

Satyavan

The Golden Tower and the Future of the Earth

PRAVIR MALIK | YES TALKS

Opening introductions

Host

Namaste, everyone. A very warm welcome to YES Talks. Today's talk is titled *Satyavan: The Golden Tower and the Future of the Earth*. Our guest speaker is Dr. Pravir Malik. I'll begin with a brief introduction.

Pravir Malik is a scientist, author, and emerging-technology leader exploring new foundations for quantum systems, computation, and intelligence. He is the founder and scientist at QIQuantum and the developer of the Quaternary Interpretation of Quantum Dynamics. Pravir has authored more than 30 books, is an IEEE Senior Member and TEDx speaker, and leads the Quantum Computing Group within Forbes Technology Council.

His recent work focuses on how deeper models of information and coherence may open new possibilities at the intersection of quantum technology, artificial intelligence, and complex natural systems.

Moderator

Thank you, Arunima. Let me add to your introduction. I have been a longtime admirer of Pravir as a management guru with a difference. I have known him primarily through his books on management, in which he has shown how management can be taken to a different level altogether by bringing in a spiritual approach.

Today, however, he has chosen to speak on a different subject: Satyavan, one of the principal characters in Sri Aurobindo's epic poem Savitri.

Sri Aurobindo's Savitri is more than a book; it is a scripture. Many people are not familiar with it, although many more are familiar with the story of Savitri in the Mahabharata.

In the Mahabharata, Savitri is a small episode. Essentially, Savitri marries Satyavan knowing fully well that he will die after a year. During the year available to her, she accumulates spiritual powers. When Satyavan dies, she is ready: she knows that he is going to die on that day. Instead of remaining on earth with his body, she accompanies the god of death and tries to follow him wherever he is taking Satyavan's soul.

Finally, to cut a long story short, she convinces the god of death to return Satyavan's soul. She comes back and has her husband once more. The story illustrates the great strength of spiritual capacity, particularly the strength that a faithful wife can accumulate to defeat even the god of death.

Using the same storyline, Sri Aurobindo has created an epic in which the story is similar, but the significance is entirely different.

Here, once again, Savitri knows that Satyavan is going to die after a year. But she wants him back not simply as a husband, as any ordinary wife might, but because her mission on earth is distinctly defined. She is, one might say, a representative of heaven on earth, and she has come specifically to transform human nature: to shift it from an ego-centred personality to a love-centred personality. That is possible only by raising the consciousness of the human race to a perceptibly and distinctly higher level.

When this change in the human personality—in typical human nature—is brought about, it will eventually wipe out the problems of human existence and give us a much better world. That is the mission with which Savitri has come.

For this, she needs suitable human material on which to work as a prototype, and Satyavan happens to be that human material. Once again, therefore, she accompanies the god of death and tries to convince him to return Satyavan, explaining why she needs him back.

The god of death, however, tries to convince her that there is a natural order that does not allow the soul to be returned. He also argues that her mission is unrealistic: earth is meant to be earth, earth cannot be transformed into heaven, and this is how it is destined to remain. She should not try to change the natural order.

Finally, once again, Savitri prevails. She brings Satyavan's soul back and now has that human material available for working out the mission of her life.

With this brief introduction to Savitri, over to Pravir Malik.

Host

Welcome, Pravir sir. We are delighted and honoured to have you with us on the YES platform today.

Pravir Malik

Yes, thank you very much. It is an honour to be here.

Host

Thank you for joining us, sir. We look forward to an interesting session with you. Over to you.

THE TALK

1. The enigma of Satyavan

Thank you. As mentioned, my talk is based on a recent book I wrote, *Satyavan: The Golden Tower and the Future of the Earth*.

I would like to begin by pointing out that Satyavan is somewhat of an enigmatic figure. We first meet him in the very first canto, *The Symbol Dawn*, in its final line:

This was the day when Satyavan must die.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 10, Book I: *The Book of Beginnings*, Canto I: *The Symbol Dawn*.)

Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo uses the phrase “Satyavan must die” four times in *Savitri*. The other occurrences are in *The Book of Fate*, when Narad visits Aswapati’s palace.

First, in Canto I, *The Word of Fate*, we have:

This day returning Satyavan must die

(*Savitri*, p. 431, Book VI: *The Book of Fate*, Canto I: *The Word of Fate*.)

Then, in Canto II, *The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain*:

It is decreed and Satyavan must die

(*Savitri*, p. 458, Book VI: *The Book of Fate*, Canto II: *The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain*.)

And again:

In vain thou mournst that Satyavan must die

(*Savitri*, p. 459, Book VI: *The Book of Fate*, Canto II: *The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain*.)

The question, then, is: why must Satyavan die?

This becomes even more enigmatic when we consider Sri Aurobindo’s description of Satyavan in the *Author’s Note*: “Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance.” The full note places this description in its larger context:

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the *Mahabharata* as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, *Author’s Note*.)

Now, the hypothesis I would like to explore—and this is an interpretation arising from my reading of Savitri, and should be taken as such—is that there is an important relationship between the first and last lines of *The Symbol Dawn*.

The first line is:

IT WAS the hour before the Gods awake.

(Savitri, p. 1, Book I: The Book of Beginnings, Canto I: The Symbol Dawn.)

Here, the poet uses a capital G for “Gods.” The canto ends by telling us that this is the day when Satyavan must die. So the question becomes: why must Satyavan die for the Gods to awake?

What I would like to do first is take a broad sweep of the change we see between the very first canto of Savitri and the last. The first, of course, is *The Symbol Dawn*; the last is *The Return to Earth*.

As we look at the difference between them, we begin to see a suggestion of how earth may have flowered during the course of this epic through the work of the triple Avatars: Aswapati, Savitri, and Satyavan.

2. Earth’s flowering

To get a sense of this, I would first like to turn to *The Debate of Love and Death*, and particularly to one line. While Savitri and Death are debating, she tells him:

Thy Gifts resist. Earth cannot flower if lonely I return.

(Savitri, p. 637, Book X: The Book of the Double Twilight, Canto III: The Debate of Love and Death.)

We have to understand that Death wants to give her gifts because he is impressed by her. From his perspective, she is a human being who perhaps possesses some extraordinary occult powers.

She has been able to follow him into the realm of Death, but he has no understanding of who she really is. If we step back, we might say that, in a sense, he was created that way. In the final canto before *The Book of Everlasting Day*—that very revealing book in Savitri—Savitri tells Death, “You are my shadow and my instrument.” But he cannot know that. The moment he begins to know it, his reality will change. We see that towards the end, and I will return to it.

Therefore, he offers her gifts, and she responds: “Thy Gifts resist. Earth cannot flower if lonely I return.” The Mother sheds light on the formation of the earth in Volume 4 of the *Collected Works of the Mother*, *Questions and Answers* 1951. She says:

The formation of the earth as we know it, this infinitesimal point in the immense universe, was made precisely in order to concentrate the effort of transformation upon one point; it is like a symbolic point created in the universe to make it possible, while working directly upon one point, to radiate it over the entire universe.

If we want to make the problem a little more comprehensible, it is enough to limit ourselves to the creation and the history of the earth, for it is a good symbol of universal history.

From the astronomical point of view the earth is nothing, it is a very small accident. From the spiritual point of view, it is a symbolic willed formation. And as I have already said, it is only upon earth that this Presence is found, this direct contact with the supreme Origin, this presence of the divine Consciousness hidden in all things.

The other worlds have been organised more or less hierarchically, if one may say so, but the earth has a special formation due to the direct intervention, without any intermediary, of the supreme Consciousness in the Inconscient.

(The Mother, Collected Works of the Mother, vol. 4: Questions and Answers 1951, 24 March 1951.)

With this as our backdrop, it is perhaps fair to say that the epic Savitri lays out—and even achieves within the epic—the foundation for the transformation of the earth.

Let us therefore contrast the very first canto, The Symbol Dawn, with the very last, The Return to Earth. This gives us insight into how earth has flowered.

I will begin by quoting from The Symbol Dawn. There are phrases such as “green smiling dangerous world,” but what I want us to receive is the tone: a sense of what this earth was before Savitri’s conquest of Death.

All came back to her: Earth and Love and Doom,
The ancient disputants, encircled her
Like giant figures wrestling in the night:
The godheads from the dim Inconscient born
Awoke to struggle and the pang divine,
And in the shadow of her flaming heart,
At the sombre centre of the dire debate,
A guardian of the unconsolated abyss
Inheriting the long agony of the globe,
A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain
Stared into Space with fixed regardless eyes
That saw grief’s timeless depths but not life’s goal.

(Savitri, pp. 9–10, Book I: The Book of Beginnings, Canto I: The Symbol Dawn.)

If we read into these lines, we feel the giant figures wrestling in the night, the godheads born from the dim Inconscient, the struggle and the pang divine, the shadow in Savitri’s flaming heart, and the sombre centre of this dire debate.

Clearly, a particular kind of reality animates the earth as we find it in this first canto.

Before turning to the last canto, I also want to mention what the Mother says about the relationship between Savitri and Satyavan. This will have a bearing on how we understand The Return to Earth. The passage is from Mother's Agenda, 22 January 1961:

The entire last part, from the moment she goes to seek Satyavan in the realm of Death, the whole description of what happens there, right up to the end, where every possible offer is made to tempt her, everything she must refuse to continue her terrestrial labor... it is my experience EXACTLY.

Savitri is really a condensation, a concentration of the universal Mother—the eternal universal Mother, Mother of all universes from all eternity—in an earthly personality for the Earth's salvation. And Satyavan is the soul of the Earth, the Earth's jiva. So when the Lord says, 'he whom you love and whom you have chosen,' it means the earth.

He says that she very carefully takes the SOUL of Satyavan into her arms, like a little child, to pass through all the realms and come back down to earth.

Here, the Mother is referring to the entire journey Savitri undertakes when she follows Death and then overcomes him. She continues:

He hasn't forgotten a single detail to make it easy to understand—for someone who knows how to understand. And it is when Savitri reaches the earth that Satyavan regains his full human stature.

(The Mother, Mother's Agenda, 22 January 1961.)

That final point is especially important when we look at the closing canto, The Return to Earth. What we encounter there is a luminous Satyavan who has regained—or, rather, appears in—his full human stature. But what does that really mean?

Before this, we might say that human beings have been controlled to a large degree by the mind of Night. Yet because of what happens in the realms of Death, and then in The Book of Everlasting Day itself, that reality has changed. Satyavan is no longer the figure we met earlier, subject to Death and to the dynamics arising from the mind of Night.

He is luminous, and he has regained his full human stature. In that sense, one can say that he has become the golden tower. I will speak more about this later. Briefly though, why the golden tower? Because he is, in a sense, quarried from the bricks of earth, yet is open to the supramental possibility. He sees in a different way. He is open to the supramental influence in a different way and can progressively become something different.

Remember that we are speaking of Satyavan as the soul of the earth. With that in mind, I will quote a few lines from The Return to Earth so that we can sense how this earth differs from the earth we encountered in The Symbol Dawn.

3. The weight of heaven in his limbs

The following passage comes after Satyavan has asked Savitri some questions. This is what she says:

All now is changed, yet all is still the same.
Lo, we have looked upon the face of God,
Our life has opened with divinity.
We have borne identity with the Supreme
And known his meaning in our mortal lives.
Our love has grown greater by that mighty touch
And learned its heavenly significance,
Yet nothing is lost of mortal love's delight.
Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not our earth...

(Savitri, p. 719, Book XII: Epilogue, Canto I: The Return to Earth.)

As we look further into this canto, we can begin to ask more precisely what has changed. One thing in particular stands out. Savitri and Satyavan have returned from the realms of the Everlasting Day, and as she awakens from trance, we read:

...The waking gladness of her members felt
The weight of heaven in his limbs, a touch
Summing the whole felicity of things,

(Savitri, p. 715, Book XII: Epilogue, Canto I: The Return to Earth.)

What matters here, I think, is “the weight of heaven in his limbs.” Something has changed. He is now carrying something of infinity within himself.

This contrasts with the Satyavan of the first canto, who is clearly subject to death, and with the Satyavan we encounter subsequently, in *The Book of Death* and elsewhere, when the hounds of pain race through his body.

All of that has now changed: he has the weight of heaven in his limbs.

This is significant when we return to *The Symbol Dawn*. When Savitri is introduced in the second half of that first canto, she is in trance. It is obviously a very significant day: the day when Satyavan must die. She is contemplating—or is in an inner space in which she experiences—what earth is, what life is, and what doom is. That is the debate the poet describes as taking place in her heart.

Her spirit has been travelling in inner realms, and it is her body's voiceless call that calls her spirit back. Not her mind's call, not her heart's call: her body's call summons her spirit back to herself.

From the very first canto, then, we already receive a sense that the body is a significant part of this epic. And here, in the final canto, *The Return to Earth*, we find the weight of heaven in Satyavan's limbs.

(For “her body's voiceless call”: Savitri, p. 9, Book I: *The Book of Beginnings*, Canto I: *The Symbol Dawn*.)

Moreover, this is something felt by her body as she comes out of trance: “The waking gladness of her members felt.” Again, the poet is emphasising the transformation, if we may call it that, occurring at the level of the body.

There are also lines describing Savitri herself and the immense change in The Return to Earth. They imply that she has fused together space and that in which space arises. She is bound by form, and yet: Boundless she was, a form of infinity.

(Savitri, p. 716, Book XII: Epilogue, Canto I: The Return to Earth.)

We see the juxtaposition of two vastly different realities in her body.

She lives in time and yet transcends it, being:
Absorbed no longer by the moment’s beat

(Savitri, p. 716, Book XII: Epilogue, Canto I: The Return to Earth.)

Past and future merge in her seamlessly:
Her spirit the unending future felt
And lived with all the unbeginning past.

(Savitri, p. 716, Book XII: Epilogue, Canto I: The Return to Earth.)

This describes a Savitri who is also different. The boundaries between what are considered different worlds have merged in her: they are no longer separate worlds.

I will mention one more passage from The Return to Earth, through which we can again sense the difference between the earth of the first canto and the earth of the last.

Ever she held on the paradise of her breast
Her lover charmed into a fathomless sleep,
Lain like an infant spirit unaware
Lulled on the verge of two consenting worlds.

(Savitri, p. 716, Book XII: Epilogue, Canto I: The Return to Earth.)

Here Satyavan himself lies “on the verge of two consenting worlds.” The two worlds have now consented to merge, if you will, in the bodies of Savitri and Satyavan.

When we consider that Satyavan is the soul of the earth, this becomes significant for the earth itself and for the transformation it will undergo. This is one way to think about the epic Savitri: as the foundation for the transformation of the earth.

4. Aswapati, the Lord of Life

But we must step back and ask: how does this become possible? What has happened to bring about the sweeping difference we see between the first canto and the last?

For that, we need to turn first to Aswapati, whom we can refer to as the Lord of Life. When we first meet him, he is introduced as the “Protagonist of the mysterious play.”

In Book I, Canto III, The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release, we have these lines:

A WORLD'S desire compelled her mortal birth.
One in the front of the immemorial quest,
Protagonist of the mysterious play
In which the Unknown pursues himself through forms
And limits his eternity by the hours
And the blind Void struggles to live and see,
A thinker and toiler in the ideal's air,
Brought down to earth's dumb need her radiant power.

(Savitri, pp. 22–23, Book I: The Book of Beginnings, Canto III: The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release.)

Let us contemplate Aswapati as the protagonist of this mysterious play. Cantos III, IV, and V of the first book, The Book of Beginnings, offer insight into the yoga he has undertaken.

In Canto III, The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release, Aswapati breaks all the bonds that, in a sense, keep the ego intact. He becomes free of them.

Canto IV, The Secret Knowledge, sheds light on the dynamics of Him and Her—with a capital H. Then, in Canto V, we see Aswapati breaking all cosmic bonds. He is now free.

He is a completely free soul, able to go wherever he wishes in the creation. In the second book, The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, he first goes to the World-Stair and sees the different realms stacked one upon another.

I want to draw attention to a couple of points in this journey. Remember why he undertakes it, and why he performs this immense yoga: to change the reality of mortality on earth. When he encounters the worlds on the World-Stair, he is trying to find the power that can actually change the foundation of the earth.

In Canto III of The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, The Glory and Fall of Life, we first see young gods on earth yearning for release and fulfilment. The plane of Life answers, and we see a glimpse of the glory of that plane and of its immense power.

Yet when Life rushes down to offer its gifts to earth, something different happens. This is what The Glory and Fall of Life describes. I want to quote the passage:

But while the magic breath was on its way,
Before her gifts could reach our prisoned hearts,
A dark ambiguous Presence questioned all.
The secret Will that robes itself with Night
And offers to spirit the ordeal of the flesh,
Imposed a mystic mask of death and pain.
Interned now in the slow and suffering years
Sojourns the winged and wonderful wayfarer
And can no more recall her happier state,
But must obey the inert Inconscient's law,
Insensible foundation of a world
In which blind limits are on beauty laid
And sorrow and joy as struggling comrades live.

(Savitri, p. 130, Book II: The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, Canto III: The Glory and Fall of Life.)

In his journey, Aswapati penetrates every possibility to understand why the earth is as it is. He is seeking powers that can change this reality.

Further on, towards the end of his journey, before he meets the Divine Mother in Book III, The Book of the Divine Mother, there is a canto called The House of the Spirit and the New Creation.

What is significant here is that Aswapati creates the seed for a new world. In these inner realms—in these spiritual and transcendent realms—he creates the seed. I want to quote the passage in which this happens:

Then suddenly there came a downward look.
As if a sea exploring its own depths,
A living Oneness widened at its core
And joined him to unnumbered multitudes.
A Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-white Love
Caught all into a sole immense embrace;
Existence found its truth on Oneness' breast
And each became the self and space of all.
The great world-rhythms were heart-beats of one Soul,
To feel was a flame-discovery of God,
All mind was a single harp of many strings,
All life a song of many meeting lives;
For worlds were many, but the Self was one.
This knowledge now was made a cosmos' seed:
This seed was cased in the safety of the Light,
It needed not a sheath of Ignorance.
Then from the trance of that tremendous clasp

And from the throbbings of that single Heart
And from the naked Spirit's victory
A new and marvellous creation rose.

(Savitri, pp. 322–23, Book III: The Book of the Divine Mother, Canto III: The House of the Spirit and the New Creation.)

Aswapati, as a master yogi, has done everything he can possibly do in these spiritual and transcendent realms.

First, we see him become completely free of egoistic and cosmic bonds. He can therefore travel freely. During his journey, he also tears the formats of Hell in these spiritual and transcendent realms. Then he actually creates a seed for a new cosmos.

But it is only the Mother—the Divine Mother incarnated as Savitri—who can make this real. That marks a transition from the spiritual and transcendent realms to the occult and psychic realms, where Savitri's work takes place.

We are asking what has created this different reality: the difference between the earth of the very first canto and the earth of the last. We are trying to understand, even in this brief consideration, the major dynamics that make such a change possible.

5. The prophecy of Death's tremendous hour

These dynamics are clearly housed in the bodies of the Avatars: in Aswapati as the master yogi, and in Savitri as the incarnation of the Divine Mother.

When Aswapati meets the Divine Mother, she utters an astounding prophecy. I will quote four lines. I believe they have a link with the cosmic seed that Aswapati has created:

A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.

(Savitri, p. 346, Book III: The Book of the Divine Mother, Canto IV: The Vision and the Boon.)

This is the Divine Mother speaking to Aswapati in The Vision and the Boon. The first two lines are particularly mysterious:

A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;

The seed may be the seed Aswapati created, the one that has been cased in the safety of the Light.

Yet in this prophecy the Divine Mother also states, "Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will." Clearly, another action is required: the action of Savitri, to transplant the seed to human soil.

The question remains: what really is Death's tremendous hour?

The very first line of *The Symbol Dawn* is, again, “IT WAS the hour before the Gods awake.” Here, “hour” has a different significance. Similarly, when we read or hear, “A seed shall be sown in Death’s tremendous hour,” it implies a different sense of timing. This is not an hour in the ordinary earthly sense.

Perhaps we can surmise that this hour begins when Death starts to recognise Savitri as the Divine Mother—as a power greater than himself.

Until then, he has had complete faith in his own creative power. He believes himself to be the beginning and end of all existence. But now he begins to admit that Savitri is indeed a greater power than he is, and everything begins to change.

We find further descriptions of this hour when we enter *The Book of Everlasting Day*, after *The Book of Death*. Savitri first experiences the outer realms of this inner reality of the Everlasting Day, then penetrates further into it. There she meets Death completely transformed.

I want to draw attention to Sri Aurobindo’s description of this transformed Death.

6. The fourfold Being and the substance of matter

I will quote the passage:

In him the fourfold Being bore its crown
That wears the mystery of a nameless Name,
The universe writing its tremendous sense
In the inexhaustible meaning of a word.
In him the architect of the visible world,
At once the art and artist of his works,
Spirit and seer and thinker of things seen,
Virât, who lights his camp-fires in the suns
And the star-entangled ether is his hold,
Expressed himself with Matter for his speech:
Objects are his letters, forces are his words,
Events are the crowded history of his life,
And sea and land are the pages of his tale,
Matter is his means and his spiritual sign;
He hangs the thought upon a lash’s lift,
In the current of the blood makes flow the soul.
His is the dumb will of atom and of clod;
A Will that without sense or motive acts,
An Intelligence needing not to think or plan,
The world creates itself invincibly;
For its body is the body of the Lord
And in its heart stands Virât, King of kings.

(Sri Aurobindo, Savitri, *The Book of Everlasting Day*)

We begin to get a sense of what is involved here.

Here, the poet is describing Death as the crown on this fourfold Being. The first of these fourfold beings is Virât, whose description we have just heard.

What I particularly want to draw your attention to is the line: “His is the dumb will of atom and of clod.” Consider that intricate physical constituent, the atom, which makes up the molecules, the molecular plans, and the cells, and defines the reality of cells. It is, in a sense, on autopilot; it has a certain kind of programme.

The very fact that Death has now changed means that this will—this “dumb will of atom and of clod”—is also going to change. I believe that is what is being implied here.

When we speak of overcoming the mind of Night, we can return to the opening lines of the epic:

IT WAS the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone...

(Savitri, p. 1, Book I: The Book of Beginnings, Canto I: The Symbol Dawn.)

This mind of Night, which stands across the divine Event and exercises its power, is now being altered—is going to be completely altered—because of Savitri’s conquest of Death.

Think again of the unchanging will in the prophecy the Divine Mother revealed to Aswapati:

A seed shall be sown in Death’s tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.

(Savitri, p. 346, Book III: The Book of the Divine Mother, Canto IV: The Vision and the Boon.)

That will is Savitri’s will. Fate is going to change. We see the suggestion of this even in the dynamics of the very substance that creates matter, when we consider the description of the fourfold Being, and of Virât in particular.

But if we contemplate Death’s tremendous hour further, another possibility has been suggested: perhaps it has an autobiographical significance for Sri Aurobindo himself. He made some final edits to Savitri just weeks before his passing.

7. A possible autobiographical significance

One of those edits was in The Book of Fate. Apparently, he made numerous edits to that book three weeks before his passing. I want to draw particular attention to these lines:

He who has found his identity with God
Pays with the body’s death his soul’s vast light.
His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death.

(Savitri, p. 445, Book VI: The Book of Fate, Canto II: The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain.)

We can think about this in various ways, and I would like to go a little deeper into it.

Through the conquest of Death, we already receive a sense that the fragmented knowledge driving Night, Hell, and the Inconscient is being changed, depriving them of their dark status and dynamics of being. I want to quote a passage from Mother's Agenda, which has also been included in Notes on the Way, Volume 11 of the Collected Works of the Mother.

(The planned manuscript locates the quotation below in Mother's Agenda, vol. 7, 16 April 1966. The additional Notes on the Way attribution made in the talk is retained here but is not established by the supplied sources; see Source note 3.)

I want to quote it particularly in relation to the line "His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death," because I believe it sheds light on the necessity of Knowledge reigning before Love can manifest. Let us hear the passage:

"...And finally one loves purely and simply without any other need or joy than that of loving."

That, to me, according to my personal experience, is really omnipotence.

This is the Mother speaking:

It's a power that can achieve anything—anything at all. Nothing is impossible to it.

But I have also carefully observed that if "that" manifested indiscriminately, as it were, if it came as something that imposed itself in the earth atmosphere without control or discernment, it would be... All that denies that Power (denies it wittingly or unwittingly) would be as though annulled. So the outward, apparent consequences would be... too awesome. That's what Sri Aurobindo wrote; he said Knowledge must come first. Truth must reign before Love can manifest massively—a wholesale manifestation.

I will continue with this quotation, because the Mother speaks further of the power of Love. Now it's filtered, as it were. It is still filtered.

But the vibratory quality of "that" is truly something beyond all imagination. Diseases, difficulties... none of it has any reality.

The body constantly used to ask (not a sign or an assurance or a proof: it's all of that together), it used to ask for a sort of sensation (sensation, if it can be called that) that "it is the Lord that rules" (I am putting it in childlike words because they are the truest), that it is the Lord that rules. It asked for "that" all the time, the way a child could ask: "that" in all the innumerable nothings one does all the time, which are the very fabric of the body's existence. It became so intense.... Anything perceived as separate from "that" becomes inert: ashes. Inert without even the power of inertia: the inertia of dust. I mean that a rock has a power in its existence, a power of cohesion, of duration—it's not even that: it's dust. So then, there was constantly, constantly that prayer in the body. And that's what led me to the experience.

When "that" is there, everything seems to swell with a golden, luminous, radiating Power: it's so intense as to have volume!... If that isn't there, everything is dust.

So, naturally, there is constantly in all the cells the aspiration, the intense will for there to remain nothing but That.

(The Mother, Mother's Agenda, vol. 7, 16 April 1966.)

We begin to get a sense, then, of why Knowledge must manifest before Love can act.

If the autobiographical reading of the line is indeed true, we can return to the changes Sri Aurobindo made in The Book of Fate:

He who has found his identity with God
Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light.
His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death.

(Savitri, p. 445, Book VI: The Book of Fate, Canto II: The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain.)

That could be the other significance of Death's tremendous hour.

How are we doing on time? Do we still have some more time, or should we begin to wrap this up?

Host

We have five to ten minutes.

8. The golden tower and the flame-child

Pravir Malik

Okay, certainly. Let me draw together what we have considered so far.

We have looked at the sweep of the change documented in Savitri by considering earth's flowering. We have examined some of the actions of the Lord of Life, who has been instrumental in establishing the seed and in calling the Divine Mother to incarnate as Savitri.

We have also considered the prophecy of Death's tremendous hour, and two interpretations of it.

One is contained wholly within Savitri itself: we see the change that has happened to Death, and how that has a bearing on matter itself and on the constituents of matter.

The other is the suggestion that Death's tremendous hour may refer to Sri Aurobindo's own death, given the change he made to the poem three weeks before his passing.

This is a vast subject. We have barely begun to touch the surface. But what we have been exploring is the meaning of Satyavan as the golden tower.

The line itself is “Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.” What is it referring to? Here is the full passage supplied:

For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!
O lasso of my rapture’s widening noose,
Become my cord of universal love.
The spirit ensnared by thee force to delight
Of creation’s oneness sweet and fathomless,
Compelled to embrace my myriad unities
And all my endless forms and divine souls.
O Mind, grow full of the eternal peace;
O Word, cry out the immortal litany:
Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.

(Savitri, p. 702, Book XI: The Book of Everlasting Day, The Soul’s Choice and the Supreme Consummation.)

In the reading we have been exploring, the golden tower refers to Satyavan in his full human stature, now free from the influence of the mind of Night.

Then there is “the flame-child born.” We have not gone into Savitri’s own journey, but one can see here something like a different genre of psychic being coming into birth. I believe that is what “the flame-child born” refers to.

Savitri and Satyavan are each other’s other selves. The expressions “other self” and “second self” occur in several places in Savitri.

(References supplied in the planned manuscript: p. 366, The Growth of the Flame; p. 374, The Call to the Quest; and p. 686, The Soul’s Choice and the Supreme Consummation.)

They share a very deep identity. Perhaps it is fair to say that they are one. Any change taking place in her will subsequently take place in Satyavan himself, the soul of the earth, and in the earth and some of its inhabitants.

When we hear this litany in The Book of Everlasting Day—“Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born”—it suggests a future for the earth in which this flame-child, this different genre of psychic being, can emerge.

The human being—and whatever comes after the human—becomes intimately open to the golden possibilities that exist at the supramental level. Those possibilities change what the body is, and what the earth itself is.

I will end with that.

AUDIENCE DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

Host

Thank you so much, Pravir sir, for this enlightening session. We are grateful to hear your interesting insights on this beautiful subject. Thank you once again.

With your permission, we can now open the session to the audience. Participants, please go ahead with any questions or reflections. You can unmute yourself and speak, or write in the chat box, and I can read it out. Please go ahead.

Satyavan's transformation and the material of the earth

Moderator

While the audience is coming up with questions, let me begin with one. You have given us a perspective of Satyavan undergoing a transformation after death and before returning to earth, as a result of Savitri's debate with the god of death. Savitri emerges triumphant, and that is how Satyavan is able to return. But it is not the same Satyavan who returns: he has undergone a tremendous change.

I have generally looked upon Satyavan as the material of the earth on which Savitri could work. Would you say that, after this transformation, Satyavan was more suitable as the material on which she could work to bring about supramental consciousness? That was the aim of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: to bring this consciousness to earth so that we could have a new race, with a distinctly higher level of consciousness.

Pravir Malik

Yes, absolutely, Ramesh-ji. I would say that is the case.

For eons, these forces and the Inconscient have had such a bearing on the cells of the human body. That reality has changed. The grip of the mind of Night no longer exists. I think that is the significance.

It means that the human being can now, as the Mother says, exist in full human stature: look and see in a completely different way, have different visions, and no longer be constrained. I think that is also the beginning of any bodily change. So, absolutely.

Savitri's quest and the identity of Satyavan

Moderator

You also mentioned that we can look upon Satyavan as the soul of the earth. The soul is the divine essence, but we do not really manifest our souls; we manifest them very imperfectly through our bodies and minds. Here, however, was Satyavan who, particularly after this transformation, was manifesting the soul of the earth fully. Would that be the only way of looking at it?

Would you also consider Savitri to be the result of the plea made by Sri Aurobindo—or, rather, Aswapati—and accepted by the Divine Mother: that one would descend and bring about the change he was seeking?

In that sense, Savitri was an ambassador of heaven, whereas Satyavan was the soul of the earth. Would that be a fair way of comparing the two?

Pravir Malik

Yes, absolutely. We did not have time to explore it, but within the epic itself, Savitri's journey to find Satyavan reveals something about the reality of who he is.

She passes through many cities, palaces, and countries. She meets highly esteemed beings of all kinds—leaders, sages, and others—and she does not find him. Obviously, Satyavan is somebody beyond all that. Even when she enters the destined meeting-place, the poet presents the figure of the blue-throated ascetic. The reference is to the ascetic holding the poison of the world. Yet Satyavan is not even that; he is something beyond that also.

(The related passage from the planned manuscript is reproduced after the discussion: Savitri, pp. 390–91, Book V: The Book of Love, Canto I: The Destined Meeting-Place.)

There is, therefore, a deep significance to this journey. I believe that the journey itself was Savitri's first yoga.

I see a couple of yogas in her story. This first one is her earth-encompassing yoga, through which she makes the earth her own by seeking across it. Subsequently, when Narad comes to Aswapati's palace, she is given her second yoga. Her will is steeled, if you will, and she must face Death.

(For the passage on Narad "Forcing to steel the will of Savitri": Savitri, p. 429, Book VI: The Book of Fate, Canto I: The Word of Fate. The full passage from the planned manuscript is reproduced after the discussion.)

These considerations are consistent, I think, with what you are saying. There is something tremendous to consider in Satyavan: he is already an extraordinary being, even before his transformation.

As for Savitri, I think the poet is also suggesting something through the larger dynamics of the epic. The Divine Mother would not incarnate as Savitri unless there were a figure such as Aswapati—a master yogi who could make it clear that the earth was ready for that incarnation. He therefore has to break through and do everything that he does.

There are milestones implicit in Savitri that reveal the tremendous depth and possibility being unveiled as each one is crossed. In a sense, those milestones are necessary for the outcome to occur.

Reflections on the talk

Moderator

Are there any questions in the chat, or would anyone else like to ask something?

Host

No questions at the moment, sir. Please share any reflections you may have. You have asked the question, but please go ahead with anything else you would like to share.

Moderator

I would like to thank Pravir for a very scholarly talk. This was a perspective with which I was entirely unfamiliar. I had never thought of Satyavan dying to his old self and being born to a new self during the few hours he spent in those other, celestial realms, through which he walked in the company of Savitri and the god of death.

This is an entirely new perspective to me, and it makes a great deal of sense. As Pravir emphasised, why has Sri Aurobindo written, a number of times, “Satyavan must die”? Why was it necessary for him to die? Could Savitri and Satyavan not have continued living together, with Savitri working on Satyavan as suitable human material for bringing about that change on earth? But he had to die because he himself had to undergo a change.

We are grateful that you have brought this perspective to us. We would like to have you again, perhaps on a different topic—unless you have stopped speaking on those subjects. I first became familiar with you through your book on management. You have shown how bringing spirituality into management can lift it to a new level.

Perhaps next time you could speak about management and how it can be raised to a new level through a spiritual approach.

Pravir Malik

Certainly. We can plan that in the new year. Thank you.

Savitri and Nachiketa

Host

Pravir sir, we do have a question in the chat box. Dr. Sanjay Wadhwa asks: “Savitri and Nachiketa both confronted Yam. Any similarities and differences?”

Pravir Malik

Quite frankly, my only field of study here has been Savitri. I have not really looked at other confrontations that spiritual figures have had with Death, so I am not familiar enough with them to answer this question. I am not in a position to offer that comparison, but thank you.

Host

Thank you, sir. The recording of this session will be published on our YouTube channel, YES Spirituality. I have shared the link in the chat box.

Thank you once again, Pravir sir. We are truly grateful that you have given your valuable time to all of us.

Pravir Malik

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Host

Participants, thank you for being with us today. We will close the session with a moment of peace and silence. Namaste.

Recording available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqzmm-Kd_vw

REFERENCES AND SOURCE NOTES

The talk and discussion above follow the supplied transcript. Quotations have been restored from the planned manuscript, including the full Author's Note and the passage ending "Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born." Page numbers, dates, and titles are those supplied in the planned manuscript; they have not been independently verified against published editions. Interpretive statements remain those of the speaker.

Source documents

Delivered session: Satyavan-full-transcript.docx, "Satyavan: The Golden Tower and Future of the Earth," Pravir Malik, YES Talks, full session length 1:03:51. The supplied transcript identifies itself as originating in YouTube auto-generated English captions.

Planned manuscript: Delhi Ashram Satyavan Talk.docx. This supplies the quotation wording and bibliographic details used in this edition.

[YouTube recording identified in the supplied transcript](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqzmm-Kd_vw

Sources cited in the talk

Sri Aurobindo. Savitri. Author's Note; Book I, The Book of Beginnings, pp. 1, 9–10, 22–23; Book II, The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, p. 130; Book III, The Book of the Divine Mother, pp. 322–23, 346; The Growth of the Flame, p. 366; The Call to the Quest, p. 374; Book V, The Book of Love, pp. 390–91; Book VI, The Book of Fate, pp. 429, 431, 445, 458–59; Book X, The Book of the Double Twilight, p. 637; Book XI, The Book of Everlasting Day, pp. 686, 702 and the unpaginated Virât passage; Book XII, Epilogue, pp. 715–16, 719.

The Mother. Collected Works of the Mother, vol. 4, Questions and Answers 1951. Entry for 24 March 1951.

The Mother. Mother's Agenda. Entry for 22 January 1961; vol. 7, entry for 16 April 1966.

The Mother. Collected Works of the Mother, vol. 11, Notes on the Way. Mentioned in the delivered talk; the planned manuscript separately specifies 20 December 1972. See Source note 3.

["In Savitri: The Last Three Passages Dictated by Sri Aurobindo" — link supplied in the planned manuscript](#)

<https://thewindsofwonder.org/2024/09/18/in-savitri-the-last-three-passages-dictated-by-sri-aurobindo/>

Source note 1 · A quotation available only in the transcript

The wording "You are my shadow and my instrument" is retained from the delivered transcript. The planned manuscript does not reproduce the full passage or supply its page number. No fuller quotation or unverified pagination has been substituted.

Source note 2 · Book-order shorthand and the Virât passage

At approximately 38:00, the transcript describes The Book of Everlasting Day as "the book after The Book of Death." The edited text retains the broader wording "after The Book of Death," rather than adding the claim that the books are immediately consecutive. The planned manuscript identifies The Book of the Double Twilight as Book X and The Book of Everlasting Day as Book XI. The Virât passage is reproduced in full as supplied; its page number is not given in the planned manuscript.

Source note 3 · The attribution of the passage on Knowledge and Love

At approximately 43:59, the delivered talk associates the forthcoming passage with both Mother's Agenda and Notes on the Way. The planned manuscript explicitly attributes the quotation beginning "...And finally one loves purely and simply" to Mother's Agenda, vol. 7, 16 April 1966. It separately cites Notes on the Way, 20 December 1972, for the statement about the transfer of supramental force at Sri Aurobindo's passing. The spoken attribution is retained and the quotation is referenced to the Agenda entry supplied; the documents do not establish a matching Notes on the Way location for that quotation.

Full passages related to the audience discussion

These passages are reproduced from the planned manuscript to accompany subjects discussed in the questions and answers. They were not recited in full during the recorded exchange.

The blue-throated ascetic

A matted forest-head invaded heaven
As if a blue-throated ascetic peered
From the stone fastness of his mountain cell
Regarding the brief gladness of the days;
His vast extended spirit couched behind.
A mighty murmur of immense retreat
Besieged the ear, a sad and limitless call
As of a soul retiring from the world.

(Savitri, pp. 390–91, Book V: The Book of Love, Canto I: The Destined Meeting-Place.)

The steeling of Savitri's will

Then cried the sage piercing the mother's heart,
Forcing to steel the will of Savitri,
His words set free the spring of cosmic Fate.
The great Gods use the pain of human hearts
As a sharp axe to hew their cosmic road:
They squander lavishly men's blood and tears
For a moment's purpose in their fateful work.

(Savitri, p. 429, Book VI: The Book of Fate, Canto I: The Word of Fate.)