there until his passing in 1986. His book of essays on the Matrimandir, The House For the Third Millennium, is available from the Sri Aurobindo Association office in Berkeley, CA.*

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Centenary Edition. 28:311

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 63

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* 61

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 62

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* 60

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* 61

<sup>8</sup> *The Hour of God*, Cent. Ed, 17:129

<sup>9</sup> *Savitri* 28:68

<sup>10</sup> *The Hour of God*, *op. cit.*, 137

# My Life With Savitri

By Seyril Schochen

**O**VER THIRY YEARS have flown by since I first met the flaming warrior from the eternal peaks . . . She who had conquered Death and my heart . . . Sri Aurobindo's Savitri. Yet unbelievably it was only in the last few years that her true identity has dawned in the narrow horizons of my mind. And I have realized who she is. And where she lives.

We were first introduced in the Manhattan apartment of Marjorie Spalding, to whom I'd gone for Dr. Bach's remedies. Seeking help for a spinal crisis caused by years of typing plays in an incorrect posture and threatened by a spinal operation, it turned out to be an infinitely deeper search after meaning and truth. A fellow sufferer also seeking Mrs. Spalding's help, Bob Lawlor, was the instrument of the Divine Grace who brought Sri Aurobindo's masterwork into my tormented life . . . saving it and my sanity. For in *Savitri* I was to find the key to his Yoga of Transformation appearing now for the first time in the earth—consciousness: that path in the unknown Sri Aurobindo and his co-pioneer, the Mother, were the first to have traced for us on our way to the Supermind.

"Beauty and Joy remoulding our way to live, . . . The Eternal's Truth our light and guide . . ." *Savitri* was to lead me through "Life's broken ways" to a body remembering God . . . Eventually to that Camp of God pitched in human time Mother had named Auroville, City of Dawn; Sri Aurobindo's dawn of a new world. Aurore. New Light of the new Truth-Consciousness.

## My Initiation

But the realization of Savitri's identity and dwelling place: Madra? Shalwa?—wherever on the maps of her Legend, Symbol Spaces—was to come hard. And only through further crises and ordeals. How else to seize and tear apart the covering mind? In retrospect, some of the thresholds the seeker tried to leap over into the Unknown were

excruciatingly painful, others only amusing.

Like that episode in Matrimandir Workers Camp kitchen.

From the moment I had learned that the Mother was still "in the body" and living in Pondicherry, an irresistible Power drew me to her like a filing to a master magnet. The story of that journey is told in *The Golden Bridge* anthology, inspired as it was by *Savitri*:

In the stupendous theatre of Space . . .  
A movement is abroad, a cry, a Word  
Beginningless in its vast discovery,  
Momentless in its unthinkable return

Truth's fire of transformation . . .  
Love's immortal fire . . . were moving  
me with "an Energy of the triune  
Infinite" half-way across the world to  
help build Mother's Matrimandir. Soul  
of a city aspiring to a divine life, it was  
in the Centre of her Force. I had  
become a drunkard addicted to the  
Mother's "honey-wine of eternity;"  
and reeling over the seas and conti-  
nents to offer myself as one of her  
builders, I had left behind my country,  
marriage, playwriting career in New  
York, parents, son, home in Manhattan  
and dark stages of my past to prostrate  
full-length at her feet. It was no act of  
painful sacrifice. It was the imperative  
need of my being.

A series of initiatory thresholds had to be crossed, however, before a room opened for me in the Matrimandir Workers Camp at Peace. "How does one do the Yoga?" the bewildered aspirant asked Mother. Guiding me from her quarters overlooking my room in Golconde, she answered the question lovingly: saw to it that I was given my first "very own" copy of *Savitri* by, of all sadhaks, the Indian movie magnate Dwij, who escaped the crushing "glamour" of film-producing in Bombay for the cloistered gardens of Golconde whenever he could.

She provided me with instruction on how to read *Savitri* through Norman Dowsett's careful counseling, Nolini Kanta Gupta's light-giving talks and the reading of *Savitri* in the Ashram's

inner garden. She helped me through her own Prayers and Meditations read in French with Dr. Vishwa's assistance. And she gave me my first baptism in the monsoon-filled waters of the Matrimandir's newly excavated foundation's fount.

Pre-dawn busloads of Ashramites used to ride out to Auroville to dig up the mountains of Adam-red mud with Aurovilians and Tamil villagers. On one such trip this hapless digger slipped into the abyss of Night's profound vast, disappeared under muddy waters of the excavation nearly drowning in her first taste of Matrimandir work, and was barely rescued at dawn.

## Matrimandir Workers Camp

When the year of learning to do the Yoga had been completed, that coveted room in Matrimandir Camp was ready and I could move to Peace. After work hours I would visit *Savitri*'s "still regions of imperishable light" in great "calm immensities of spirit Space" blissfully. What though my room-mates were a scorpion and red ants avid for sweet mortal flesh, a mon-goose (or rather, a family of mongeese) equally avid for the papayas stored in my flimsy straw locker, and geckos shattering through the night and falling on or into my holey mosquito-netted cot. I could still clutch *Savitri* to my insect-bitten breast and sense "the small bodily ego thin and fall, leaving me One with Nature and with God." For I lived now in my centre, at peace, only a short walking distance to and from the work on the Pillars of Mother's House.

But my past in the West pursued me, even into the Camp's keet-thatched hut serving as our Workers' kitchen where, in an attempt to enlighten its desperately unhygienic conditions, we would tack on a greasy bulletin board or scrawl in chalk on an equally greasy blackboard quotations from Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's writings. High graffititi! For example, a favorite from *Savitri*:

In this investiture of fleshly life  
A soul that is a spark of God survives  
And sometimes it breaks through the  
sordid screen

And kindles a fire that makes us half divine.

## The Husband

One memorable day an angry and mystified husband unexpectedly appeared in Camp. He had crossed the continents of our great divide to find his truant wife in South India and take her home to civilization in Manhattan. Kindled by a wrathful fire less than half-divine, he broke through the sordid screen and demanded her return. The 28-day excursion round-trip to Pondicherry he had permitted her to take—and only because she was to be escorted there by a fellow World War II officer Norman Dowsett of the British army—had stretched to years, with no round-trip return in sight.

But the Divine had other plans for the truant heart. With its divinely mischievous humour It saw to it that my husband was seated for lunch in our deplorable Camp kitchen directly under a section of the thatched roof most in need of immediate repair. Actually all of the roof was in need of immediate repair. He had been a member of General Patton's D-Day Normandy beach invasion of Nazi-held France. Living from fox-hole to fox-hole, haunted by harrowing memories of the Nazi death camps the U.S. Army had liberated, he still held an ineradicable revulsion to anything resembling muddy camp life.

So naturally no sooner had he begun to eat the gritty camp meal than a snake dropped down thru the keet roof directly onto his plate. Shortly after he and his slithery table mate had stared each other out of the Centre Kitchen, he stormed out of the Camp itself and returned to Pondicherry, and thence to "civilization."

His truant wife's only consolation was that the earthly warrior had had darshan of the Divine Warrior before flying back to Manhattan and his own solid apartment roof. She . . . the Mystery beyond the reach of Mind . . . goal of the travail of the suns . . . would surely answer my passionate prayers that she hold the wounded warrior's soul in her arms for healing, as she did mine. The Spirit's alchemist energy was hers. I had experienced it more than once at her Matrimandir. Each miracle of its felicity was "the alchemy of her transmuting heart."

Yet more tearing trials lay ahead. I finally had to leave Auroville and Matrimandir, with its all-pervading radiance of our Mother of Radiances. The years of estrangement, separation, demands of my family that I return to my disUnited states of being all climaxed in the illness and subsequent death of both parents and forced the issue.

## The Coming of the Cyclone

That was in 1978. Five years earlier Mother had left our physical plane. But not until she granted Matrimandir workers yet another miracle of her continuing care. In mid-November 1973 we were alerted by emergency radio warnings that a monsoon cyclone heading down the Coromandel Coast from Calcutta was due to strike Pondicherry on November 17.

**The golden  
Savitri is our own  
Divine Mother.  
And she lives . . .  
everywhere. In a  
measureless  
Reality. In every  
cell of my body.**

Months of preparations for the concreting of the four pillars foundations securing them to the central equatorial ring of Matrimandir would be destroyed. Piero went to Mother with the warning. Working day and night in mass concretings, pillar after pillar was completed, the last being Mahasaraswati at the West. We laid down our tools at precisely 7 p.m. on the 17th. We went to bed exhausted but triumphantly grateful to Mother for averting the cyclone. We were awakened in Camp at 4 a.m. the next morning by a phone call from the Ashram:

"Mother left her body at 7.p.m. yesterday, November 17."  
Her distraught and grieving children were reminded that Mother's Con-

sciousness was universal. She had written to a doubting disciple about Sri Aurobindo's own work for the transformation after his passing in 1950:

"Last night we (you and myself and some others) were together for quite a long time in the permanent dwelling of Sri Aurobindo which exists in the subtle physical (what Sri Aurobindo used to call the true physical). All that happened there (much too long and complicated to be told) was, so to say, organized in order to express concretely the rapid movement with which the present transformation is going on; and Sri Aurobindo told you with a smile something like this: 'Do you believe now?' It was as if He were evoking these three lines from Savitri:

God shall grow up while the wise  
men talk and sleep;  
For man shall not know the coming  
till its hour,  
And belief shall be not till the work is  
done.

## Savitri's Hand

Battle for control of the City of Dawn named for Sri Aurobindo and founded by the Mother under UNESCO auspices was mounting in virulence. Shaken, residents of its scattered communities faced claims by an Ashram-based society to own Auroville. Physical assaults, police vans shrieking thru even its Centre, Peace, were evoking memories of Kurukshetra's violent family feuds.

According to Mother' Charter: "Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole." She had added a most significant "but" for those attempting the Yoga of Transformation as a collective experiment in evolution. "But to live in Auroville one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness."

How to be that "willing servitor" while in exile from my Centre Matrimandir? Actually this trial was to be a signal opportunity; but the exile did not realize its dimensions until much later. The pain of personal bereavements, grief at collapse of my old world were too great at the time.

But I had Savitri's hand to cling to. Her two hands: the book given in Golconde. The other, given in Auroville—first facsimile pocket

edition of *Savitri* which was specially printed for Mother's Birth Centenary, 21 February 1978 on 8 April after the birth of Auroalice to Diane, then a Matrimandir worker. The new mother had inscribed it to me with "lots of love" and a drawing of the lotus of immortality under the line from *Savitri*:

... That matter may be turned to spirit-stuff.

This priceless treasure has been my constant companion ever since. Its fine bible-print is easily read: Mother had corrected my bad eyesight, a long-standing case of myopia, during the years of Matrimandir work. This among other miracles of her healing my many phobias: fear of heights, fear of falling, fear of diseases, death, operations, loneliness after divorce, fear of—you name the old gang ...

### Who She Is

Then came the great discovery. Realization of who Savitri is. And where she lives. "She of whom the world has heard ... working the rapid marvels of this day ... Opens for us ... a happier age." I would wonder no more at the cause of all.

Each easy miracle of felicity  
Of her transmuting heart the alchemy is.

The golden Savitri is our own Divine Mother.  
And she lives ... everywhere. In a measureless Reality. In every cell of my body.

Poring through *The Agenda of The Supramental Action Upon Earth*, her gift to those who love her, I find her journey into Eternal Night that of Savitri's as she explores the way in her body—which had become the body of the Earth—into Eternal Day.

A while she shared the lot of common souls  
And felt the anguish in life's stricken deeps ...

Until in a flaming moment of apocalypse the Incarnation had thrust aside its veil. Eternity had looked into the eyes of Death, hailed the void that makes room for all to be, that eats the whole world with his jaws of fire, and



Seyril Schochen

commanded her shadow and her instrument to :

Release the soul of the world called Satyavan  
Freed from thy clutch of pain and ignorance  
That he may stand master of life and fate ...  
The mate of Wisdom and the spouse of Light.

Always her beloved has been the world's soul. "Bearing the burden of universal love, A wonderful mother of unnumbered souls," she faced Death daily for us. As Savitri, her light like a burning tongue licked up Death's thoughts ... Her mastering Word commanded his every limb and left no room for his enormous will.

His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured ...  
Abandoning hope to make man's soul his prey  
And force to be mortal the immortal spirit ...  
The dire universal Shadow disappeared,  
Vanishing into the Void from which it came.

The mother's light in Savitri, her love, Truth-consciousness and Force of the Supreme has conquered Death

for us and shown us the passage into her House of the Spirit and the New Creation. It is in our own slumbering cells, guiding us towards our awakening as her "sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn."

When on 18 November 1973 Savitri's earthly envelope was taken downstairs to the Meditation Hall in the Ashram, Satprem had the most powerful experience of his life. He was immersed in a tremendous flood of Power, made of an elation that was love, as he relates in *The Mutation Of Death*. It was a tremendous peal resounding over the universe: The Mother's promise of the Victory of the Divine. Our transformation. The promise of Savitri.

The Spirit shall take up the human play,  
This earthly life become the life divine.

"All the floodgates were wide open" as that elation of love like a torrent peeled the ringing promise - "each word reverberating as if all the bells in the world were ringing together in a tremendous peal of bronze:

"No Obstacle ... Nothing Stands In The Way. No Obstacle ..." And with such joy, such triumph, oh, something so bursting with delicious but irresistible laughter, washing everything away, toppling the walls, bursting open the gates ... As imperative as a Last Judgement. A cataclysm of joy."

This is the magic of our golden change: "That to feel love and oneness is to live." Our Mother's Promise ... Savitri's ... resounds over the universe. My life with *Savitri* has become: My Life Is Savitri's.



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# Savitri: A New Veda

By Eric Hughes

**W**HEN I WAS ASKED TO write about *Savitri*, I was at a loss. What could I possibly say about this magnificent epic poem that would be of interest? Reluctantly I agreed, and for several weeks I thought about it and finally decided that I would simply write of my experience on reading it.

Let me start by going back to the summer of 1962 when I began seriously reading the works of Sri Aurobindo, introduced to them by Sam Spanier. One day I was sitting in my apartment in New York City reading Sri Aurobindo on education (I had been trained as a teacher of English and foreign languages), and I raised my eyes from the page. A vision appeared before me of a beautiful palace made of light—a vast and complex palace with towers, set upon a mountain. The entire structure was composed of white light with a bluish cast. There came also the sense that this palace of light represented—indeed was—Sri Aurobindo's written works. The vision was so vivid and unexpected that I have remembered it clearly to this day. But it was a striking sign of what was yet to come and has remained for me the symbol of Sri Aurobindo's works.

**There came also  
the sense that  
this palace  
of light  
represented—  
indeed was—Sri  
Aurobindo's  
written work**

Eventually I moved to Woodstock and helped to establish Matagiri with Sam. At Matagiri we initiated the reading aloud of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's works. That was a revelation. For the mantric power of his works was immediately apparent. The readings generated a vibration of light and power in the room which envel-

oped those listening and I sometimes found myself being taken over by that power, as though the works were reading themselves, and I was merely the instrument.

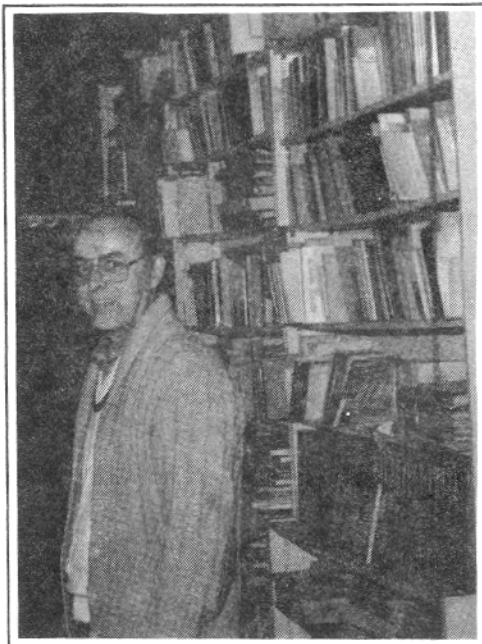
## A Technicolor Movie

Then we came to *Savitri*. It was an extraordinary experience, for suddenly there was a vivid, technicolor movie before my eyes. The words and rhythm (his almost conversational and "natural" phrasing) seemed to create (or re-create) the world of *Savitri* right in the room. And not just a two-dimensional world, but a three-dimensional reality that seemed to take more and more complete shape with the uttering of each line of the poem, and as vivid as "real" life. And it was not merely Sri Aurobindo's remarkable command of English or his mastery of blank verse (I might note here that Sri Aurobindo found English to be a language developed and supple enough to become a vehicle for supramental expression), but also the fact that his consciousness was fully open and unobstructed to the highest reaches of his inspiration, thus allowing the full force of that inspiration to come down. ("I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension," he wrote. "I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level.")

In addition, the sound of the words became music, each word adding a new overtone or undertone that seemed almost alchemical in its effect on the consciousness.

## A World of Evolutionary Vision

And the world he brings down in *Savitri* is the world of his evolutionary vision. He documents, in graphic and dramatic detail, the planes of consciousness, from the lowest to the highest, and from within out, limning humanity's psychological makeup and the fullness of it yet to come. There is



Eric Hughes at Matagiri

the King's yoga (a yoga for himself, done for his own realization, and his yoga for humanity which results in the birth of the Divine Mother in the form of Savitri) and Savitri's own yoga in which she seeks and finds her soul. So the poem chronicles, in imaged music, so to say, the planes of consciousness, climaxing in Savitri's debate with Death and the exploration of the darkest depths of the Inconscience which holds the key to transformation (and which Mother's own experience paralleled as recounted in the *Agenda* and her Victory).

Eventually I read Sri Aurobindo's writings on the poem, and on Mantra and the Vedas, and came upon this:

"What the Vedic poets meant by the Mantra was an inspired and revealed seeing and visioned thinking, attended by a realisation . . . of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature and cosmos and life and thing and thought and experience and deed. It was a thinking that came on the wings of a great soul rhythm . . . For the seeing could not be separated from the hearing; it was one act."

And that is precisely what Sri Aurobindo has done in *Savitri*..



*Eric Hughes is Editor Emeritus of Collaboration and lives at Matagiri in Mt. Tremper, New York.*

# On Savitri

By Debashish Banerji

*Editor's Note: The East West Cultural Center conducts a weekly study group in The Future Poetry. One of the aims of this group is to prepare themselves to receive and enjoy more completely Sri Aurobindo's magnificent epic, Savitri. Some of the members of this group are long-time students of Savitri and were approached by Debashish Banerji for their views on "experiences" with it. However the response was not promising. Universally, there was a shying away from the subject as something which would invite and breed sensationalism, opening the ground for all manner of ego-driven muddy talk about "mind-of-the cells energy" and "supramental energy." What follows are some reflections from Debashish Banerji's own experience of reading Savitri.*

**S**AVITRI IS PERHAPS THE most living mass-produced item of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness. By this I do not mean in a merely metaphorical sense. One has heard the story of the illiterate Indian villager witnessing the emanation of blue light from every line of *The Life Divine*. Dr. H. Maheshwari of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, in a discussion on *Essays on the Gita*, told us that Sri Aurobindo's books contain his word-body, *vanmaya deha*. In this respect, all of Sri Aurobindo's books are packed with his consciousness, and an experience of this may be had directly from the physical object, even without reading the words.

However, one of the most important instrumental means employed by Sri Aurobindo to effect this transfer of consciousness is the mantric quality of the text and *Savitri* is the most perfect expression of this Overmind transmission. When I first came across Sri Aurobindo's Relics at his birthplace in Calcutta, I had the experience, through both sight and touch, of the marble slab heaving gently like a breathing breast. This experience was accompanied with a profound inner sense of the stone slab being His physical body.

This experience has subsequently

been repeated at every site where Sri Aurobindo's Relics are enshrined, and at His Samadhi at the Ashram.

When I first came into possession of the book *Savitri*, I had an identical experience. The heavy paperback tome with its blue cover carrying Sri Aurobindo's symbol breathed gently like the Lord in repose. Ever since, I have looked upon this book as a physical part of Sri Aurobindo.

## Savitri in the Subtle Physical

Reading *Savitri* opens the subtle physical to the working of Sri Aurobindo's Force and many kinds of movements and vibrations are experienced in the subtle body, throughout the day and sometimes over an extended period of time. This was also one of the early experiences I had with the reading of *Savitri*. The body consciousness seemed to lose its density and grow light, along with an awareness of a streaming in and out of forces and automatic upward movements of "aspiration" in various parts of the inner body. Mother says, "Reading *Savitri* is doing Yoga" and these were some of the ways in which the process was observed.

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This I believe occurs due to an inner concrete contact with Sri Aurobindo's "body of Yoga experience," a living consciousness that has the effect of reproducing itself in us through the medium of the mantric word. In a deep

level of our being, we realize our identity with Sri Aurobindo, with his wideness and stillness and Bliss and his Knowledge and mastery over all the planes of existence; and at more superficial levels this identity translates itself into a dynamic force in action, realigning existing constituents and bringing to birth new ones.

## Savitri as Inner Knowledge

*Savitri* communicates through the written word the experience of knowledge through inner contact and at a higher pitch of experience, knowledge through identity of the inner visions, events and realities being spoken about. Thus, Sri Aurobindo's promise of *The Future Poetry* as native expression of the Overmind in the English Language is fulfilled.

This also I experienced early in the reading of *Savitri*. I found that as I read, I was drawn, imperceptibly into a magical space, where all the subtle senses participated in a synaesthetic concrete experience of the inner reality described. One senses the forms, colors, smells, tastes, movements and moods with an extreme vividness and an understanding resonance "too mystic-real for space tenancy."

Mother points out that the sound and rhythm of the work sets up a continuous massive intonation of OM, the unstruck sound-body of the Brahman. The substance, expression and this rhythmic vibration knock powerfully on the doors of the Jnana Purusha, the Knower Within, dormant in the psychic center, causing it to "remember" or "recognize" what is being described.

## The Literary Rasa of Savitri

Finally, any discussion or statement on the experience of reading *Savitri* is not complete without an acknowledgement of the enjoyment, bhoga, of the literary rasa of this work of incomparable literary excellence. The multi-layered structuring of this epic, which takes a legend out of the *Mahabharata* and explores its symbolism to reveal the most recondite secrets of existence and to map out "to prophetic sight" the scheme of the Divine manifestation, is

again the fulfillment of what seems otherwise an improbable promise in the book *The Future Poetry*. Several modern literary critics and theorists have sentenced the epic as a form to extinction, under the premise that the largeness and grandeur of character, theme and vision needed for the epic is no longer possible to humanity in an age dwarfed by the Machine.

With this backdrop, to encounter the conscious living superhumanity of the

characters in *Savitri* and to recognize that such characters have lived in our times, that such Dharma-altering events have been enacted in our times, that in fact we are permitted entry here to a glimpse of the inner biography of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, whose lives have "not been lived on the surface for men to see," is to be filled with a deep sense of Humanistic joy, most rare in the literary work of today.

The plot structure, the measure, the easy slipping in and out from local to Cosmic significances, the layering with special glimpses into Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's own lives, the prophetic innuendos and the mystic realism, all add up to a literary experience of an infinite depth and richness.

*Debashish Banerji lives in Los Angeles and is the president of The East-West Cultural Center.*

## Off The Charts

*continued from p. 3*

read *Savitri* aloud, I could not try to imitate it myself. Chalk it up to my obtuse American spirit. Chalk it up to a dwarf consciousness. My world was so much smaller than Sri Aurobindo's, and my poems, like this one, were too:

### Mango

To peel away the green, mottled skin  
and reveal the inner pap,  
pale golden core of delight,  
biting into our dream body  
eagerly

tasting

the secrets children know  
who devour summer days  
and drink the sun  
down

our lips smeared

with shreds of gold flesh  
that cling

My view of *Savitri* has been generally out of the mainstream of the Yoga as the articles in this issue will attest. But I have stopped reading Macpoems of late and have started searching for poems with a larger vision that will also inspire me to write on a larger canvas. And there is *Savitri* waiting, with a vision that is off the charts.

When I pick it up again, I will not read it silently to myself. I will tune the tanpora. Breathe deeply. Let the words come singing-chanting-rolling out and the sound-rhythms settle into the body:

As one who sets his sail towards  
mystiered shores  
Driven through huge oceans by the  
breath of God,  
The fathomless below, the unknown  
around ...

☆ ☆ ☆

### Mother's Love

#### Mother's Love

Is empowering self-diminution  
Expenditure conditions Her expansion  
Divulging, an act of deliverance  
Division, Her gift to the One  
Conscious replication of matter  
Replication of conscious matter  
Nothing else matters  
Save Divine Manifestation  
"These, my children shall see the light!"

#### Mother's Love

Is willing to destroy  
Sacrifice conditions her existence  
She preserves her progeny at all cost  
Her Divine Protection cushions atmospheres  
Enwombs all spheres  
Insulates all fears  
Hers is the fiercest selfless assertion  
"These, my children shall not perish!"

#### Mother's Love

Provides nourishment  
Provision conditions her subsistence  
Her Divine Support sustains all void  
Drawn from infinite reserve  
Assigns no debt incurred  
All holes will be filled, with no holes barred  
We are assured,  
"These, my children shall thrive unto fruition!"

#### Mother's Love

Spins yarn from dander  
Rock gardens sprout lichens  
Wondrous earth enlightened  
Beneath cracked concrete sprouts a weed  
She conceives all fertilized seed  
Her womb craves to produce  
Divine Abundance, Her birthright bequeathed  
"These, my children shall have all that they need!"

Leslie Levy

*Leslie Levy is a member of the East-West Cultural Center in Los Angeles, California.*



## Centers

### Collaborating Towards The Future A.U.M. 1993 July 1 thru 5 Sponsored by The East- West Cultural Center, Los Angeles, California.

Poised as we are at present for an era of Integration on all levels, as a human race and as a planet sustaining evolving life in the universe, the children of Sri Aurobindo and Mother all over the world are called upon, as never before, to unite and collaborate with each other and with the new consciousness which is seeking to manifest on earth. A practical unity, progressively pushing the borders of identity, both psychological and spiritual, to include first the local, then the national, then the global collective and finally all of humanity, is the pressure and demand of Mother's recent working, welding all into a single, many-mooded, conscious manifestation.

In the North American community, the awareness of this working is being felt in Sri Aurobindo groups everywhere, awakening as an aspiration and expressing itself as a need for a wider solidarity and a new identity - telltale signs are universal, from mergers, relocations, and newsletters, to plans for regional collective action, national teleconferences and choices of themes for collective concentration. Following this momentum, it is natural that the annual conference set up traditionally to be a meeting for all those touched by the marvellous Grace of Sri Aurobindo and Mother in the U.S., namely the All U.S.A. Meeting or A.U.M., should assume an increasingly greater practical significance in the years to come. AUM '92, held in Swannanoa, NC, showed its alignment with this aspiration by focusing its attention on the Unitive or Collective Conscious.

Furthering this thrust, the theme for AUM '93, to be hosted by the East-West Cultural Center, Los Angeles, has been selected as "Collaborating

Towards The Future."

A warm welcome is extended to all seekers of Truth and dreamers and aspirants of a Divine Life on earth to attend this conference, which will be held from July 1 thru 5.

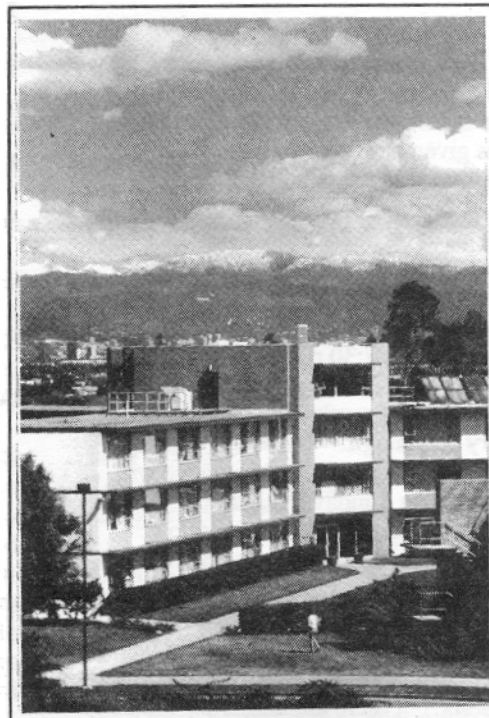
The site of the Conference is the Loyola Marymount University, a Jesuit liberal arts and science campus, located on a 128-acre hilltop mesa overlooking the ocean at Marina del Rey, 5 minutes from Los Angeles International Airport and another 5 from the East-West Cultural Center. Located in a smog-free zone, the University offers private double bedrooms, conference meeting rooms, an auditorium, a swimming pool, outdoor sport facilities, and a cafeteria, catered by Marriott, where vegetarian meals are available on request.

The best qualities of Southern California are available here, a cool clean coastal climate, abundant sunshine, green lawns, lush Mediterranean vegetation and panoramic ocean views and breezes combined with the richness and vibrancy of one of the most massive and dynamic metropolitan centers of the modern world. Nearness and easy access to the East-West Cultural Center provides opportunities for meditation in the saturated Calm and Bliss-charged physical atmosphere emanating from Sri Aurobindo's Relics.

On-site registration and orientation for the Conference begin from 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 1 and the proceedings come to a close by noon on Monday, July 5.

Ideas regarding talks, presentations, work and discussion groups are welcome and should be mailed to The AUM Working Committee, The East-West Cultural Center, 12329 Marshall Street, Culver City, CA 90230. Those wishing to speak on a particular theme are requested to include an abstract of approximately 500 words outlining the content of their presentation.

The presence of an excellent intimate Performance Arts auditorium suggests immediately the possibility of



Part of Loyola Marymount

Recitation, Theater, Dance, Music and/or other performances on one or more of the evenings; and individuals and groups are strongly urged to respond early if they wish to avail themselves of this opportunity. A written note indicating the nature of the performance, the number of people involved, the duration and any other special production requirements should be mailed in to the above committee. Program choices should be in keeping with the theme and abstracts should preferably contain a justification to this end. Final figures on expected expenses along with a clearer emergence of structure are subjects still in gestation in that inner space of Communion where the Mother pieces together the designs of Her complex Will. Updates will be forthcoming in future issues of *Nexus* and in the monthly newsletter of the East-West Cultural Center.

## Matagiri

1218 Wittenberg Road  
Mt. Tremper, NY 12457  
(914) 679-8322

Yes, Matagiri has a new postal address, shown above. We are still in the same location, but the post office has given new designations to all addresses in the county.

A meditation will be held at Matagiri on Saturday, 24 April, at noon, to mark the anniversary of Mother's return to Pondicherry.

Weekly meditations are held Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Matagiri. While the official date is 2 August, the observance will be held on Sunday, August 15, in conjunction with Sri Aurobindo's birthday. As usual, the meditation will be followed by a potluck picnic. Please call or write in advance if you are planning to attend. Matagiri has limited accommodations for overnight guests, but there are numerous motels, bed and breakfasts and camping facilities nearby.

As part of the anniversary observance, there will be an exhibition of several hundred photographs taken at Matagiri of residents, visitors, and activities over the years, as well as a display of rare and special items in Matagiri's Sri Aurobindo library: a set of *The Arya*; a first edition of *The Life Divine* signed by Sri Aurobindo; *The Golden Book of the Mother* (a limited edition of Mother's writings issued for her 80th birthday and signed by her); the manuscript of an original musical composition by Christa Maria Love, arranged for piano by Richard Hartz; audio tapes of talks by M.P. Pandit, A.B. Purani and others; a complete set of audio tapes of Mother's talks with Satprem which form *The Agenda*; and much more.

During July and August, Matagiri will hold open house for visitors on weekends, though anyone wishing to visit at other times may do so by making arrangements in advance.

We welcome everyone to visit us during this special year.

## Receiving Mother's Mountain—A Gift to the Yoga in America

By Rudy Phillips

In December of 1992, Matagiri was transferred to the Foundation For World Education as a gift to the Yoga in America.

The new Matagiri is, in fact, an entirely new entity. The vision is for something which has been tentatively called a "Sri Aurobindo Shrine and Retreat Center"—quite separate from the current buildings on the property.

An advisory board under the FWE will manage the new shrine. Direction for what the new Matagiri is to become, of course, is something to be created by the new board and the input of the American community of devotees. But some initial ideas have emerged.

It seems desirable to enter the shrine from the other side of the mountain. It is envisioned that the logging road be extended to the top of the mountain. A shrine could be built there to house relics and other relevant memorabilia of this Yoga. Nearby, a building housing a meditation hall and library is envisioned. After that, further down the hill, an emerging new group of buildings might be laid out to provide flexibility to house conferences as well as devotee retreats. And so it goes, a dream is born and an old dream is beginning to be realized.

The old dream has roots dating back some time. For several years, Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes have held a heart-felt wish to transfer Matagiri property from individual ownership to collective ownership by the community of disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. There have been many different discussions, and a couple of "almost-ready" times occurred over the last eight years, but the right moment eluded the aspiration.

The need for continuing retirement security for Eric and Sam was one issue needing resolution. The literal legal framework was another. Finally, the

definition of the leadership and direction for the new entity needed clarity. Many have worked to keep this aspiration alive and finally possibilities emerged for concrete action.

It has been possible through months of legal advice to work out all these details and they are now being implemented. Mother's Mountain has been gifted to the FWE and a retirement annuity has been established for Sam and Eric. The details of residence leases, insurance, taxes, filings, etc. continue under finalization at press time though no obstacles exist, only paperwork.



The View From Matagiri

Specifically, the current buildings on the property will remain Eric and Sam's private residence for their lifetimes. They will continue their lives as devotees receiving friends and family at their discretion as before. They will not serve on the Advisory Board, but, of course, will always provide the sense of history and vision that brought Matagiri into being.

I believe that a master plan starting with the shrine could be the focal point for fund raising and broad involvement. I hope and expect that an emerging vision will gain broad excitement and consensus. I will attend A.U.M. '93 on behalf of the FWE and plan a presentation and discussion on the new Sri Aurobindo Shrine and Retreat Center. I welcome cards and letters care of FWE with your thoughts, hopes, and aspirations in the interim.

As we approach the 25th anniversary of Matagiri, it is particularly exciting to think of receiving Mother's Mountain and launching a whole new phase in its service to the Yoga in the USA.

*Rudy Phillips is President of the Foundation For World Education.*

Anie Nunnally will be moving from the Woodstock, New York area at the end of April, 1993 and will live temporarily (until she finds a new home) at the East-West Cultural Center, 12329 Marshall St., Culver City, California 90230 (310) 390-9083. Anie will continue the administrative work for the Foundation For World Education from that address, until she finds her permanent home there.

She will be arriving at the East-West Center around the middle of May, and during that interim period of travel and moving (April 29-May 12), either Margo MacLeod or Rudy Phillips can be contacted with reference to any business relating to the FWE. Margo's phone number is (802) 223-6959; Rudy's number is (201) 825-6967.

Anie reports that the drive to raise funds to purchase botanical reference books for the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery Library has been successful. Over half the needed books have been purchased and are on the way to Auroville. For those people who are inspired to help complete this library requirement and the creation of Mother's Rose Garden, donations may be sent to the coordinator of this project: Audene Holloway, 39819 Chimney Flats, Palm Desert, CA 92260 (619) 340-2307. If you wish your contribution to be tax-exempt, donations may be sent through AVI-USA, 3112 'O' Street, Suite 13, P.O. Box 162489, Sacramento, CA 95816 and earmarked for the botanical books/rose garden for Matrimandir nursery.



## Sri Aurobindo Centers, Study Groups, Contact Persons and Affiliates, USA & Canada.

Please contact the SAA office in Berkeley if you would like your center or study group listed here.

**AVI-USA**  
P.O. Box 162489  
3112 'O' St., Suite 13  
Sacramento, CA 95816  
(916) 452-4013

**Auroville Information Office**  
23 Mill Hill Road  
Woodstock, NY 12498  
(914) 679-2926

**Boston Study Group**  
91 Kilmarnock St.  
Boston, MA 02215  
(617)262-6390

**California Institute of Integral Studies**  
765 Ashbury Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
(415) 753-6100

**Le Centre Sri Aurobindo**  
4125 Rue St. Denis  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
H2W 2M7 (514) 845-2786

**Cultural Integration Fellowship**  
360 Cumberland  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
(415) 626-2442

**Dushyant Desai**  
Sri Aurobindo Center  
25 Hill Street  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
(201) 748-0639

**East Bay Center**  
2288 Fulton St., Suite 310  
Berkeley, CA 94704  
(510) 848-1841

**The Integral Knowledge Study Center**  
Sri Aurobindo Circle  
221 Clematis St.  
Pensacola, FL 32503  
(904) 433-3435

**Jyoti Ashram**  
1291 Weber St.  
Pomona CA 91768  
(909) 629-0108

**Matagiri**  
1218 Wittenberg Road  
Mt. Tremper, NY 12457  
(914) 679-8322

**Pacific Northwest/Puget Sound**  
2020 Roosevelt  
Enumclaw, WA 98022  
(206) 825-3413

**Sri Aurobindo Association**  
2288 Fulton St., Suite 310  
Berkeley, CA 94704  
(510) 848-1841

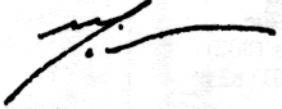
**Sri Aurobindo Center—Southeast**  
c/o JHM Enterprises, P.O. Box 8375  
Greenville, SC 29604  
(803) 232-9944

**Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, Inc.**  
Savitri House  
& Savitri Solar Village  
Baca Grande, P.O. Box 80  
Crestone, CO 81131  
(719) 256-4917

**Sri Aurobindo Study Group**  
25 East 21st St.  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
L8V 2T3 (416) 383-5743

**Wilmot Center**  
33719 116th Street  
Twin Lakes, WI 53181  
(414) 889-8561

Read with your heart  
and you will understand  
blessings



Read with your heart and you will understand.  
Blessings.

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