

**EXPRESSION OF INDIAN SPIRITUAL TRADITION
IN THE LITERARY WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO HIS LONGER POEMS**

GIRIJA KUMARI G.

Research Supervisor
DR. P. RAMACHANDRAN
Department of English
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

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Dr. P. RAMACHANDRAN

Retd. Professor

Marath House, Marath Lane

Thrissur

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled '**Expression of Indian Spiritual Tradition in the Literary Works of Sri Aurobindo With Special Reference to his Longer Poems**', submitted to the University of Calicut for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a record of Bonafide research carried out by the candidate under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any degree before.

Calicut,
October 2011.

Dr. P. RAMACHANDRAN
Research Supervisor in English
University of Calicut

GIRIJA KUMARI G.

Associate Professor

Department of English

NSS College

Ottapalam.

DECLARATION

I Girija Kumari G, hereby declare that this thesis entitled **‘Expression of Indian Spiritual Tradition in Literary Works of Sri Aurobindo With Special Reference to his Longer Poems’** has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

GIRIJA KUMARI G.

Calicut,

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INTRODUCTION

THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND

Man's instinct to know the why and wherefor of his existence has flowed in two channels: the one of experimental science and the other of intuitional understanding. Scientists like Niels Bohr, Max Planck, Erwin Schrodinger claim that the latest findings in physical sciences make it possible to have a materialistically monistic theory (or advaita) regarding the evolution and final destination of life. On the other hand idealists depend mainly on intuition and claim that sensual proof is insufficient or incapable to understand the ultimate mysteries of the world. Sri Aurobindo is for a reconciliation of the two world views. SriAurobindo makes it clear when he says: "To reach that reconciliation it must traverse the degrees which our inner consciousness imposes on us and, whether by objective method of analysis applied to Life and Mind as to Matter or by the subjective synthesis and illumination, arrive at the repose of the ultimate unity without denying the energy of the expressive multiplicity." (LD. 7) When such a compromise is made man becomes aware of the fact that there are in the universe knowable realities beyond the senses and reason. But they can be really mastered in its fullness only when the human beings are firmly rooted on the physical. "Earth is his footing' says the Upanishad when it speaks about the self that is manifested in the universe (Mu.11.1.4).

The spiritual history of India abounds in advanced discussions on various related subjects at different levels. Indian visionaries have formed diverse opinions about man, God and Nature and also about their relationships with each other. Consequently our spiritual history has become complicated and rich. Understanding spiritual Hinduism in its manifold complexities is like

learning to read a complex tapestry with many deeply woven threads, each seeming equally important as the other containing subtle and intriguing ideas.

India's unique spiritual heritage begins with the Vedas. It is the most ancient record of the sacred. The Veda has been regarded as the highest source of knowledge throughout history. Vedas are fundamentally the record of the experiences of intuition and revelations of the sages. These experiences are varied and they belong to various stages of development and exploration in the physical and the spiritual sense. We confine our discussion here to the domain of spirituality. To the ordinary human beings uninitiated in spirituality the world seemed to be peopled by unseen mysterious powers, the earthly animals and creatures of various kinds. The wise among them try to ask 'why all this?' They seem to wonder whether there is another truth behind what they experience by intuition. Slowly they come to realize "that there is no fundamental contradiction between the real truths of the universe and the apparent manifestation of these truths through the physical phenomena of Nature.' (KJ, VIC. 3). This concept later assumed the form of animism, spiritism or pantheism. At a deeper stratum the Vedas in their spiritual aspect existed in two levels, one in which knowledge (Jnana) was given more importance and the second in which ritualism (Karma) played a prominent role. The Brahmanical domination in the society enriched religious rituals in the Vedas under the cover of supporting the action (Karma) part of the Vedas. Among the six darsanas which developed later, the Vedanta supported the knowledge part while the other darsanas are not at all spiritual.

The Upanishads or the text of Vedanta being condensed forms depends on the interpreter fully for its meaning. It was Badarayana who systematized

the Upanishads in his Vedanta Sutra which investigated the teaching about God, the world and the soul in its conditions of wandering and deliverance. He advocates a monistic view of the world. He also accepts the determinate and the indeterminate forms of the Brahman and is of the view that Brahman develops itself into the universe and remains transcendent.

Badarayana's Brahma Sutra ('Vedanta Sutra') opened a flow of discussions on Brahman, atman and the nature of the universe. Prominent among them were the interpretations of Gowdapada, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhava. Gowdapada is said to be the first systematic exponent of the advaita philosophy. He believed that the universe is only the inherent nature of the Almighty and an expression of his power. He used 'maya' to mean the inherent power which is the nature of the atman. He felt that the supreme aim of man is to get freedom from the shackles of maya and to recognise his atman. For such an achievement he recommended good conduct, devotion to God and Yogic practices.

Sankaracharya (788-820) came in a crucial period in the history of Hindu religion when there existed a pandemonium of approaches and sects. Brahmanism had transformed Hinduism to a religion of rituals and the advent of Buddhism influenced a major section of the Hindus. People were totally confused among the diverging views. A compromise at this critical situation was offered by Sankaracharya. As Dr. Radhakrishnan puts it : "Sankara 'set to music' the tune which had been haunting millions of ears and announced his advaita Vedanta as offering a common basis for religious unity" (IP.II.467). According to Sankara, Brahman is the absolute reality to which the soul or the atman is to be absorbed. To him the material world is only an illusion, but

because the atman is steeped in avidya (ignorance) it seems real for the atman. He opines that the duty of the soul is to try to get absorbed in the Absolute forgetting everything about the material world. He denies the exterior world and also the existence of the outward realities. To him the sole aim of the seer is to get out of the cycle of rebirth and win personal salvation. Advaita philosophy thus advocates a spiritual life which helps man to escape from worldly life. The major criticism against this philosophy seems to be that it denies the whole material existence in the name of maya. Naturally, according to this philosophy human life on earth becomes worthless and meaningless. However, the place of Sankara in the spiritual scenario of India is remarkable. We have to agree with Dr. Radhakrishnan when he comments : “He put into general circulation a vast body of important knowledge and formative ideas, which, though contained in the Upanishads, were forgotten by the people, and thus recreated for us, the distant past’ (IP. II 658).”

The role of philosophy or spirituality in human life becomes meaningful when it justifies the fundamental human instincts and interprets the deeper spirits of religion. The absolute Brahman of Sankara was a total failure in giving solace to human beings in their stress and suffering and solving their decisive fatal problems. Naturally the immediate need was that of a philosophy which would be a refuge of human minds in crises. This was put forward by Ramanuja (1017-1137) the exponent of the theistic school of Vedanta as qualified non – duality (Visishtadwaitam). It is quite distinct from and opposed to Sankara’s advaita philosophy. Ramanuja opines that there is difference between the supreme Brahman and the Jivas. He suggests that God is real and independent. The souls of the world are also real, but their reality is dependent

on God. He believes that the whole world is a reality. He insists on the continued existence of the released souls. Bhakthi, to him, is man's reaching out towards a fuller knowledge of God quietly and meditatively. In his opinion salvation is the soul's release from barriers. The released souls become a part of God, like the stars in the sky. They never identify with Him fully. They turn out to be the attributes of the absolute. He maintains that to transcend the material world the soul has to maintain closeness to God throughout one's life on earth.

Compared to the other interpretations of Vedanta philosophy qualified non-duality seems to be more appealing and closely connected with practical human life. By asserting that human beings are lower in merit to God and God is the controller of their fate, which is based on Karma, it deeply influenced the personal life of the individual. It has helped to project the importance of earthly life and validity of personal goodness after the Mayavada of Sankara.

Another prominent view was propagated by Madhvacharya (1239-1319) named Dwaita philosophy. It suggests that the material world originated from Prakriti and will return to it in course of time. God moulds forms out of prakriti which is the material cause and exists himself in it various forms. According to Madhva God, soul and the world are real and eternal, but the latter two are dependent on God and subordinate to Him. Brahman is the independent reality and the creator of the universe. Dwaita philosophy conveys the idea that the worldly life is significant for humanity to attain salvation. The philosophy puts forward two remarkable views different from those of Sankara. One is that the Brahman and the atman are different and real. Secondly to

attain liberation the human soul has to take this worldly life seriously which is controlled by karma.

The Vedantic philosophies had to be always in confrontation with three main non-Vedantic forces, namely Charvaka philosophy, Buddhism and Jainism. Even though a first hand account of Charvaka philosophy is not available, from references in other books, we understand that its followers were worldly people who denied the existence of spiritual forces or worlds. Charvaka philosophy is directly opposed to all spiritual thoughts discussed so far. The Charvakas never believed in anything other than the perceptual reality around us. According to charvaka, the only reliable instrument of knowledge is our senses. He believes that man has to enjoy his existence and to concentrate on the present moment. It does not mean that he should be immoral. Only morality can ensure him long-standing enjoyment of the material world. The Buddhist philosophy is influenced by Charvaka. The Buddhists also emphasise the importance of the present moment. If one lives in the present moment fully, then, he has nothing more to achieve. The present moment is the eternity and if one spends it observing his dharma, he has nothing to repent or to fear. The Vedantins consider the Buddhist philosophy as atheistic because it does not conform to their view of the world. The Vedic seers placed an external all powerful force as the cause of the universe calling it Brahman. They were much concerned about the relationship of the Brahman with the world and the atman. Badarayana's 'Brahma Sutra' thus became a prominent text dealing with the subject. Even from the very outset Buddhism adopted a method of critical analysis denying the existence of the soul or the atman. Buddha put forward the theory of voidism (Sunyatha vada) denying the

existence of a metaphysical force and thus its consequences. Nagarjuna opines that Sunyatha is the fact of dependent imagination. The Buddha gave utmost importance to personal values and dharma because he believed that these give human being a chance to have a fruitful life on earth, fulfilling his duties. Buddhism depends on 'Dharma Sutra' for the perfection of our life on earth. Thus it becomes evident that while the Vedic seers gave importance to life after death, denying worldly life, Buddhists gave prime consideration to this world and a meaningful life here. Jainism, though aspired to the attainment of freedom from karmic cycle, insists on a value-based life. This is the message of Tri-Ratna of Jainism.

Sakthism is related to Charvaka philosophy in the importance it gives to the universal powers. It suggests that the creatrix of the world is a power inherent in matter. This power is Adiparasakthi which stands in contrast with a non-worldly Brahman. Being represented as a universal force she (the creatrix) came to be ultimately connected with Prakriti. The worship of the female principle is so much deep-rooted in Hinduism that they speak about the five mothers who should be protected as the duty of the individual.

Saivism is a continuation of Sakthism, Siva being only a witness of what Sakthi does. It is now generally recognized that the origin of Siva and Sakthi worship can be traced back to the Mohanjodareo and Harappa civilizations. D.R. Bhandarkar asserts that the earliest evidences of worship are found in the seals and terracotta figurines exhumed by Sir John Marshall from different sites of Indus valley. So it can be assumed to be older than the Vedic cult. The Vedic view, being wholly based on 'Purusha Suktha', naturally, was male dominated. Saivism gives equal importance to both the male and the

female principles. For the same reason the Aryans showed a kind of aversion to this cult in the beginning. Here siva works through his Sakthi, the conscious energy which is the very body of God. Sakthi becomes an inevitable part of Siva and is represented by the androgynous (ardhanareeswara) form of Siva. In Saivism, Siva is regarded as beginningless, uncaused, the all-knower and the all-doer. Still he remains a silent witness to the dynamic activities of Sakthi.

Tantrism is the method by which a sadhaka tries to develop his personality by using techniques like yoga, pranayama etc. It has more to do with the austerities and self-control that a sadhaka has to observe in pursuit of his goal of not only his physical being, but also of spiritual attainment. It aims to control the mind through pranayama and develop the full personality of the individual by making one conscious of the submerged elements of the opposite sex within oneself. In fact it was the Sakthi cult that gave rise to tantrism. Here efforts are made to perfect the personality of the sadhaka by the development of the opposite sex in the individual. Most of the sadhakas being men, the feminine principle became more important in tantrism. Tantrism can be understood as a science in which the subtle parts of the body are given training in concentration through the control of the mind and breath. The extreme bliss which tantrism has to offer is the bliss of the merging of the Shakti and Siva in the thousand-pettalled centre of consciousness supposed to be situated in the head or as per the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, a little above the head. In contrast to Saivism, Vaishnavism is more closely related to Vedantic values with Lakshmi as Maya playing a second fiddle. It gives more importance to the avatars of Vishnu and later contributes much to the Bhakthi movement. As the Vedantic values have been discussed at length earlier, we

shall proceed further to analyse Sri Aurobindo's place in the philosophical scenario.

Sri Aurobindo is widely known as a patriot, mystic, poet and a sage. He was born in 1872 and was kept away from Indian culture and languages till 1893. Consequently his personality was formed under the forceful impact of foreign cultures, languages and literatures. On his return to India he found his experiences in his motherland totally new and fantastic. His teaching experience in Baroda gave him a genuine picture of the dismal condition of education in India and prompted him to think about a true national education which would be helpful in creating a patriotic disposition in students. With this purpose he began to study the culture and history of his own motherland. He mastered Vedic Sanskrit and analysed the Vedas and its various interpretations. Being a scholar of high caliber in western languages and philosophies, he gave new interpretations to Vedas which have the potentiality of turning the whole spiritual the outlook of India in a new direction.

Going through the discussions and interpretations of his predecessors he found that they had taken ample freedom in dealing with the Upanishads. He seems to be against Sankara's idea that worldly life is an illusion. He strongly believes that material life is real and that the present stage of the human being is something transitional. He strongly denies the mayavada of Sankara. He feels that it is possible for the human being to transcend the present position through yogic practices and to become one with the Almighty. So we have to infer that he never supported the Dwaita philosophy.

He shows a clear inclination to the qualified non-dualism which admits the reality of the material world. By his interpretation of the Upanishads, he

argues that everything is Brahman including the material world. He asserts that maya is the creative force in matter to be used for the promotion of humanity. God has involuted into matter and 'evoluted' out of it into life and mind. The next stage of evolution is the unfolding of the consciousness and further the supramentalisation. For such a process, according to Sri Aurobindo, the practice of yoga is necessary and for that purpose, he puts forward his integral yoga. In the case of the Absolute truth also he has his own vision. His absolute truth is a unique, eternal and all-inclusive Brahman which is undivided, perfect, mobile and immobile.

To Sri Aurobindo, Shakti is the all powerful creatrix. It has given him the inspiration to establish Bhavani mandirs as centres of political activity. His knowledge of Tamil helped him to come to certain original conceptions with regard to the Vedas. To him, the duty of a yogi is not to get personal salvation, but the upliftment of the whole community by bringing down heaven to earth. By yogic methods man has to improve himself, reach heaven and bring heaven down to earth for the benefit of the human race. Such a transformed world was his goal. This idea is superbly expressed by his poetic creation 'Savitri' where the heroine denies heavenly bliss for herself and wants to come down to earth with her husband to divinise it. In this aspect he reminds us of the Buddha and certain Christian mystics who wanted to change the earth to a better place to live in.

In the first chapter of this thesis I try to follow Aswapati in his journey to the spiritual heights in search of the Almighty. This journey helps to draw the picture of integral yoga as experienced by the poet. The second chapter deals with the yoga of Savitri who recognizes her divine self and prepares

herself for the unprecedented fight with the God of Death. The arguments between Savitri and Yama opens a discussion on a wide range of subjects and various points of view about love, life and death. While the former seers were satisfied with Nirvana and found it as the ultimate aim of a yogi, Sri Aurobindo suggests the divinization of earth as his goal. His hero and heroine denies the happiness of heaven and comes back to earth to make it a better place. The third chapter goes to the details of their journey and return to earth.

Aurobindonian poems deal with aspects of this theme. I have made a selection of four of his longer poems and ten short poems to illustrate the main points of the present thesis in the fourth chapter. A study on Aurobindo seems to be incomplete without an analysis of his symbols. The fifth chapter fulfils this purpose.

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CHAPTER 1
ASWAPATI'S YOGA

Sri Aurobindo's epic 'Savitri' illustrates the mystic background in which the poet tries to rewrite or transform the present situation of the human race and the world. Going through the lines of 'Savitri' we intimately feel a totally Indian spiritual milieu. On close reading it can be seen as a poetic expression of a great mystic's spiritual line of thought already hinted in the introduction of this thesis.

SriAurobindo calls his epic a legend and a symbol. The fact that the story is taken from the Aranya Parva of Mahabharatha justifies itself to be a legend. The poet has defined symbol as a form in one plane that presents a truth of another. From a familiar story praising feminine chastity at the common level, he creates an epic in which the cosmos is the canvas where in the aspiring human soul plays the role of the protagonist. The theme of the epic is none other than the most fatal issue of mankind for ever-death. Naturally the characters here become symbolic and even their names are meaningful. The name 'Savitri' etymologically means, 'Someone descended from the sun'. In the epic she is the representative of the divine grace descended in the human form to work out, with the aspiring soul of humanity, its destiny. Satyavan, means someone who possesses or wants to possess truth. He represents the human soul carrying the divided truth of being within himself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance. Dyumatsena, Satyavan's father, is the blind and ousted king who symbolizes the divine mind fallen blind losing the celestial kingdom of vision and through that the loss of its wisdom and glory. DyumatSena means the lord of the shining hosts. Narad, the great sage acts as a catalyst in affecting the three characters – the king, the queen and their daughter – in three different ways and finally stimulates the decision of fate

which is enforced through Savitri. The journey of the Soul from the unconscious to the superconscious and the descent of heaven to earth make the epic eventful. Great poets like Dante and Milton were his predecessors in treating the theme of spiritual journey in poetic form. According to Srinivasa Iyengar: “Where Dante is religious, theological and medieval, Sri Aurobindo is spiritual, scientific and modern, what Dante did with such superb psychological and clinical precision for his time, Sri Aurobindo has done for our time” (SA. 669).

Sri Aurobindo had a very hopeful vision to place before the world about the future of the human race. In his opinion man is a transitional being who has to progress through a long way to reach the next step, the supermanhood. To him there is a continuous ascending evolution in creation and now it has reached a particular stage, that of the reasonable thinking animal, man. According to SriAurobindo man can never be considered the head and crown of all creations. He portrays man in his poem, ‘Man, the Thinking Animal’ as :

A creature of his own grey ignorance,
A man half shadow and half gleam, a breath
That wrestles, captive in a world of death,
To live some lame brief years (CP. 163)

In his opinion man has to leave the present consciousness in which he lives now, in order to acquire a new consciousness. In other words his effort can be described as the search for and the realization of the supernal light within him. At each step of progress there are indications about the next movement and the consequent forceful aspirations coming up in the human race give signs for further progress. A change in consciousness is a significant

step in the next evolutionary transformation and man's urge towards spirituality is an undeniable indication of the inner drive of the spirit within towards self realisation. But in his present condition man is fully immersed in ignorance and confined by mental limitations. Only a spiritual realization can effect a change of the mental being into a spiritual being. In his "Integral Yoga" Sri Aurobindo deals with the process of evolution of man through which he could reach super consciousness and bring down the supramental power to divinise the earth. The transition from mind to supermind is also a passage from nature to supernature. For that very reason it cannot be achieved by the mere effort of overmind or by our unaided aspiration. The power of super conscience must descend into us, uplift us and transform our being. The flames of aspiration or evolution are fed by the fuel of divine help or involution from above.

The ancient sages of India never thought about divinizing the earth. To them the world was 'Maya' or illusion. Seers like Sankara and Madhva exhorted people to escape from the material world (Samsara) and attain Moksha. Because of the same reason it was meaningless for them to think about improving life in this world. So all the philosophic and yogic paths concentrated on liberation or Moksha of the individual soul. Being familiar with the advanced scientific world and the western psychological insights of natural evolution, Sri Aurobindo suggests another possibility for mankind. He does not feel that he is in the midst of "illusions". His body and soul, he feels, are equally divine.

My Soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
My body is God's happy living tool,
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light (T; CP. 161)

Sri Aurobindo argues that all that exists in this universe is part of the absolute. The Spirit is involved in everything by the process of involution and so everything must be the manifestation of the same absolute. Evolution is the process by which the involved spirit comes out of the creation. The activities of the universe thus can be described as a totality of these double movements – involution and evolution, a descent and an ascent. He wants to contribute his mite to bring the universal power down to earth so as to transform the mind and matter on earth. To be wholly and integrally conscious of oneself and of all the truth of one's being is possible only then. What is implied by this is the perfect emergence of individual consciousness. It is to this goal that evolution tends. To be fully conscious means to be integrated with the consciousness of all, with the universal self and force and action.

The great epic, *Savitri*, opens with 'the hour before the Gods awake, 'and that particular dawn heralding, 'The day when Satyavan must die'. In the poet's own opinion the opening canto, 'the Symbol of Dawn' is a key beginning and an announcement of the cosmic dawn. And the poem ends at the end of the day in the silent night with the line, "And in her bosom nursed a Greater dawn." What happens in between the two dawns is the theme of the poem. Here the aspiring soul undergoes a lot of changes through yogic practices, reaches the superconscient and brings the divine power down to divinise the earth. Transmutation or transfiguration of death also happens. We have to agree with Sreenivasa Iyengar when he comments: 'Savitri' is thus a new kind of poem, a poem whose making was yogasadhana and whose reading too should be such a Sadhana" (SA 660).

“A world’s desire compelled her mortal birth” gives the first hint of immortality of Savitri. Naturally, her human father, named Aswapati, meaning, ‘Lord of life’ occupies an undeniable position in the poem. He is the symbol of the aspiring soul of man as manifested in life on earth. The seer-poet pictures Aswapati as a spiritual seeker who travels from mental consciousness through various stages to the Supreme Divine Mother consciousness. It is this yoga of Aswapati that makes the epic a spiritual odyssey of the human soul. He vividly describes the story of man’s ascent from world to world, through peaks of mind to the supreme consciousness. The situation gives a chance for the poet to deal with such a lofty subject as the soul’s release in the poem. Being an ardent devotee of the divine creatrix, he was always in search of the truth of life. Aswapati’s yoga occupies a considerable part of ‘Savitri’ (Book I. canto 3 to Book III. Canto 4). It evolves in three stages - the realization of the individual divine, cosmicisation of the soul and ascent to the spiritual consciousness. It begins when he comes to the knowledge that the first step of spiritual progress is to be free from mental, vital and physical ignorance. He also realizes that, he has to give up his ego which brings along with it suffering, desire, pain etc. He becomes aware of the higher potentialities of his own personality which makes him think that ‘he was a colonist from immortality.’ This creates an aspiration in him to grow into the likeness of his spiritual being with a mind which was ‘like a fire assailing heaven.’

Aswapati’s spiritual growth begins with the realization that the finite outer appearance of man conceals immense spiritual potentialities and in his effort to develop and to expand his world ‘his days were a long growth to the

supreme' and the earth became "a playground of the living Infinite'. He realizes that there is an immortal ineffable spirit in man who creates forms for his own manifestation. It is aware of the finite that is actual and the Infinite that is potential. The divine indweller compels the soul to grow because he is certain that out of the apparently insignificant form of the worm, God will emerge one day. As "the beam of eternal strikes his heart;' all his thoughts and movements spontaneously turn to the vastitudes of the spirit. As a result 'His soul breaks out to join the over soul/His life is oceaned by the super life' (S. 1.3.24)

Hereafter he is nourished by the divine creatrix, the mother of the worlds, and all his physical, vital and mental qualities change. He breaks the boundary between human nature and supernature. The divine power that works secretly in him begins, to 'turn this trail mud engine to heaven's use'. He realizes that the whole movement of cosmic evolution, though it seems illogical and meaningless in the surface level, is part of a wide plan by a master craftsman behind the veil of ignorance. The earth aspiring through Aswapati meets and marries the heaven above. This confluence in the being of Aswapati results in joining divinity to the empire of mortality. The human stature of Aswapti expands itself by drawing the divinity above and he sees the visions of divine life on earth. Consequently, 'a seer was born, a shining guest of time.'" The barrier that conceals the mystery of creation from the human eye is forced open and his mind becomes boundless. His little ego vanishes. The poet describes: "The landmarks of the little person fell/The island ego joined its continent/ (S.1.3.25). He becomes one with the universal existence. Thus Sri Aurobindo gives the picture of the human soul who becomes aware of its own

potentialities and liberates itself from the bonds and limitations of ignorance through Aswapati.

This experience of boundlessness prompts him for further development and awakens many of the dormant faculties in him. He felt the world thought streams running into his own mind. He came into contact with various planes of consciousness and beings on occult planes. Going forward in this journey he crosses beyond the world of the formless where objects are not cognisable by sense or thought. In this realm of knowledge, 'one can be wider than the world,' and he realizes that; 'while there, one is one's own infinity.'" Here all contradictions of life are solved. He realizes the origin of the spirit and consequently, "He plunged his roots into the infinite/He based his life upon eternity"/(S.1.3.34) There was the nirvanic absolute silence and he runs his way to its supernal calm.

At this stage Aswapati gets answers for a lot of questions. From the new spiritual poise he saw the world as, "A small result of a stupendous force". The human instruments are not capable of supporting a higher status of life. The gravitational pull of the lower consciousness often brings down the consciousness from its heights and man is forced to go down deeper than the normal level. He realizes that even these downward movements are used to divinise the lower ignorant nature of man and to prevent nature from becoming imperfect. He experiences the higher consciousness coming down from above like rain over a flood of illumination. During the period of ascent and descent his being is integrated in the process and attains complete equality, tranquillity, serene strength and lasting peace. This tranquillity, he understands, is the dynamic power which helps the toiling world by its silent working.

As he proceeds he realizes that there is an immortal self in man awaiting discovery and there are wide spaces and depths possible to man's consciousness of which his surface nature is ignorant. The descent of the divine element happens at times making him feel that, "A greater personality sometimes/Possess us which yet we know not is ours' (S.1.4.47). It is there that man opens to a wider consciousness and closes himself from the outer world. In the silence of the mind he hears the voice of inspiration which assures him, 'of the living image seated in the heart;' Nature wants to reach some state of perfection of knowledge and she strives for it. When the process of evaluation starts the transcendental one who has involuted into the unconscious creates his innumerable symbols and equates them to the truth. The dual element in Nature has divided its functions. The soul, the purusha who has forgotten himself consents to do what nature wants him to perform. In fact "His breast he offers for her cosmic dance' (S.1.4). During the play of the dual aspect when the purusha remembers his true self, then, nature reveals herself as his spiritual mate. "The absolute, the perfect, the Alone" has called out his silent power within himself and has entered into space and Time and has become many. The interaction between He and She is the knot that holds all the manifestations together. Transformation of nature becomes possible because of the presence of the Divine behind the human. Aswapati here realizes that it is with the attainment of purusha consciousness as the witness that the liberation of the human consciousness begins.

Fired by the pressure of the powerful aspiration he gets into the hidden chambers and realizes the way of Mother Nature working through creation obeying 'the mystery of God's covenant with the Night'. After experiencing

the new world, he feels a great aspiration to bring down this great divine and spiritual world among human beings whose power of thinking now seems to him to be, 'a borrowed light.' Maintaining the inner silence, proceeding 'like an arrow leaping through eternity,' he rose to the higher consciousness and finds a great and strong descent coming suddenly on him. "A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes met him' and consequently his soul, 'was torn out from his mortality." His mind is opened to the cosmic sky and he witnesses the sweep of the transcendent. His individual self became wide as the cosmos. The poet observes: 'The soul and the cosmos faced as equal powers" (S.1.4). An ascending and descending order of worlds from Eternity to Time and Time to Eternity was revealed to Aswapati. A divine unity was seen, reconciling all the discords of multiplicity. Highly inspired, Aswapti mounts like 'a cone of fire to the peaks of the spirit and he 'broke into another Space and Time."

He enters into identity with the immensity that he sees and feels around him and travels through all different worlds. Book II of Savitri' gives a fantastic and mysterious picture of the different worlds. All the worlds of heaven and hell imagined by the human mind are found in the true setting providing a full forum for the extremes of pleasure and pain. As he proceeds he comes to see an immense world pile rising from the plinths of matter and ascending into the unknowable summits of the spirit. He perceives also the great stair down which the spirit has descended and the heights to which the soul has to ascend. The next area, the kingdom of subtle matter acts as a protective and regulatory channel to the downflow of powers from above. It is the source of all movements of creative beauty, delight and grace and each truth finds its natural expression without deformation. Within its limits it is a

perfect world and all in that world is happy to stay in that perfection. His journey through the next world, the kingdom of little life, is also disappointing. In this domain everything is in a flux and the spirit of adventure works everywhere careless of fall or pain. Life strives to attain her lost glory but in vain. In the higher regions he witnesses the finite blending with the Infinite and Time fades into Eternity. All the original fire and might of pure life is brought down here into the littleness of the material being. Unable to realize fully its spiritual consciousness it begins to live in a pigmy world of its own, subject to dull sensations and animal instincts. The mind that developed in that state is only a vital one incapable of higher working. He also sees a third set of creation whose thinking is confined to the visible. Even though it has awakened to some of its potentialities "It knew not the immortal in his house". The world of little life, a narrow power with rigid forms proves to be an unhappy place set in ignorance. A whole crowd of uncouth entities like elves, imps, goblins, genii etc. appears before his eyes. Their only work seems to be to spoil and vitiate and amuse themselves in the process. They lurk in the unconscious and half conscious part of man and leads him astray. Aswapati advances through the mists of the empire of little life among misleading shapes and whispering ghosts like a moving point led by his spirits flame, while 'The darkness glimmered like a dying torch.'

In the next domain, the realm of greater life, there is an intermittent will to live and no direction at all. Energy is at work perpetually though its results are transient. Though she is unable to regain the bliss, she strives on and on because she is impelled to do so by the will of the creator active in her. The greater life is in pursuit of the unseen, the light beyond. She feels the silence

and touch of grace from above. Life exerts herself in all planes of existence and in all conditions irrespective of her failures. The greater life force is creative and she is the same “on earth, in heaven, in hell”. She is obliged to work in the darkness of ignorance with its dim shadows pursuing her everywhere for ‘she carried crucified God upon her breast’ (S.11.6). He sees that this endless march through the veil of ignorance and the night of inconscience is inspired by her Eternal Lover’. She has been attempting to seek the attention of Purusha who is fast asleep in her profound. He wants to keep him attached to her under all conditions, “Lest from her arms he turn to his formless peace”. In spite of this great care, she follows the law of contradiction and forgetting that she and Purusha are eternally related, “Her will is to shut God into her works. And keep him as her cherished prisoner/That never they may part again in Time” (S.II.6).

To attract his formless peace and timeless eternity she builds the creation between the original silence and the void like a rainbow bridge. All forms that she creates here are symbolic of some veiled idea but nature fails miserably in carrying out her purpose on this level of the higher vital being. The beings here are full, self-assured, pre-designed and follow the guidelines from within. The soul within them participates in the destiny that is being forged and determines the issue. The beings here have their own ideals which they seek to realize. They aspire for truth and strive to govern their lives in accordance with it. Their actions embody the spirit of the truth sought for, their thoughts are inspired by it and their lives are moulded by its figure. The vital being is a warrior by nature and whether he be on the side of the good or the evil, he is an ardent combatant. Good and evil exist here with equal dominion.

In the life world each power has the freedom to expand its sway and the field being vast, adventure is natural. The emotions and the feelings of one are not separated from those of others, but the soul has the capacity to be separated. The miracle of inconscience has been overpassed, but the miracle of superconscience is still a mystery looming overhead. Aswapati is overpowered by the skill and splendour of the greater life. But he understands that she is totally disappointed in her failure to seize the truth. He feels the presence of the spirit in the forms built by life, but he is unable to decipher the design in her vision. He follows her course towards some infinitude and reads her signs by intuitive flashes. Though his life is filled with misery and suffering, it is joy to live because there is a will behind it. Life is charged with the mission to manifest divine reality and she has to strive forward till she attains her goal. Behind all these efforts there is the memory of the lost glory and beyond all failures, there is the splendor that beckons. Till she attains her mission life has to continue the circle of birth and death.

Searching for the cause of the failure of this higher vital world, he peers into the darkness below. There, “He saw the fount of the worlds’ lasting pain/
And the mouth of the black pit of ignorance” (S.II.7.202). The region is located there ‘where dies subjective space’. It is a region of Nescience and here everything that is present in life is turned into its opposite with almost equal imperativeness. Mind here corrupted truth with her own formula. Under its influence even the very best became dangerous and harmful. Seeds of evil seemed scattered everywhere. Even positive aspects like love, beauty and friendship had a negative impact. In this region “ominous beings passed him

on the road/Whose very gaze was a calamity.’ (S.II.7.205). The sweet and charming faces he saw we are dangerous and their beauty is ‘like a snare’.

Progressing through the same track he comes to a region on the borderland between heaven and hell which was a world of pretence and falsehood. The ruling hostile power cloaks itself in the garb of light, quotes the scriptures and slays the soul with the self righteous virtue. Then he enters the city of Ignorance where ego and falsehood are arbiters and they usurp the place of truth and God. They cherish no ideals and consider spiritual seeking as a self-deception. He proceeds to the darkest part where; ‘eye could not see, but the soul feel’. He saw that here life has fallen into the lowest depth of degradation, obscuration and deformation. The beings in this region took delight in everything perverted. Aswapati feels lonely and sees that he is face to face with ‘a sense of death and conscious void’. As he went further down solitude wraps him making all the things disappear. Now he is alone with a dark nescience and he feels a cold sensation and a chill in his heart. Existence, hope, belief and memory disappear leaving behind, “a nameless and unutterable fear”. Soon the Godhead in him is awoke and it overpowers the evil with his bare spirit.

Aswapati beholds the core of the night. It is a spiritless blank eternity where the eternal truth is denied. There was only a brute principle of the life without the revealing presence of the divine light. Evil and pain acting in this dark life gives rise to demoniac powers which are responsible for the creation of man’s hell. Thought became an instrument of perversity and even Good, “a faithless gardener of God,/Watered with virtue the world’s upas-tree/ (S.II.8). He also sees some vague illimitable power sitting on Death and trying to

subject everything to one fate. When life tried to create a way for the spirit in the void, the night responded by creating a vast non-being which occupies the earth with its huge body of Doom. Death, pain and falsehood emerge vitiating and deforming the original design of creation. Man's thoughts are guided by these forces and his faith is destroyed by them. Man becomes his slave and all possibilities of his spiritual evolution are completely lost. They usurp the place of the divine in the human mind while shutting its doors to the divine. They always interfere in the passage of light from above. They occupy all the seats of power, influence humanity and proclaim eternal laws as falsehoods. They even happen "to serve by enmity the cosmic scheme." In the darkness of ignorance in the sunless privacy' under 'the creative death' 'the giant sons of darkness" plan the tragic drama to be enacted on the stage of the earth. Those who aspire to raise fallen mankind come under the cruel attack of demonic forces because, "None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell" (S.II.8.277). He observed that in this world of agony life itself is a long punishment, people's heart were hard and their minds without joy. Jealousy, spite, hatred and lust continued to work upon men. The human soul is obliged, 'to worship a black pitiless image of power' and be thankful for even the most inhuman and evil things.

Aswapati tries to understand the heart of hell and heard its goblin voices that misguided, enchanted and ambushed the traveller. He suffers all the sorrows of this hell and 'drank her poisonous draughts till none was left.' While he keeps his flickering soul tightly treasured in his hands he arrived at the very heart of the dark gulfs from where the creation has emerged. Here he discovers by sheer identity the presence of a wisdom and will that works

behind all the veils of nature. In his luminous vision he sees the invisible Hand of the spirit laid upon error and pain which changes itself into ecstasy at that touch. He sees clearly that night is only a veil of the Eternal, death a process of life, destruction a rapid step of creation, and hell a short-cut to the gates of heaven. Thus the illusion of the nether absolute is dissipated. Life comes to its own purity. The soul lights up the conscious body and matter and spirit become one.

Temptations, fear and darkness experienced by the soul before entering into the light of felicity seems to be an inevitable phase to many mystics belonging to various spiritual paths. Evelyn Underhill in her book 'Mysticism' dwells on the various reaction seen in different personalities on their spiritual journey to heaven. She narrates the experiences of many spiritual practitioners like Suso, Madame Guyon, St. John of the Cross, Augustine Baker and St. Theresa. She feels that the dark night before enlightenment is common for all, though different in its nature. To quote her. 'Psychologically, then, 'the Dark Night of the Soul' is due to the double fact of exhaustion of an old state, and growth towards a new state of consciousness. It is a "growing pain" in the organic process of the attainment of the Absolute' (M.1.386). She also comments " "The Dark Night, then is a really deeply human process in which the self which thought itself so spiritual so firmly established upon the supersensual plane, is forced to turn back, to leave the light and pick up those qualities which it had left behind" (M.388).

From the dark gloom Aswapati comes out to the day of felicity. He has scenes of beauty and bliss and hears celestial music Peace, love and strength reach their acme. Pain is transmuted by the divine alchemic touch into joy.

The gulf between heaven and hell stands healed. His senses acquire a new range. When he has so changed his vital mould he finds that, “Eternity drew close disguised as Love/And laid its hand upon the body of time” (S.II.9.237).

His body glows with light and readily accepts the demands of the spirit to lose itself in identity with it. Aswapati rises to the stature of Gods and divine felicities pour unto him transporting him into unknown ecstasies. Then, “a giant drop of bliss unknowable/overwhelmed his limbs and round his soul became/A fiery ocean of felicity” (S.II.9.237). This ceaseless divine bliss and joy purifies him entirely and transmutes his human strength into an unfailing luminous power.

Above the paradise of life gods, are the realms of the mind. Aswapati finds a silver grey expanse parting the flow of life from the poise of thought, a meeting ground of ignorance and knowledge. At the lower end there is a dim small-range mind ever turned outward which lives from moment to moment in its search for knowledge. Above this belt in the sunny region Intelligence is at work mediating between the Supermind above and Nescience below, linking up gross matter and its forms with the consciousness looming from above. This reasoning intelligence with its instrument of logic cuts up Truth into bits and an entirely artificial pattern of the universe. Invasion from above in the form of intuitions, inspirations and myths effect a breakthrough and living knowledge begins to take shape and lead the earth onward.

Aswapati gets a clear picture of the structure of the mind-power also. There are three gradations – the physical mind, the desire mind and the reasoning mind. The physical mind is a mechanical device ever exposed to habitual grooves of movement, inert, unchanging, repetitive and limited to

physical forms and senses. Its role in creation is to fix things in type. The desire mind is imaginative, adventurous, impulsive and is never satisfied with what is gained. Instincts and intuitions play a significant part in its action. The last and the greatest of these powers is reason which looks upon the universe as an object to be studied and analysed piece by piece and seeks to impose a logical order and system on everything. There is no finality to her knowledge and she cannot perceive the whole truth at the same time. Her labours are inconclusive. She believes that the material universe is a huge self-operating machinery and life and consciousness are products of this action. But this idea breaks down at the very first touch of the unseen. All reveal themselves to be the movement of a force. Fresh heavings of knowledge from within and new prospects open up linking Earth and Heaven, life and Spirit, and the Finite and the Infinite.

Aswapati perceives that above these three spheres stand two more powers of the mind. First is the huge high-winged life thought which breaks down the little walls built by the three smaller powers and soars wide and far--mapping vistas beyond the normal changes of the labouring mind. The second, 'A pure Thought Mind' luminous in its transcendent status impassively surveying the cosmic act. Aswapati realizes that these two in their combination would make it possible for man to break the limits of his humanity and arrive at the supernal light.

Crossing the limits of the human mind Aswapati reaches a region of vaster transcending thought which is allied to a vision facing the spirit Eternal. These planes create unrealized possibilities far beyond the ken of the expanding universe and they overtop, "the ceiling of life's soar". It intervenes

between the divine and the human and its might bridge the gap between the mortal and the immortal. There knowledge is certain and joy and powers are spontaneous. Though we are self-exiled from our own home, and human being are dropped into material ignorance, we still have the memory of the splendid plane. Human soul can climb to these regions and become the thinker (Manishi) who enters the immortal's air where there is perfect rhythmic calm and joy.

This thought-world exists in three levels. In the first level there is an interchange between the beings of that plane and humanity, and it is possible for human beings to mount upwards and for the divine beings to descend here to humanity. Their forces stand behind nature and support matter life and mind and in obedience to the divine command create this complex world. The second level of the thought world is peopled by a race of beings in whose eyes 'a light of liberating knowledge shone'. They could pierce behind outer appearances of things and contact the Reality which eludes the human sense and narrow human mind. They are, "High architects of possibility/And engineers of the impossible/ (S.II.11.268). They try to structure the free rhythms of the Infinite Consciousness to the logic of the finite thought. And in doing so, they construct a calculus of destiny to measure the immeasurable. As a result they are lost in details and miss the whole. Thus the unknowable retains its secrecy from them. In the third level of this plane of consciousness is a channel for the operation of the higher forces of the guidance of the world. The gazes of the kings of thought embrace Time and Space. They hold and transmit to earth and heaven the imperative of the creator self. They eliminate sense, forms and soul and make a vacuum to hold the one. They arrive at an

austere negation as the meaning of all, a zero as the finis. To establish the kingdom of truth among the mortals, they have imprisoned her in the human heart itself. The power of truth (parasakthi) that is above the higher planes of the mind can become the mental nature in man. Man in his own turn, can have a relation of subjection and mastery with her and through all his dealings with her he can experience a throbbing delight. But all that the earth can afford, the life can create, and thought can envisage would not be able to seize her eternal Truth. When man goes beyond the planes of the mind and establishes himself in the supreme sight and surrenders himself to the Absolute power, “The Timeless Ray descends into our hearts/And we are rapt into eternity” (S.II. 11.276).

Wakened thoughts leave the boundaries of the known to scale the peaks of the unknown. It longs for the unrealized truth and ascends to it. Aswapati sees stairs on either side. One leads to the kingdom of deathless Rose, of Bliss. This bliss lies between the supramental realm above and the abyss of the inconscient below.

Here too its bud is born in human breasts;

Then by a touch, a presence or a voice

The world is turned into a temple ground

And all discloses the unknown Beloved (S.II.12.278)

On the other side of the stair are realms of luminous knowledge. The flame of knowledge mounts up from the altar of the mind aspiring to reach the Absolute Beings But the worlds of ascent are great and unreachable to man with his limited knowledge and strength. He finds that each idea is only a partial truth and each claim to be supreme. There are regions where all of them

stand united, but even then they keep their separate individuality. Aswapati proceeds in search of a world where all these powers unite to form a single multitudinous whole.

Beyond the kingdom of the Ideal world Aswapati reaches a summit, “Where silence listened to the cosmic voice” and there he “stood on a wide arc of summit space/Alone with an enormous self of mind”/ (S.II.13) which was, ‘Omnipotent, immobile and aloof/In the world which sprang from it, it took no part/ (S.II.13.283). The witness silence is the origin of the world. He watches the world from this height and feels that this silence and peace is the ultimate. Suddenly a ray of light falls on the scene making it clear to him that nothing is really known. By a mysterious act of providence self-knowledge is denied to the self and an effort was imposed upon the instruments of nature to acquire the knowledge of the self. Doubt pervades even in the means to think. Power of mind is also in the shadow of doubt and consequently all knowledge acquired by it turns out to be undependable frauds. This condition in the cosmos gives rise to knowledge which is acquired under the conditions of division and therefore even though what it sees is real, its sight is untrue. All knowledge built by the mind appears unsound, unreal and all experience in life is converted into fixed mental forms that are more dead than alive. The human ‘mind is a house haunted by the slain past.’ This self of mind proves to be a veil. It can afford the experience of deep peace, but can not embody the nameless force because the passion of god ecstasy proceeding from the boundless heart of love was lacking.

Aswapati understands that for a greater satisfaction for the spiritual hunger of man, he has to proceed in search of a greater spirit. From the summit

of Thought he sees life below, its strife and endless labour, surging like an ocean. This whole creation reposes upon, “the dim inconscient’s dumb incertitude.” The two firmaments of darkness and light faced each other offering themselves for the movement of the spirit. In it the spirit moved in spirals or gyrating circles of acts and thoughts. It seemed as if, “to be was a prison, extinction, the escape.”

On searching for a way to escape Aswapati sees a brilliant opening in the background of the mind space. It extends into the unknown like. “A well, a tunnel of the depths of God.” “As one drawn to his lost spiritual home/Feels now the closeness of a waiting love” he is led by a mysterious sound which is a combination of a flute call, cricket note, anklet-bells, caravan-twinkle, temple-gong, bee-croon, and sea-waves. There is an unearthly incense and the feeling of the approach of the invisible beloved and the possibility of changing the world. He feels ‘in this hour eternal in the heart of Time’ he is, ‘A single person who was himself and all’ who can transform all experience to delight. This world soul leads evil things towards good and falsehoods are changed into happy truths. He finds that everything in the cosmos has grown familiar and kindred because ‘The intimacy of God was everywhere.’ Here is the source of all finite life and the soul is in its own form and meet other souls directly. He knows thing by their soul and not by their shape. Everything here is beautiful by its own birthright on this plane, “world and self were one reality’. There Aswapati sees beings in a state of silent internal trance who are assimilating their life experiences in the previous births and preparing for the next. He discovers that he has come to the centre of creation from where with a starting point of silence all spiritual personalities remould their purpose. Aswapati’s

soul passes on towards the end which ever begins again, approaching through a stillness to the source of all things human and divine. As he proceeds:

“There he beheld in their mighty union’s poise

The figure of the deathless Two-in-one,

A single being in two bodied clasped,

A diarchy of two untied souls

Seated absorbed in deep creative joy;

Their trance of bliss sustained the mobile world (S.II.14.295)

Behind the dual personality he sees the great one, the Divine Mother who ‘guards the austere approach to the Alone.’ She stands above all the planes supporting them in her omnipotence. She is always veiled. The ages of Time are the courses of her walk and all that takes place is prefigured in her thoughts. Aswapati’s spirit is made a vessel of Her force and he ‘outstretched to her his folded hands in prayer’. And in a spontaneous gesture of response, she uncovered to him half of her face. He is overwhelmed by the light and the bliss and:

He cast from the rent stillness of his soul

A cry of adoration and desire

And the surrender of his boundless mind

And the self-giving of his silent heart

He fell down at her feet unconsciousness, Prone (S.II.14.296)

From the soul state Aswapati again comes back to the surface and stands in a realm of silence, alone and still. He has gone beyond the reign of Nature and Mind. It is a plane of undetermined spirit beyond thought. Here is a voice that human ear cannot hear, a knowledge that is gained by identity in which the

knower is the known . having gone beyond the knowable he gazes with an immeasurable outlook which was “One with self’s inlook into its own pure vasts.” This is the place of the spiritual birth of things. He sees that all forms are shapes of the spirit and outbursts of the Truth. He also sees the powers that preside over the world. The All revealing light leads him to the regions of transcendent truth where Time and Space are seen in their true nature as self-extensions and self-durations of the spirit. The Beauty and Harmony of creation unveil themselves to his vision. He beholds the play of Inspiration, Revelation and Intuition. There is a universal beauty sheltered behind all forms which renders common place things into wonders of beauty.

Freed from the hold of sleep and death he crosses the seas of the cosmic mind and nears the rim of Eternity. Above him there are hierarchies of planes, powers and gods, presiding over the whole creation. He has reached the topmost region and only the last mystery is left. All the multiplicity flows into one and he becomes a part of the glory. No untruth can enter here. Each truth is unique, yet all are one the impersonal, and the personal, movement and Quiscent exist side by side.

A symbol of the self, the body is an immortal point of power in the surge of cosmic life. Consciousness is one single weft. Space does not divide and Time is one. Idea embodies vision and vision proceeds from identity. Aswapati is the newborn in the kingdom of spirit’s power and light. His knowledge grasps the unfathomable, embraces all without segmentation. He is in communion with greater beings and gods. The primal energy enters into him, and overwhelming light envelops his brain. He studies the secret of the

overmind region. He is in tune with the supernal harmonies and links up in his consciousness the creation and the Eternal's sphere.

The third book of 'Savitri', the book of the Divine Mother draws the picture of a blissful world where Aswapati moves and finds out a solution for the most fatal issue of mankind. He begins to feel that 'All knowledge ended in the unknowable.' At the same time there is peace and silence which settles in him, occasionally calling him to reach to something impalpable, something beyond, which yet fills his whole being. A giant doubt overshadows his advance, but he ascends without pause and reaches a vague immensity condemning the finite things of the world to Nothingness. Then, all of a sudden, he came to a height where nothing could live that belongs to this world. All the instruments of his nature which "Nescience builds collapsing failed." The situation is that "the separate self must melt or be reborn/Into a truth beyond the minds' appeal" (S.III.1.307)

All names and forms completely disappeared and the whole universe appeared like a veil. Behind the veil is seen the transcendent divine with "his feet firm – based on life's stupendous wings." The movement of the eternal time returns to His timeless eternity and nothing of the cosmic mind's conception remains. The peace and silence of the vastness rejects the world and the soul from itself. Some stark Reality alone remains which has no relation with the universe. The poet describes it as, "uncreating, uncreated and unborn/The One by whom all live, who lives by none.' (S.III.1.309)

It is also, "A silent cause, occult, impenetrable/Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone" (S.III.1)

This stillness though it “makes unreal all that the mind has known”, it does not mean that everything is made unreal. The present condition is that, ‘we have done with birth and death and work and fate.’ This conveys the idea that the state of consciousness now reached leaves no function for the self. Here Sri Aurobindo differs from all his predecessors in the spiritual field. He argues that this nothingness or white eternity of the being is not the last secret of the cosmos. It is only the first entrance into the realm of timelessness which would be a beginning of his discovery of God. Even when a shadow of ignorance is removed, the mystery of God’s manifestation in the cosmos remains. The riddle of this world is to be solved. He believes that this silence of the divine is not without power. Aswapati standing on the edge of this silence, finds that from the Transcendence,” ‘someone came Infinite and absolute.’ It is the divine Mother and she ‘took to her breast Nature and the world and the soul.’ The vacancy and the silence disappear and the brilliant luster shows a golden passage that led to his heart, ‘A moments’ sweetness of the All-Beautiful’. He finds that, “A Mother of Might brooded upon the world and she was, “The Mother of all godheads and all strengths/Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the supreme/ (S.III.2.313)

Thus the riddle of the world is solved for him. There is hidden, but all the same present, a wisdom, a word a love and ‘life from beyond grew conqueror here of Death.” There was no necessity of error, falsehood and wrong. The effort of man for knowledge and all human efforts are directed towards the Divine Mother. It is through her that man realizes his unity with all beings and the fulfillment of divine life on earth. Aswapati feels in all his limbs the joy of eternity. Now “only the hunger for the infinite bliss was left’

in him. But the delight that he thus receives into him is too vast for him. Even his widened heart cannot contain it. He wants to share his joy with his fellow beings. But he knew that it cannot be done by human effort alone. He decides to use his only weapon, 'a vast surrender' in order to, 'Bring into life's closed room the Immortal's air/And fill the finite with the Infinite" (S.III.2.316). Henceforth he longs only to bring down her presence and power into his heart and mind and body.

Aswapati now turns to the source of all beings. In the utter silence of his soul he aspires for the light of truth still beyond. He feels the resistance from below, "The ignorant No in the origin of things". The silence of one side appears to be neutral and on the other side there is rejection and contradiction of all that was high in the very nature of the world. He realizes that even in his own being there are earthly elements which were ultimately connected with ignorance and inconstancy. Old accustomed norms and habits resist their displacement and plead for prolongation of their life. There are also instincts taking refuge in the subconscious and revolts in his nature that had not yet taken shape. On investigation he finds that, "the Inconscient too is Infinite, the more its abyss we insist to sound/The more it stretches, stretches endlessly"/(S.III.3.318).

To make himself a fit vessel for the descent of the divine power, Aswapati" tore desire up from its bleeding roots." The aspiration in him is to bring a divine harmony into the whole of life and to make this earth, "an empire of immanent Divine." A great transformation comes over him. His soul spreads out and embraces the whole universe like a sea. He becomes one

with all in soul and nature. The human separative formula is transcended. He is swallowed in a trance of Infinity where:

His nature grew a movement of the All,

Exploring itself to find that all was he,

His soul was a delegation of the All

That turned from itself to join the one supreme” (S.III.3.319)

After thus transcending the human formula, he widens out into a universal nature: “Awaiting the ascent beyond the world,/Awaiting the descent the world to save.” (S.III.3.319). Aswapati is driven by a divine breath into a still higher region of being “past not self and self and selfless’. Here there is no duality at all, and negatives “find no access, no cause, no right to live.” In reality, this power has a mind too vast to be bound by thought and ‘A life too boundless for the play in space’. He himself is changed to an unborn self that never dies and waits in silence in this state of Infinity for the ultimate voice of The Transcendent.

Aswapati looks down and becomes aware of an ocean of oneness. The Infinity which he is, becomes “A living oneness” and it goes on widening till he becomes one with the innumerable multitudes. In that living oneness a power so elaps all into its embrace, “for worlds were many, but the self was one.’ He begins to act on this knowledge. Thus the cosmos that is to arise from the seed of this self-knowledge, is a world of light, safe in its knowledge. In that new and marvellous creation all are joined undissolubly to the supreme. Each individual remains unique, but experiences all life as his own. Each one ‘Recognised in himself the universe.” There in that true world, “None was

apart, none lived for himself alone/Each lived for God in him and God in all” (S.III.3.324).

He sees the hierarchy of luminous planes, each unique in its kind, all attuned to one truth. The one and the many are in perfect harmony. An all-creating bliss seeks for forms to manifest the divine truths. A vast truth-consciousness takes up these forms and hues and releases them into manifestations in time. The Divine mother moves in the cosmic house sporting with her godchild. In this new world there is a perfect reconciliation between the uniqueness of the individual and the oneness of the Universal. Life is an unwearied sport. In this play even matter becomes an expression of spirit capable of harbouring knowledge, consciousness and delight. The material body can be, ‘made a bright pedestal for felicity.’ Thus matter will be so transformed that it will be plastic to the Light of the Spirit and time would be “Eternity’s transparent robe.” Here Sri Aurobindo makes the protagonist a mouthpiece of his spiritual concepts. He has always contented the importance of the role of matter or the material world in the cosmos. The next experience also points to the same conclusion. Here Aswapati identifies two negations. One is “the world that feels not its inhabiting self” ie. he finds matter which constitutes this cosmic manifestation rejecting the spirit. And the second, “A spirit ignorant of the world it made.” The world is in search of its source and cause and the self is struggling to emerge. But the whole cosmic manifestation appears to be governed by three powers-an unknowing force at the beginning, an embodied striving soul in the middle and finally a silent spirit denying life. Aswapati also participates in the world’s fulfilment and he looks at the actual

world from the potential and inevitable. Even his own body appears to him like some foreign shape from that consciousness.

Aswapati becomes conscious of the two states of his own being. “Two beings he was, one wide free above,/One struggling, bound, intense, its portion here/(S.III.3.331) And the second,/“Far down below like a lamp in night;/Abandoned it lay, alone, unperishable’/(S.III.3.332). The second being always aspires to the heights to see something unknown and struggles to leave the depths. Though all his other parts of nature feels a kind of satisfaction in the peace in which he finds himself, the spark of divinity that is in him refuses to be satisfied with anything less than the divine transformation. It is patient enough to wait for it till eternity. This fiery being appeals to the divine mother refusing to give up its aspiration and to accept failure in spite of all opposite appearances.

In book of III canto 4 of ‘Savitri’ Sri Aurobindo magnificently pictures the friction of all the efforts of Aswapati to save mankind from the fear of mortality. In response to the call of his element of divinity, he feels a great presence near his longing heart. He experiences a great exaltation which affects even his physical body. He sees a face, flame pure with large forehead and beautiful eyelids. It advises Aswapati to be satisfied with what he has achieved and not to demand more. It explained, “Awake not the immeasurable descent’/Speak not my secret name to hostile time;/Man is too weak to bear the Infinite’s weight’/(S.III.4.335).

It guarantees him that in proper course of time the conditions of the earth will change. It commands him not to be ‘lost in the Alone’. It asks him to live for “the slow-placed omniscient purpose.” It tries to convince him that

being subject to darkness, man is, “A nomad of the far mysterious life,/In the wide ways a little spark of God” (S.III.4.336).

His mind, life and other natural instruments are incapable of attaining the highest spiritual knowledge and perfection. Finally Aswapati is advised, “To its omnipotence to leave thy work’s results”. But Aswapati reacts that it is high time for the divine to interfere in the course of Nature because man on earth is having lots and lots of suffering. He describes:

Annulled, frustrated, spent, we still survive
In anguish we labour that from us may rise
A larger seeing man with nobler heart
A golden vessel of the incarnate truth (S.III.4.342)

Then he appealed to her:

Let thy infinity in one body live,
All-knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
All-love throb single in one human heart.
Immortal, trading the earth with mortal feet.
All heaven’s beauty crowd in earthly limbs!” (S.III.4.345)

He once again appeals to her to unlock the doors of fate. She promises the descent of a limitless mind, embodying all nights and greatness She assures;

A seed shall be sworn 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 (S.III.4 346)

Then the splendour vanishes. But the echo of the message in the form of delight remains in his heart. Slowly he comes back to the earthly consciousness and resumes his labours towards the spiritual perfection of man. In order to fulfill his destiny, ‘The Lord of life resumed his mighty rounds/In the scant field of the ambiguous globe.’ (S.111.4.348)

Thus Sri Aurobindo gives a graphic picture of the rising of the ‘Kundalini’ through the seven centres mentioned in the traditional yoga. In Aurobindonian ‘Integral Yoga’ the different levels of mind are closely connected with the various centres of consciousness situated in various positions in the subtle body. In integral yoga the descending force opens the centres slowly and gently from top to bottom. The divine force enters through a centre a little above the head called ‘Sahasradala padma’ in the traditional yoga. This superconscient allows us to communicate with the higher mental regions like the illumined mind, intuitive mind and overmind. The two centers of the mental region-ajna chakra and visudhi chakra govern the will and activity and all forms of mental expression respectively. The vital region has three centres – anahatha, manipuraka and swadhisthana which controls feelings and emotions of the common level. The centre of the physical and subconscious, Muladhara, situated at the base of the spine, rules our physical being and sexual impulses.

The human soul represented by Aswapati ascends to the Divine world, meets the Divine creatrix and gets the assurance of her descent to the earth to divinise it. Thus the situation is prepared for the descent of the divine element on earth and he waits patiently for the fulfillment of the promise.

A Reader of the Vedas (like Rig Veda with its Purusha Suktha) or epics like Dante's 'Divine Comedy' or humbler works, the Puranas or Buyan's Pilgrim's progress is impressed by a contrast. The divine head which Aswapati meets is a 'She' and not a 'he'. This shows the influence of the Sakthi Cult in Sri Aurobindo. Secondly unlike the other pilgrims to eternity Aswapati does not want to bask in the eternal solace offered by the Highest Godhead. He wants to bring the Godhead to the human world. And the Divinity offers to send not her son but her daughter to the earth to save mankind. As A.B. Purani Says, 'Savitri, the supreme power of Grace descended into life, is the only feminine Avatar in the world' (A.B.P.S.P.33). He goes on to say that unlike other avatars Savitri completely identifies the nature part of her Avatar with the nature of man in order to save humanity.

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CHAPTER 2
THE YOGA OF SAVITRI

Savitri is pictured in the original story as a chaste and loving wife who had the capacity to get her husband back from the hands of yama, the God of death. It is because of Divine help, the power of her chastity and her ability for logical argument that she is able to achieve such an unprecedented success in the history of human race. The story is taken as an example in praise of marital love and purity. In Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri becomes the divine element who has come down to earth on the supplication of her human father, Aswapati, to Adiparasakti. With a lot of Satwic qualities and accomplishments she lives the life of a princess. From the material point of view she is exceptional and for the same reason nobody dares to claim her hand. Satyavan is her own choice. The fact that he has to die within a year creates a crisis in her life which makes her think about her own real identity or spiritual self. Through the process of finding out her real self, recognizing her divinity and uniting with the divine mother, she prepares herself for her mission. She travels through the different stages of yoga and makes herself fit for the divinisation of the earth. In the present chapter I intend to go through the various stages of Savitri in her transformation from the human to the divine status.

The human identity of Savitri is firmly revealed in her adamant decision to marry Satyavan in spite of the warning given by the great sage Narad that he has to die within one year. The precious short period of one year for her naturally becomes a term for the realization of all her marital dreams. The conflict and tension in her mind becomes almost unbearable and the human, feeble, helpless part of her nature dominates in her personality. So she decides to be submissive to the iron law of mortality forgetting all her divine powers

and her mission on earth. While she was staring at the dumb passage of time and hastening approach of fate, she hears a call from the summits (ajnachakra) of her own being. As a result of the voice her body stiffens and she goes into a motionless trance. Her mind becomes empty of thought and hears only the voice. It exhorts her:

“Why camest thou to this dumb death bound earth,
This ignorant life beneath indifferent skies
Tied like a sacrifice on the altar of Time,
O spirit, O immortal energy,
If ‘twas to nurse grief in a helpless heart
Or with hard tearless eyes await thy doom?
Arise, O soul, and vanquish Time and Death. (S.VII. 2. 474)

Savitri replies in a helpless tone that her strength is totally taken away from her and now she is at the mercy of death. She feels it useless to try to uplift and save this ignorant race which hugs its miseries and mocks the light that comes to save. Revealing all her human traits the poet makes Savitri ask a lot of questions expressing her doubt and disappointment over the present plight of human beings on earth:

Is there a god whom any cry can move?
He sits in peace and leaves the mortals strength
Impotent against his calm omnipotent law
And in conscience and the almighty hands of Death
What need have I, what need has Satyan
To avoid the black-meshed net, the dismal door,
Or call a mightier light into life’s closed room,

A greater law into man's little world?

Why should I strive with earth's unyielding laws

Or stave off death's inevitable hour? (S.VII. 2. 475)

She becomes so selfish that she plans to follow Satyavan through the night of death to the bright heavens where both of them will be free from all the problems of man and death. There they may be able to forget even God and eternity. The voice reminds her of her divine mission on earth to change the old laws, to free the earth from her basic state of unconsciousness and to free man's spirit from adamant fate. It also tells her that she has come down to earth in order to break open the hard doors of Fate that seem ever closed and to lead man from his narrow path of ignorance to the wide and luminous road to truth that forges through the finite world to the Infinite and the Eternal. The voice feels ashamed to admit that the power embodied in Savitri has failed to fulfil its mission. While Savitri was silent on this comment, a power within her proclaimed itself to be a portion of the same power and requested the voice to command it for further action. The voice reminded it of its purpose and advised to seek out the soul and to change the mortal nature of Savitri to divine nature. The voice ordered to

Open God's door, enter into his trance.

Cast thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light

In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain

His vast Truth wake within and know and see (S. VII. 2. 476)

It clarified that a veil of sense obstructs the direct sight of her spirit and so it has to be cast away. Then the human nature shall become the powerful instrument of the all powerful and her voice shall carry the force of His creative

word. On completing all these conditions, the voice assured, 'Thou shalt harbor my force and conquer Death.'

Savitri begins to search for her own soul which happens to be the first step in her yoga. A dream-vision reveals to her the past of the cosmos, the hidden seed and occult origins, the vague beginnings of the world movement and its fate. A symbolic imagery lights up the hidden truth and pictures to her the meaning and significance of the world. The appearance of creation from formlessness of the supreme self, the shaping of matter, the sprouting of the seeds of life and the chaos of the little sensibilities as well as the emergence of mind are all seen as giant steps of great energy of God. Human nature keeps within itself both the forces of Light and Darkness and the regent mind, 'communicates with Heaven, tampers with Hell;'. The lower nature born of ignorance still occupies a large space in her being. She sits in meditation in obedience to the command and in that state time, life and death were more passing incidents obstructing their passage her inner sight that needs to break through the veils of nature and set free the divine soul imprisoned in the blind mortal man. By an inward-going process she finds her inner self in a sheer still emptiness. Going further everything disappears and she is left without thought and feeling. Then the voice directs her, to find her soul in the body formed of matter.'

Savitri comes out of her physical body and intuits the seat of her secret and unfathomed soul to be in the centre of the subtle being. She knocks at the hard dark gate forbidden to the physical mind. A mighty and fearful voice cries from within to turn back from the attempt and threatens her of cruel torture. The guardian power at the threshold of the interior, the deadly serpent

rises hissing. The hounds of the nether darkness growl with open mouths. The atmosphere is filled with danger and audible menace. Undaunted, Savitri pushes the gate open which swings wide with a loud jar of protest. The opponent forces withdraw and she enters the inner worlds. In the passage through the subconscious, she faces difficulty in breathing, but she strives to get at the inner self behind the outer senses. Misguiding flashes act in opposition and sight refuses to see because of a strong and thick barrier in the subtle matter. Through all these deformations in power, light and sight in the body she forces her way to the soul. She enters the subconscious world where everything is confusion, 'for all was there, but nothing in its place'. After a while during which she walks into the corridors of Inner Time, she breaks out into a realm of forces, of the beginnings of finiteness, of the world of senses. All is a clamour of life. Voices, visions and movements abound but without any directing will Life's power attempts to pull down reason from its seat so that it could reign unfettered in its sense world. But she cannot find the soul there.

Savitri pushes away this threatened state and goes on through this dark dangerous passage fixing her thought on the savior Name. Then comes a deliverance and she moves on through a blank tranquility.

A while she moved through a blank tranquility
of naked Light from an invisible sun,
A void that was a bodiless happiness,
A blissful vacuum of nameless peace (S. VII. 3. 491)

The next danger was the emergence of a giant head of life with an uncontrollable force. Like a turbulent sea it breaks into the stillness of her self

and floods her being with its lust for power. Drunk from the well of the world-libido, it seeks for the primitive joy of Nature. It dreams of the glory of the life gods and the cycles of Desire rise in this infinity. Released by the physical mind, a torrent of the blind life force denudes the stillness of her silent self:

A deaf force calling to a status dumb,
A thousand voices in a muted vast,
It claimed the heart's support for its clutch at joy,
For its need to act the witness soul's consent,
For its lust of power her neutral beings' seal. (S. VIII.3. 492)

This ardour of life is not blunted by the weight of the earth and as this force of life rises upwards, there is the glow of the mind of life, the vital mind imitating the light of intuition and its infallibility. But it is a borrowed light mingled with falsehood and error. In their nether realms of life all kinds of contraries are mixed up. Truth and error, wisdom and ignorance, death and life are all mingled in this valley of fleeting Gleams. Souls trapped in this region become agents of life's desires. Savitri is not attracted by this gleam. She wants to remain its mistress and stands unmoved, allowing the current life force to pass by. Gradually the storm and the roar subside and one again she breathes free and tranquil air.

Savitri proceeds in her journey and steps into a brilliant, ordered space where life is tamed and controlled, her will and fancy curbed. The poet describes:

A royalty without freedom was her lot;
The sovereign throned obeyed her ministers;
Her servants mind and sense governed her house;

Her spirits bounds they cast in rigid lines

And guarding with a phalanx of armoured rules

The reason's balanced reign, kept order and peace (S. VII. 3. 495)

The soul is enthroned on a bench of law and wisdom is reduced to a formula. The ample sweep of idea is cut into a system and fixed to pillars of thought or clamped to the ground of Matter. Thought revels in abstractions. Life's empire is forced into a scheme of Reason. Its course is confined to a safe level path. It never tries for adventures or to soar too high or to set the world afire. Life activity is not a spontaneous projection of the inner being. It changes even religion. In the words of the poet:

A rational religion dried the heart.

It planned a smooth life's acts with ethics rule

Or offered a cold and flameless sacrifice

The sacred Book lay on its sanctified desk

Wrapped in interpretation's silken strings:

A credo sealed up its spiritual sense (S. VII. 3. 497)

Thus Savitri finds the country of life mind – a world of small ideals, of closed conventional and formal mediations and rational religion.

The best example of this, to my mind, is the theory of positivism proposed by August Comte which greatly influenced philosophy in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to Comte, "Spiritual reorganization must repose upon the authority of demonstration; it must be based on science, with a priesthood properly constituted out of the regenerated scientific class. In other words, the spiritual authority must issue from a philosophy which can be demonstrated, not a philosophy which is imaginary."

Further Savitri enters the quiet realm of the thought mind. The clamour of the senses has come into a hush. Here, “the spirit saw itself as a form of mind,/Lost itself in the glory of thought,/A light that made invisible the sun” she comes to a settled and ordered space. It is a world of fixity and stability firmness and finality. Here savitri meets a commanding being with an air of self-importance. He warmly welcomes her to “their brilliant air flaming with thought’s supreme finality.’ He wants Savitri to live permanently in this kingdom of safety, certainty and mental ultimancy. She replies

But I must pass leaving the ended searh,
Truth’s rounded outcome firm, immutable
And this harmonic building of world fact,
This ordered knowledge of apparent things.

Here I can stay not, for I seek my soul (S. VII. 3. 499)

To the inhabitants of this world it is not imaginable to go out of this systematised world in search of something better. Savitri’s reply causes various reactions in her audience. Some of them considers soul as ‘a gland or a secretion’s fault’ or ‘a functional disorder of the brain’ or ‘an unreal term that made people ‘cling to living in a sea of death’. To some others the soul is

“A splendid shadow of the name of God,
A formless lustre for the Ideal’s realm,
The spirit is the Holy Ghost of Mind;

But none has touched its limts or seen its face (S. VII. 3. 500)

To a third group mind, the conscious origin of the soul, the base on which quivers a brief passing light that they call the soul. One of them, however, with mystic and unsatisfied eyes, still remembering his old

unsuccessful quest, wonders that there is still someone who seeks for a Beyond. They could not even imagine someone to think about soul. Perhaps the Buddha belongs to this group according to whom there is no soul. He calls the soul anatta or anatma or the no-soul. There is only mind in its place. Many mighty powers of the thought mind attract Savitri, but she continues her journey in search of the soul.

On the way she meets a luminous company of Gods and goddesses, messengers and emanations from the subliminal vasts and guests issuing from the cave of the secret soul. Attracted by their spiritual light, she thinks of joining them to save the world from its pain and suffering. But she holds herself back because, 'only who save themselves can others save.' Here she realises 'life's ridding truth' that all those who desire to help humanity turned to the outer world in search of the external means whereas she alone looks inward for eternal source of alleviation. She addresses the happy company of luminous gods' and enquires the way to her secret soul and the mystic fire. The occult powers, the messengers who helped men and brought solace and light to their lives, knew Savitri as the 'human copy and disguise of God'. One of them directs her:

Follow the world's winding highway to its source,
There in the silence few have ever reached,
Thou shalt see the fire burning on the bare stone
And the deep cavern of thy secret soul" (S. VII. 3. 501)

Following their suggestions Savitri takes the winding road, the narrow path and soon feels the nearness of the soul.

A creature of universal lower nature, the human ego assumes the three postures of Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa. Each mode has its leading instrument or faculty which serves as the liver of operation on the other members of the human race. The tamasic ego chooses the undeveloped higher vital, the petty heart with its limited power of expansion of consciousness as its seat. The ever hungry all-devouring lower vital becomes the vehicle of the rajasic ego. The Sattwic ego concentrates in the reasoning mind. The Tamasic ego is exclusively preoccupied with misery and suffering. Evil is the very nature of this being and it cherishes its own miseries and goes on increasing it in quantity and quality and in this excels others. A perfect satisfaction with one's own special pangs, a perverse delight in suffering is the only refuge for the man of sorrow. The Rajasic ego revels in the worship of the power and pleasure in its exercises. It does not believe in respecting the laws of nature and is not concerned with the miserable condition of the world. An ardent quest for knowledge and understanding with the sense-shackled intellect of Nature, Man and the Beyond is the characteristic trait of the sattwic ego. Even though it is proud of its achievements in unraveling many of the secrets of the world with the help of scientific enquiry, the fundamental question or cause is left unanswered, because of the defects of instruments used in the process. These three nature forces of egoism with their characteristic defects in themselves reside in all individual human beings with varying intensity or concentration. But in spite of all the noises made by these egoes, more subtle and harmonious tunes are audible to the subliminal ear of the seeker of Truth. The delegates from the one original Tanscendent Shakthi kindle and maintain the intensity of aspiration in man for communion with and manifestation of the forces and

powers of the higher vast consciousness. These are the three mothers of the universe – Madonna of suffering, Madonna of Might and the Madonna of Light; Savitri's meeting with the three mothers here represents the presence of three types of human ego within herself.

As she proceeds she meets the mother of the seven sorrows who sits on the rugged ground with sharp and wounding sores beneath her feet. She embodies divine pity for she is a spirit touched by the grief of all that lives in this world. She introduces herself as the secret soul of Savitri who shares the grief, pain and sorrow of the whole creation. She has enough of sympathy, compassion and pity for all around her. She explains:

I am woman, nurse and slave and beaten beast,
I tend the hands that gave me cruel blows;
The hearts that spurned my love and zeal I serve;
I am the courted queen, the pampered doll,
I am the giver of the bowl of rice,
I am the worshipped angel of the House
I am in all that suffers and that cries (S VII. 4. 504)

She feels that all her prayers to God are in vain. She is not given the power to save, but she can share the sorrows and love the victims. She shares the pain and grief of all existence with the steadfast hope that someday the Divine shall come down and transform sorrows into pure delight. She concludes:

I am the hope that looks towards my God,
My god who never came to me till now;
His voice I hear that ever says 'I come':

I know that one day he shall come at last.' (S. VII. 4. 505)

She stopped her words and immediately like an echo, followed an angry voice – the voice of a tortured Titan crouched within man's depths, of one who seemed to enjoy his 'suffering even as he complained against it. He introduced himself as the man of sorrows 'who is nailed on the wide cross of the universe' and shouted:

I am Prometheus under the vulture's beak,
Man, the discoverer of the undying Fire,
In the flame he kindled burning like a moth;
I am the seeker who can never find,
I am the fighter who can never win,
I am the runner who never touched his goal;
Hell tortures me with the edges of my thought,
Heaven tortures me with the splendour of my dreams

(S.VII.4.506)

The wrath of a being who toils without success, who ceaselessly toils, but is not fated to enjoy the fruits of his toil and forced to fight ever without success, is clearly reflected in his voice. It is the reaction of a being who is condemned to live with his evil thoughts and quarrel some nature against both God and man. It is the voice of an angry fatalist, symbolic of the tamasic and demoniac nature of humanity who never thinks about a radical change in his consciousness, and who believes that 'what nature made, that I must remain/I suffer and toil and weep; I moan and hate' (S.VII. 4. 507). Savitri does not answer the voice but turns to the Madonna of Sorrows and admits her as a part of her soul. She appreciates her presence which makes their sorrows bearable

to human beings. It is because of her presence that they hope for better things and they claim for happiness and struggle with fate to obtain it. But Savitri recognizes that the Madonna of sorrows has no power to save. She proceeds her journey after consoling the Madonna : ‘one day I will return, a bringer of strength,/And make thee drink from the Eternal’s cup.’ (S.VII.4.507)

Savitri passes through the upward route of her spirit and is attracted by the pressing grandeur of forests and rocks and enjoys the delicate perfume emanating from the slender trees. On one of the boulders was seated a woman in golden and purple splendor with trident and thunder bolt in her hands. Her feet rest upon a prone lion’s back and her body exudes massive courage and unearthly strength. She threatens the lower powers and introduces herself as the secret soul of Savitri. She explains:

I stand upon earth’s paths of danger and grief
And help the unfortunate and save the doomed
To the strong I bring the guerdon of their strength,
To the weak I bring the armour of my force;
To men who long I carry their coveted joy;
I am fortune justifying the great and wise
By the sanction of the plaudits of the crowd,
Then trampling them with the armed heel of fate (S.VII.4.509)

She is Durga, the goddess of the proud and strong, she is Lakshmi, the queen of the fair and fortunate, and she is also Kali, the destroyer of the demons. She guides man to the divine path and guards him from hostile violence and treachery. She tells:

I break the ignorant pride of human mind

And lead the thought to the wideness of the Truth;
I rent man's narrow and successful life
And force his sorrowful eyes to gaze at the sun
'That he may die to earth and live in his soul. (S.VII. 4.510)

She does everything for the upliftment of man, but she can save only a few because in ignorant obstinacy, the world opposes and resists her attempts. She feels that 'the cosmic evil is too deep to uproot; the cosmic suffering is too vast to heal,' But she is confident and optimistically waits for the sweet sound of the opening of the gates of Heaven when god will come out to greet the aspiring and ascending souls of the world.

As the speech of the mother of might finishes, there comes a voice from the lower human world-the asuric antithesis growing ego-like in the human mind that claimed allegiance both of earth and wide heavens. It was the voice of the dwarf titan, the cry of "The Ego of this great world of desire" Though this human part believes himself to be a master over Nature, in truth he is, "A tool and a slave of his own slave and tool/He praises his free will and his master mind/And is pushed by her upon her chosen paths;' (S. VII. 4. 511). Though 'a conscious automation' and 'desire's dupe' he feels to be 'the heir of the forces of the earth' and 'a claimant to the throne of heaven'. Although he lives," 'in Time besieged by Death' precariously housed on a little speck amid the stars' he thinks that he is the 'god still unevolved in human form" and the universe was made for his use and enjoyment'

The sea was made for me to swim and sail
And bear my golden commerce on its back;
It laughs cloven by my pleasure's gliding keel,

A laugh at its black stare of fate and death.

The earth is my floor, the sky my living's roof (S. VII. 4. 512)

Though he was born small, feeble and helpless, now he claims to be greater than nature and wiser than God.' His enlarged ego makes him say

What God imperfect left, I will complete,

Out of a tangled mind and half-made soul

His sin and error I will eliminate,

What he invented not, I shall invent:

He was the first creator, I am the last (S. VII. 4. 512)

and exposes his further plan to conquer heaven when the earth is mastered. Savitri listens to the words of the mental ego and appreciated the Madonna of Might for being in man by whose presence the soul of man can climb to the heights of heavens. She consoles her saying.

One day I will return, a bringer of light,

Then I will give to thee the mirror of God;

Thou shalt see self and the world as by him they are seen

Reflected in the bright pool of thy soul

Thy wisdom shall be vast as vast thy power (S. VII. 4. 514)

Savitri continues her journey in search of her secret soul and arrives at a high and happy region from where all dashing colours can be seen fusing into a harmony when seen from a distance. She feels the nearness of the spirit and the profoundest things seems to be so obvious, close and true. Here she comes across another woman whose eyes shine with crystal light and face beams like the golden sun. Her feet are moon beams and her smile can enliven a bleeding heart. She introduces herself as Savitri's secret soul the Madonna of light who

has come down to earth 'to heal her pangs', lull her heart to rest' and 'lay her head upon the Mother's lap'. She describes herself.

I show to her the figures of bright Gods
And bring strength and solace to her struggling life;
High things that now are only words and forms
I reveal to her in the body of their power.
I am peace that steals into man's war-worn breast,
Amid the reign of Hell his acts create
A hostel where Heaven's messengers can lodge (S. VII. 4. 515)

She is also the benevolent charity, the sustaining silence and the knowledge. She has a lot of powers which are capable of lifting man from his pitiable mortal condition to the blissful immortality. The Madonna of light is fully involved in the hard tasks of the upliftment of the human race. But she feels the resistance of the human ego a major hindrance in the path of progress. She tells that if man is to be saved, "Man's mind shall admit the sovereignty of Truth/And body bear the immense descent of God" (S. VII. 4.516).

Suddenly from the ignorant nether regions there comes a cry, 'A voice of the sense shackled human mind' carrying the proud complaint of its innate god-like power for knowledge being hedged by the bounds of the human thought. As he is 'imprisoned in his body and his brain', he cannot see 'God's mighty whole'. Wandering on the cosmic surface man is denied the chance to 'commune with the throbbing heart of things.' Though frequently inspired by the unknown and visited by intuitions from beyond, he depends on reason and sense and thus is baulked in this splendid effort to save himself and humanity. An immeasurable pathos and self-pity dominates in his words:

I am a god fettered by Matter and sense,
An animal prisoned in a fence of thorns,
A beast of labour asking for his food,
A smith tied to his anvil and his forge (S. VII. 4. 518)

Man has succeeded in mapping the heavens and analyzing the stars but is ignorant of the secret purpose of life itself. Naturally the question arises:

Even if a greater consciousness I could reach,
What profit is it then for thought to win
A real which is for ever ineffable
Or hunt to its lair the bodiless self or make
The unknowable the target of the soul? (S. VII. 4. 519)

So this voice thinks it better to work within the mortal bounds and believes that, 'our smallness saves us from the Infinite.' This particular aspect of the human mind is incapable of accepting a higher destiny for man. From its experience it can not conceive that man, constituted as he is of clay and inconscience, could ever grow immortal and divine. So he has taken the final decision. 'Human I am, human let me remain/Till in the Inconscient I fall dumb and sleep" (S.VII.4.520) and so it becomes his moral right to resist any attempt to change his consciousness.

Savitri turns to the Madonna of the Light and praises her work to raise the spirit to the heights. She admits the fact that it is the presence of the Madonna which makes it possible for love to grow on earth and for knowledge to walk unslain in this pit of Darkness. She remarks that:

But not by showering heaven's golden rain
Upon the intellect's hard and rocky soil

Can the tree of paradise flower on earthly ground

And the Bird of Paradise sit upon life's boughs

And the winds of paradise visit mortal air (S. VII. 4. 520)

She advises the Madonna to tend and increase man's hunger for the Eternal, fill his heart with the flame of heaven and to bring down God into his body and life. Savitri assures her return with the hands of God in hers, making the holy marriage of heaven and hell possible. Thus the whole universe will become a divine family and light and peace will reign the world.

Savitri continues her journey and steps into a night of God.' The light which helps the world is extinguished and the inadequate mind gives up its round of futile thoughts and the striving heart gives up its vain hopes. All knowledge fails and all forms taken by the Idea also fail. Wisdom veils her humble head in awe, feeling herself in the presence of a truth that is too lofty, beyond the range of thought or speech, formless, inexpressible and immutable. Her mind is denuded of its contents and in that simple purity of vacancy it kneels down in worship before the unknowable. There is no strength of her own left and no pride of her own force. Her high flaming desires including the hope of attaining spiritual greatness fly away. She feels

Her self was nothing, God alone was all,

Yet God she knew not, but only knew he was.

A sacred darkness brooded now within,

The world was a deep darkness great and nude (S. VII. 5. 522)

But she knew this void is not an empty one. It holds in its bosom more than all that the crowded worlds do. This blank feels more than all that has been felt in the entire course of time. This darkness knows even the unknown

in a way that is mute and vast, 'But all was formless, voiceless, infinite.' Savitri moves silently, feeling empty like 'A small nought passing through a mightier Nought: then a change comes over and there is a ripple of movement within her being. Once more Savitri lives within her own inner self. A blissful nearness is felt and the felicity of heaven leans down to touch the sacred hell of her being. It is like the birth of Dawn wearing immortal lustre for her robe and she recognizes in her prophetic mind, 'The mystic cavern in the sacred hill/And knew the dwelling of her secret soul' (S. VII. 5. 523). A wondrous meditative twilight spreads over the scene. The great rock-doors of the cave are hewn in the massive stone of matter in trance. Crossing the silent threshold she

'... Found herself amid great figures of gods
Conscious in stone and living without breath,
Watching with fixed regard the soul of man,
Executive figures of the cosmic self,
World-symbols of immutable potency (S. VII. 5. 524)

She finds great figures of gods carved in stone and the walls covered with significant shapes portraying the life scenes of man and beast, the role of gods, the scheme of the planes and worlds. As she walks from door to door in the rocky temple, 'She felt herself made one with all she saw/A sealed identity within her woke' (S. VII. 5. 525). Here she realizes that she is indeed the energy, the being of all the Gods.

She knew herself the Beloved of the Supreme:
These Gods and Goddesses were he and she:
The mother was she of Beauty and Delight,
The word in Brahma's vast creating clasp,

The world-Puissance on almighty Shiva's lap,-
The master and the mother of all lives
Watching the worlds their twin regard had made,
And Krishna and Radha for ever-entwined in bliss,
The adorer and Adorned self-lost and one (S. VII. 5.525)

Then she moves to the last chamber of the rock temple and sees on a golden seat a figure of supreme Effulgence, a form of indefinable splendor. She feels that to be

“A power of which she was a straying force,
An invisible beauty, goal of the world's desire,
A sun of which all knowledge is a beam,
A greatness without whom no life could be (S. VII. 5. 525)

After that everything fades away into silent self and all becomes formless, pure and bare. Passing 'through a tunnel dug in the last rock' she enters into the radiant domain of the deathless sun. There in a house made entirely of flame and light, crossing a wall of living fire, without doors, 'there suddenly she met her secret soul.' The poet describes the secret soul thus:

A being stood immortal in transience,
Deathless dallying with momentary things,
In whose wide eyes of tranquil happiness
Which pity and sorrow could not abrogate
Infinity turned its gaze on finite shapes. (S. VII. 5. 526)

Savitri observes the silent tread of Time and the passing scenes of the everlasting play and realizes her own role as

In the divine comedy a participant,

The spirits conscious representative,
God's delegate in our humanity,
Comrade of the universe, the transcendent's ray,
She had come into the mortal body's room
To play at ball with Time and circumstance (S. VII. 5. 526)

Moved by her infinite love for her children, the mother being puts out a small portion of herself – a being of the size of a thumb – into the hidden chamber of the heart in order to face and bear the pangs of life and to share the suffering and endure earth's wounds and participate in the incessant labour of the universe. This immortal soul within human being supports him in his mental, vital and physical life. This hidden godhead uplifts us 'from light to light' and 'from power to power.' The secret deity and its human part' and 'the calm immortal and the suffering soul' meet and realize their true identity. 'Then with a magic transformation's speed/They rushed into each other and grew one' (S. VII. 5.527).

Once more Savitri finds herself back in her normal human state. The subtle world which has opened itself to her in trance has retired within the bright curtain of the inner sight. She experiences within her the harmonizing oneness of life, mind and soul. She prays to the supreme mother to descent into his earthly body and make it a temple of her own transforming, pure love. In response to her call, 'A living image of the original power' comes down into her heart.

Sri Aurobindo gives here a picture of the rising of the Kundalini power through its various centres which plays a pivotal role in yoga. The very touch of the divine feet creates a mighty movement in Savitri. It rocks the subtle

world and releases from its coiled – up position ‘a flaming serpent’ that rises billowing its coils and stands erect. It touches the different centres (Chakras) in her body, ‘surcharged with light and bliss reached the centre at the top of the head (Sahasrara padma, thousand – fold consciousness), linking matter’s nether base with the spirit’s summits in the Eternal’s space Savitri beholds in her heart an image of the primal powers with the form and face of the mighty mother.

An image sat of the original power

Wearing the mighty mother’s form and face.

Armed, bearer of the weapon and the sign,

Whose occult might no magic can imitate,

Manifold yet one she sat, a guardian force:

A savior gesture stretched her lifted arm,

And symbol of some native cosmic strength,

A sacred beast lay prone below her feet

A silent flame-eyed mass of living force. (S. VII. 5.528)

A high celestial change occurs and ‘many powers and divinities burst forth ‘breaking the black inconscients blind mute wall’ and effacing the circles of ignorance.’ Each part of her being vibrates with delight and is overwhelmed with waves of happiness. She perceives the hand of the mighty mother in every circumstance and feels her touch in every limb and cell. As a result of this impact and revelation there comes a joyous uplifting and new working in the different centres of consciousness in Savitri’s body. It affects the thousand-petalled lotus (Sahasrara padma) at the crown of the head, the two-petalled lotus (ajna) in the midst of the brows and the sixteen – pelalled lotus in the throat. Consequently the limited view, thought and sense are replaced by

vaster thoughts and movements of the immortal. In the place of the force of Nature of ignorance, a divine Shakthi, consciousness power, begins to act and impel the movements of her body and mind. The mind with the soul proclaims that “within we have found the kingdom here of God.’ Thus Savitri has succeeds in building’ ‘a strong fortress of the Divine in a loud ignorant world’ and “made the body a capital of bliss’. But she realizes that

In the slow process of the evolving spirit,
In the brief stade between a death and birth
A first perfection’s stage is reached at last;
Out of the wood and stone of our nature’s stuff
A temple is shaped where the high roads could live.
Even if the struggling world is left outside
One man’s perfection still can save the world.
There is won a new proximity to the skies,
A first betrothal of the earth to Heaven,
A deep concordat between Truth and Life:
A camp of God is pitched in human time. (S. VII. 5.531)

At last Savitri finds her soul which is cosmic and supra cosmic. She passes into eternity and lives eternally in the consciousness of the supreme Mother and prepares to meet her fate from that position.

After this mysterious experience Savitri returns to her normal life and continues as the happy pleasant Savitri among the people of the hermitage. She has found the truth of her being and knows the aim of her life. Though she keeps it a secret, she can feel its charm around her. This radiant inner perfection of Savitri overflows into her outer environment.

Even the smallest meanest work became
A sweet or glad and glorious sacrament,
An offering to the self of the great world
Or a service to the one in each and all (S. VII. 6. 532)

Moreover, her newly-opened foreseeing eye perceives a golden halo around the head of Satyavan, the supernal radiance, revealing a fully rounded victorious life. He remains always with her ‘.... A living soul/That met her eyes with enamoured eyes,/A living body near to her body’s joy/ (S. VII. 6.533). They are united in the common round of their days by the unseen atmosphere of their love, inseparable like the earth and sky. Thus for a while Savitri treads the Golden path of Felicity which “was the sun before the abysmal Night’

Once while she is absorbed in her happy contemplation of love something fearful grasps her mind.

Then rushing came its vast and fearful fount
A Formless Dread with shapeless endless wings
Filling the universe with its dangerous breath,
A denser darkness than the Night could bear,
Enveloped the heavens and possessed the earth (S.VII.6.534)

A powerful wave of benumbing death comes sweeping from the far end of the troubling earth, negating heaven with its huge stride. She is held in the hard grasp of some half-seen invisible entity which is at once an individual formation and some black unbounded vast. This invading host appears to proclaim to her the unnerving message of its dark eternity and the fearful meaning of its cold silences. It is a consciousness of being bereft of its innate

joy, vacant of thought, incapable of bliss, feeling life to be blank and finding nowhere the soul. Savitri hears in her depths its unspoken thought that makes the world unreal and cancels all meaning from life.

“Who art thou who claim’st thy crown of separate birth,
The illusion of thy soul’s reality
And personal god head on an ignorant globe
In the animal body of imperfect man? (S. VII. 6.534)

The voice warns her that she should not hope to be happy in a world meant for pain and not to listen to the inner word which makes itself heard without utterance. It also advises her neither to try to achieve her heart’s joyous desire of realising bliss in the silent still, supreme reality, nor to dream of calling the divine into her heart – chamber and of sharing the human joy. It explains :

I have created all, all I devour;
I am Death and the dark terrible Mother of life,
I am Kali black and naked in the world,
I am Maya and the universe is my cheat (S. VII. 6. 535).

The voice tells her that it wastes all human happiness and kills the joy of existence, so that all may disappear into a nothing and only an absolute may remain. Addressing her the voice finally demands:

“O soul, inventor of man’s thoughts and hopes,
Thyself the invention of the moment’s stream,
Illusions centre or subtle apex point,
At last know thyself, from vain existence cease” (S. VII. 6. 535)

Then this shadow of the all-negating Absolute ebbs away. Savitri found 'her inner world laid waste' and 'a barren silence weighed upon her heart' because all her efforts at perfection are negated by this voice. It reduces the world to an illusion. Then a greater voice comes from the heights of her own being. It is a word that touches the heart straight and discovers the soul. It advises Savitri to hide her kingdom of heaven within herself. It explains the various ways to proceed for attaining a great goal.

But not for the self alone the self is won:
Content abide not with one conquered realm;
Adventure all to make the whole world in thine,
To break into greater kingdoms turn thy force
Fear not to be nothing that thou mayest be all;
Assent to the emptiness of the supreme
That all in thee may reach its absolute
Accept to be small and human on the earth,
Interrupting thy new-born divinity,
That man may find its utter self in God. (S. VII. 6. 536)

The greater voice adds that because Savitri has come down 'to aid blind and suffering mortal race' it is necessary that she should undergo all the miseries of the human world. This also gives hope to mankind on the ground that 'God must be born on earth and be as man/That man being human may grow even as God/ (S. VII. 6. 537). In order to understand this cosmic unity, the being who would attempt it should grow into a supracosmic consciousness. To experience this Savitri is advised to banish all thoughts and 'be God's void'. Then she will be, 'one with God's bare reality' and the miraculous world he

has become! “The Divine miracle still to be’ will also be revealed to her. Then only the complete transformation will take place and matter will be “The spirits’ willing bride.”

Savitri plunges deep into herself and watches the whole scene “aloof and standing back detached and calm’-There she could see the movements of Nature and know the forces behind them-“prompter’s voice’ ‘animal instincts’, impulses and passions. She sees the formidable powers staring from the nether depths. And also the steady silent light from above that liberates the soul from its manifold bondage. She would also see the birth of ‘thought’ and

These were but counters in mind’s symbol game,
A gramophone’s discs, a reproductions film,
A list of signs, a cipher and a code
In our unseen subtle body thought is born
Or there it enters from the cosmic field (S. VII. 6. 539)

Savitri sees the various faculties in the subtle centres of consciousness, the lotuses. She feels the totality of the universe, the high meeting the low. She beholds the mighty power of Nature and the role of the individual as its instrument. God and Nature play the prominent roles and man has to give only the soul’s acceptance. Savitri understands:

But only when we break through matter’s wall
In that spiritual vastness can we stand
Where we can live the masters of our world,
And mind is only a means and body a tool (S. VII. 6. 543)

Rising above the mind, above the hold of Nature, Savitri sees creation from greater heights. From there she “laid her sovereign will to dedicate it to

God's timeless calm.' Then all grows tranquil and the body seems to have become a stone. But she still sees stray thoughts crossing her solitude. Gradually this also stops and all is absolutely still and silent.

In that absolute stillness bare and formidable
There was glimpsed an all-negating void supreme
That claimed its mystic Nihil's sovereign right
To cancel Nature and deny the soul;
Even the nude sense of self grew pale and thin:
Impersonal, signless, featureless, void of forms
A blank pure consciousness had replaced the mind. (S. VII.
6.545)

In that void the world appears as dream and her soul something impersonal-only a name. As sense cannot act in this all-negating void, there was no 'form' but only, 'A sheer self-sight, 'a self-seeing', 'a self-view.' Events can not provoke it into action. There was no response to external touches of Nature. Savitri acts thinks and feels impersonally, 'her consciousness looked on and took no part.' The only active power in her seems to be that of pure perception. "Even though a hollow physical shell persisted" everything becomes unreal in that experience. To her

All seemed a brilliant shadow of itself,
A cosmic film of scenes and images;
The enduring mass and outline of hills
Was a design sketched on a silent mind
And held to a tremulous false solidity
By constant beats of visionary sight (S. VII. 6. 546)

And yet she perceives behind all time and space, one that is solely real
escaping from all form and hue.

It faced her as some vast Nought's immensity,
And endless No to all that seems to be,
An endless yes to things ever unconceived
And all that is unimagined and unthought,
An eternal zero or untotaled Aught,
A spaceless and placeless Infinite (S. VII. 6. 547)

Yet eternity and infinity seem to be mere labels affixed by the
incompetent mind upon that stupendous reality. A formless liberation comes
upon Savitri.

Once sepulchered alive in brain and flesh
She had risen up from body, mind and life;
She was not more a person in a world,
She had escaped into infinity (S. VII. 6. 548)

In that state she shares' the superconscient's high retreat' and there is no
temptation of the joy to be. A lonely Absolute, negating all, effaces the
ignorant world and drowns her soul in ever-lasting peace.

Savitri continues her life in the hermitage in the normal manner and
remains her gracious self to all. But great changes occur within her. 'A vacant
consciousness watched from within/Empty of all but bare reality' (S. VII. 7.
551)'. She is impersonal in her movements and some mystery seems to act
through her. This mystic power is reflected in her speech and actions, as
beauty in her limbs and it is the very life of her breath.

Savitri is no more a separate entity as, 'Her mortal ego perished in God's night'. She sees within her that 'the individual die, the cosmos pass'. But there is something hidden. In the hush of the profound and intimate night, she comes face to face with 'a veiled voiceless Truth' that is hidden in the silent depths of the heart and waits beyond the highest reach of thought, unseen, but seeing the struggling world. Out of the vast she gets replies to her questions. Sometimes in the assembly of sages in the forest new unexpected revelations beyond the human range come to her. It seems as if the inconscient nature and the super conscient mystery, at two different poles are acting upon her. The inconscient used her body to get across the world through the conscious void in Savitri, The super conscient mystery above dispatched its message through the void in her to touch the thoughts of men around. Her being becomes a centre without circumference. In her inner world there is no movement and all is still. One is reminded here of the state of consciousness described in the Upanishads, of 'Aham Brahmasmi' The Buddhist state of Nirvana is not essentially different.

One night Savitri hears a voice from herself and it changes everything both within and without her. She realizes that all beings are one existence. "There was no more a universe built by mind,/convicted as a structure or a sign;/ (S. VII. 7. 554). A spirit perceives all created things and casts itself into innumerable forms. It becomes what it sees and makes. Everything now testifies to a stupendous truth in which there is no negation anywhere, the fact of a being, a living consciousness, a sheer absolute Reality.

"There unreal could not find a place,

The sense of unreality was slain:

There all was conscious, made of the Infinite,
All had a substance of Eternity (S. VII. 7. 555)

The absolute that Savitri experienced was realized as :

It was herself, it was the self of all,
It was the reality of existing things,
It was the consciousness of all that lived
And felt and saw; It was Timelessness and Time,
It was the bliss of formlessness and form
It was all love and the one Beloved's arms,
It was the sight and thought in one all seeing mind,
It was joy of being on the peaks of God. (S. VII. 7. 555)

Savitri passes beyond time and space. She is at once a measureless point and all vastness. She lives in the everlasting and realizes the universe to be the body of the Real, with God for its soul. She sees the world as living God, the one that is all. She identifies with him in herself. She becomes one with nature and feels the movements of all in Nature as in herself. She feels that she is spread out in infinity and

'she was a subconscious life of the tree and flower,
The outbreak of the honied buds of spring;
She was the red heart of the passion – flower,
The dream – white of the lotus in its pool.
Out of the subconscious life she climbed to the mind,
She was thought and the passion of the world's heart,
She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
She was the climbing of his soul of God. (S. VII. 7. 557)

So at the last stage

The superconscient was her native air,

Infinity was her movement's natural space;

Eternity looked out from her on Time (S.VII.7.557)

Savitri has gone not only beyond Ignorance and found her soul which is supra- cosmic or transcendent. She lives in it and so is beyond time and space and at the same time she is present in time and space. Thus she prepares herself to face the most fatal issue of mankind for the human race. The austerities and prayers of Savitri for the life of Satyavan in the original story is converted by SriAurobindo into a passage of consciousness from the human to the divine or the realization of the divine in her by Savitri herself. This gives her the confidence and the capacity to win over the God of Death. Her final victory may be said to be the fruit of this yoga. Her confrontation with the God of death is to be dealt with in detail in the next chapter and will be analysed there.

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CHAPTER 3
VICTORY OVER DEATH

In this chapter I would like to discuss the unique, unprecedented attempt of a human being to alter the ever-fixed laws of fate and its consequences as drawn by the seer poet in his epic. The poet here brings in almost all aspects in the philosophical field and also thoughts and questions which cross human mind in crises. Savitri here shares both the human and divine personalities bridging the gap between the two worlds.

All actions are the result of an inspiration or an emotion which originates in the human mind. It acts as a spur or a stimulant in realizing the scheme of action. On analyzing the human mind of Savitri we feel that it is the love for Satyavan that acts as a driving force enabling her to fight against fate. This inspiration makes her think critically about human love and also about the ideal of love. In her first meeting with Satyavan the poet comments: ‘the god touched in time her conscious soul/her vision settled, caught and all was changed/(S.V. 2.395) and on the first sight itself her heart recognises him as, “one nearer than its own close strings”. In a moment all that was in states of imagination and dream, sprang into a flaming reality to create a new world and a new life. “Arising to a hymn of wonder’s priests/her soul flung wide its doors to this new sun’/Quivering with the supernatural shock, her heart wakes up and cries out like a bird that recognizes her companion’s sound on a neighboring branch. Satyavan on his first sight of Savitri perceives an aura of light around her head and comes to regard and adore the new divinity on earth as the lovers meet.

By the revealing greatness of a look,

Form-smitten the spirit’s memory woke in sense,

The mist was thrown that lay between the two lives;

Her heart unveiled and his to find her turned; (S.V. 2.399)

After telling her the story of his life, he relates his experiences in communion with Nature and also of meditation where 'he glimpsed the presence of one in all'. But he feels the absence of the ultimate transcendent power which alone can save all. After meeting Savitri he feels that, he shall feel 'the world mother in thy golden limbs/and hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice'/And gradually they merge into one. In the words of the poet.

As when a soul is merging into God

To live in Him for ever and know His joy,

Her consciousness grew aware of him alone

And all her separate self was lost in his (S.V. 3.410)

Even when sage Narad intervenes announcing the fate of Satyavan, Savitri never waveres. She firmly declares:

Once my heart chose and chooses not again

The world I have spoken can never be erased,

It is written in the record book of God. (S.VI. 1.432)

Later in her discussion she tells the God of Death her idea of love in a detailed manner. She pictures her ideal of love thus:

My love is not a hunger of the heart,

My love is not a craving of the flesh;

It came to me from God, to God returns.

Even in all that life and man have marred,

A whisper of divinity still is heard,

A breath is felt from the eternal spheres (S. x. 612)

It is something sanctioned by heaven and wonderful to man. In the wild boundless cry of this passion there is hope. And when its strains reach and ebb away into the high heavens of up-soaring souls, its burning breath still survives beyond the rapturous core of the ever flaming, pure, unseen suns, as a voice of unending ecstasy. She believes that it was 'the Divine Lover' that came in the form of Satyavan for her and they are "twin souls born from one undying fire." Passionately she describes how "He rose like a wild wave out of the floods/And dragged me helpless into the seas of bliss'/She remembers his arms which touched her with the softness of a gentle wind and plucked her like a flower happy to be plucked and 'clapsed me happily burned in ruthless flame." As a proof of her unchanging love for him she declares that if there is some greater God who desires her, let him wear the face of Satyavan before meeting her.

From her personal love, her hopes about love expands and reaches to the wellbeing and a dream of perfect bliss for the whole world: "One day I shall behold my great sweet world/put off the dire disguises of the gods,/unveil from terror and disrobe from sin"/(S.X.2.613). Then she expects hope not only for the pure godheads, but also for 'the violent and darkened deities" who had leaped down in rage and revolt from the common source. Thus she expands her range of love and is capable of including in it even the evil powers. Still she reminds the God of Death that she wants Satyavan back to fulfill their mission on earth. Though she speaks from a highly spiritual plane she is conscious of the prominence of earthly life and also of the physical body. She tells him: "not for my hearts poignancy/Nor for my happy body's bliss alone/I have claimed from thee the living Satyavan"/(S X. 3.633). Thus she puts

forward her vision of love and also its fulfillment in both the physical and spiritual spheres. It is because of the same love for mankind that she rejects her chance to be in heaven. She declares: 'I climb not to thy everlasting Day/ Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night'/

The word 'Bhakti' in the spiritual background is defined as love also. Overflowing of selfless love or adoration for a person or the world is also considered a significant feature of bhakti. It often leads to unlimited bliss. Many poets have sung much about this ananda, which transports the devotees into another world. If we look at Savitri from such a point of view, we may find this aspect of the bhakti element prominent in her character.

The divine part of the personality of Savitri is revealed in the last part (Part III) of the epic, where she fights against the god of Death in a high spiritual plane and defeats him finally using her divine power. Empowered by her yogic experiences Savitri goes to the forest with Satyavan. Though mentally prepared, here she faces the acute form of human helplessness, death of the dear ones. When Satyavan dies in the forest, she does not brood over her loss, nor try to mitigate her pain with tears. She feels "as if her mind had died with Satyavan.' Then a change comes over her, 'the veil is torn, the thinker is no more:/only the spirit sees and all is known/ (S. IX.1.571) The calm power seated above the eye guides her and controls the stormy whirl of things. A new birth takes place in the splendour and intensity of the soul. A new sight is formed and new voices fashion in her a whole pattern of celestial music. All this happened to "Savitri in a moment's depth." She looks up towards the heights of her being, 'where she had worked in her lone mind. And sees a power emanating into universal space and understands that she is 'the

passionate instrument of an unmoved power'. The High power descends on her and she is changed:

On its lips the curve of the unuttered truth
A halo of wisdom's lightnings for its crown,
It entered the mystic lotus in her head,
A thousand petalled home of power and light,
Immortal leader of mortality,
Doer of her works and fountain of her words,
Invulnerable by time, omnipotent,
It stood above her calm, immobile, mute (S.IX.1.573)

The young divinity in her assumes a wide spiritual control, filling her life energies with the spirit from above, infusing celestial strength in her human part. She rises to meet the dreaded God of death before her.

Something stood here, unearthly, sombre, grand,
A limitless denial of all being
That wore the terror and wonder of a shape
In its appalling eyes the tenebrous Form
Bore the deep pity of destroying gods;
A sorrowful irony curved the dreadful lips
That speak the word of doom (S.IX. 1.574)

Human Savitri and the universal God of Death confront each other with their eyes.

Then 'a sad and formidable voice' orders Savitri to leave Satyavan's life and to return to her vain life as a slave of nature. As she does not respond, lowering its tone to suit the human ear, it advises Savitri not to prevent him

from the silent rest. He clarifies that only his body belongs to this world and soul belongs to a greater power. Savitri draws back her heart's force and leaves the rest to 'her spirit above'. When death touches the earth Savitri sees 'another Satyavan' arising forsaking the poor mould of that dead clay'. He stands between 'the mortal woman and the God' like one who sightless, listens for a command. Then there is a sudden impulse to move, Satyavan moves and death follows him 'like a shadowy herdsman'. Behind him Savitri walks with pace equaling gods into the dangerous silences beyond. Gradually the path becomes difficult for her while the two spirits speed along a grander road. When she feels that they would escape, "then flaming from her body's nest, alarmed/Her violent spirit soared at Satyavan" like a fierce she-eagle. Her spirit separates itself from the body and the physical body falls into a trance. Her mind regains the ability to observe the shapes of things and to live within the borders of the world that can be seen and known. In this new world they are the only travellers where 'souls were not, but only living moods.'

On reaching a chill and scorched boundary the God of Death notices her following them. He advises her that mind-born passion is not able to survive in this world and it is dangerous to go beyond the limits on the impulse of the strength of an idea which is a product of ignorance. But she continues her journey. On the boundary of Nothingness again he asks her to return to earth. He draws the picture of man, who is 'a product of Time' who is afraid of the void from which he has come and 'He magnifies his self and named it God". In the midst of dangers some supernatural presences move him to hope and 'clothes all with the beauty of his dreams". Mind of Man creates all these unreal images and the gods have planted 'incurable unrest' in the mind of Man

which drives him on relentlessly. Man toils, without aim in an uncertain world whipped by boundless desires and is helplessly bound to the moving chariot of Gods. They instill courage in him which leads him finally to his death. After offering some gifts to her to sooth her wounded life, he requests her to go back giving up the hope of getting Satyavan back. But Savitri clarifies that she is an equal spirit to him though in human form. The God of death proclaims himself to be the God all powerful over human beings. He has the right to create, destroy, compel man to sin, and then to scourge him with grief and despair. Savitri laughs at his idea of God, who creates in contempt worlds that he looks down upon. She describes her God as the will that triumphs and the love that suffers happily. He likes and shares both hell and heaven. She pauses stating that her God is sure to reform his world.

The God of Death then tries to make her understand that the world is created by him using the unconscious force and gods are only his imaginations and moods and so it is futile to argue with him. Savitri retorts that, his weapon, reason can only scan and break, but can never build. She believes in her own existence because, ‘I am, I love, I see, I act, I will.’ Then on behalf of the whole mankind she replies to death.

When I have loved for ever, I shall know

Love in me knows the truth all changings mask

I know that knowledge is a vast embrace

I know that every being is myself,

In every heart is hidden the myriad one.” (S.IX.2.594)

He who loves all came in us veiled by death and man is equipped with a mind and heart that would help him to conquer death. The God of Death neglects all her arguments, as he is sure of his power and empire.

As they entered the twilight world of the ideal, Death again addresses Savitri. He tells her that this ideal world is the source of the yearnings of human mind which dreams of its own immortality. When the thought of the human mind wishes to erect eternity from out of mere dust, it paints images bordered by illusion. He describes:

This is the stuff from which the ideal is formed
Its builder is thought, its base the heart's desire.
But nothing real answers to their call.
The ideal dwells not in heaven, nor on the earth,
A bright delirium of man's ardour of hope
Drunk with the wine of its own fantasy
It is a brilliant shadow's dreamy trail. (S.X.2.607)

To him love is "a passion of thy yearning cells" and human mind only 'dreams a while that it has found its mate'. It is the passion in man, 'a beast of prey' animal whom he takes to be 'immortal and a god'. The human effort to persuade' the insensible Abyss and 'to lend eternity to perishing things' is fruitless. He assures that the Ideal can never be realized in life. It lives only in the abstract world, in a white temple in man's heart, rejected in life'. Immutable, bodiless, beautiful, grand and dumb" Ideal is 'the aerial statue of the nude idea'. It stirs man to create an image of the divine things in life. But only a coloured reflection falls on man's act. He opines that the earth is the

only reality even if heaven and truth exist they can not come down to unhappy earth. He clarifies:

Earth lies unchanged beneath the circling sun;
She loves her fall and no omnipotence
Her mortal imperfections can erase;
Force on man's crooked ignorance Heaven's straight line
Or colonise a world of death with gods (S./ X. 2.610)

To him love which Savitri glorifies is

A conscious yearning of thy flesh,
It is a glorious burning of thy nerves
A rose of dream-speldour petalling thy mind,
A great red rapture and torture of thy heart. (S. X. 2.610)

He admits that true love raises human being to a divine height, but even in the purest love

'The snake is there and the worm in the
Heart of the rose,.' He firmly declares that,
Love can not live by heavenly food alone/
Only on sap of earth can it survive".

Love can be a victim of treason and wrath. It can result in a struggle between two egos and even "dull indifference can replace its fire.' Thus the ideal love is falsified. Considering all these points Death claims that he has saved both of them from such predicament. So he requests Savitri to correct her mind with knowledge, forgetting the vain waste of her spirit's force.

Savitri reacts that his speech is a mixture of falsehood and sad truths. She denies the idea that her love is a hunger of the heart and a desire of the

flesh. It is something that came from God and it has to return to God. In spite of all that life and man has spoiled, a heavenly breath can be felt in love. In this passion there is hope and ecstasy. The Eternal comes ever in the guise of love and tastes both the joy and pain of life. Every time he comes with a sweet face and attracts us with his magic notes of love. She cherishes God in the form of flaming fire. She proclaims Satyavan as her personification of the divine love.

Then Death begins to speak about the impossibility of bringing heaven down to earth, of the joining of matter and spirit. It is the Mind, artificer of idea and ideal, who inspires matter and life to attain higher life of existence. But mind, who “walks lamely on the earth footsteps slow” finds it difficult to control the unruly life and senses. The mind is rich in the realm of thought, but poor in the field of action. Everything depends on matter. ‘And if it ended all would cease to be’. Mind creates the idea of the soul. But body and life are controlled by the laws of matter. And this matter is “An appearance and symbol and a nought”.

Its aspect of a fixed stability
Is the cover of a captive motions swirl,
An order of the steps of Energy’s dance
Whose foot marks leave for ever the same signs,
A concrete face of unsubstantial Time,
A trickle dotting the emptiness of space:
A stable seeming movement without change,
Yet change arrives and the last change is death. (S. X. 2. 616).

It can be seen that the world and the human race are based on the unconscious. Out of the unconscious void something was born which was compelled to see, to feel and to love and it imagined that there is a soul within and searched for self and God. Till then death could create this world by Necessity and by Nature. With the coming of thought, harmony was spoiled. The impersonal vast throbbled back to man's desire" and as a result the great world's blind still heart was thrown into agitation. Thus came into existence the twisted, an understandable scene of souls caught up in the delight and pain of life, in the sleep of matter and mortality of the mind. In such a world there can be no place for God and soul. What is taken as the soul is the fleeting breath in the physical body and God is only a magnified image, a shadow of the human being cast in space. Human consciousness interposed between the upper and the lower void, 'reflects the world around'. Immortality for the imperfect man would be a cycle of eternal pain". Wisdom, love and knowledge in spite of their appearance to the contrary, have no basis in anything except matter. Mind and life cannot live by their own natural right. Everything that man is and does depend upon matter and this matter is nothing but energy which means motion in nothingness. All that man is and does is a dream. He declares:

The ideal is a malady of thy mind,
A bright delirium of thy speech and thought,
A strange wine of beauty lifting thee to false sight

(S.X.2.619)

He concludes his speech with an advice to obey the law of the earth, submitting to the whip fate and sharing the toils and griefs expecting the final release from it through death and to retire into eternal silence.

Savitri then accuses Death of hiding eternity with his dance of death, weaving the ignorant mind into a screen, and turning sense a false witness. She tells him that she would answer his Truth that slays, with her Truth that saves. Savitri, like a teacher explains the evolution of the universe. God, “A traveller new discovering himself’ made the realm of matter his starting point. He lived in nothingness, made night a process of eternal light, and death a goad towards acquiring immortality. She describes:

God wrapped his head from sight in matter’s cowl,
His consciousness dived into inconscient depths,
All knowledge seemed a huge dark Nescience;
Infinity wore a boundless zero’s form
His abysses of bliss became insensible deeps,
Eternity a blank spiritual vast (S. X. 3.621)

The eternal took position in the void and sketched the pattern of the universe in order that the free spirit might undertake an adventure into time. The spirit built a thought in Nothingness. Matter was made the body of the Bodiless, and

In inert matter breathed a slumbering Life,
In a subconscious Life Mind lay asleep
In waking life it stretched its giant limbs
To shake from it the torpor of its drowse;
A senseless substance quivered into sense,

The world's heart commenced to beat, its eyes to see,
In the crowded dumb vibrations of a brain
Thought fumbled in a ring to find itself,
Discovered speech and fed the new born Word
That bridged with spans of light the world's ignorance

(S X 3.622)

The waking mind gave rise to the Thinker, man became a reasonable animal, he measured the universe, opposed his fate, conquered and used his laws and mastered the environment. He wants to progress further:

Now through minds windows stares the demigod
Hidden behind the curtains of man's soul;
He has seen the Unknown, looked on Truth's veiless face;
A ray has touched him from the eternal sun;
Motionless, voiceless in foreseeing depths,
He stands awake in supernature's light
And sees a glory of arisen wings
And sees the vast descending might of God (S X 3.622)

Addressing Death she tells him that his comments are about an unfinished world' for which imperfection is a common thing. "The infinite holds the finite in its arms". One can very well feel

A miracle structure of the eternal Mage,
Matter its mystery hides from its own eyes,
A scripture written out in cryptic signs,
An occult document of the All wonderful's art.
All here bears witness to his secret might,

In all we feel his presence and his power (S X 3.623)

Everything in the world reveal his glory. God's ways challenge our reason and our sense. It is really a profound plan of a high, transcendent wisdom finding ways to meet her lord and master in conditions of darkness and Night. Immortality confirmed itself through the process of the death of the form. He concealed his knowledge in Ignorance, and paired good with evil. He made of error a door of entry for Truth. His bliss was nurtured by pain and sorrow. Through all vicissitudes man has moved towards the Divine wisdom and virtue failed to be perfect. Reason has sounded the shallow depths and caught small fish, but the great truths escaped her as they lived in the depths. Man's mortal vision peers with ignorant eyes. His knowledge leans on error, he worships false gods and doubts every truth he finds. In spite of all these, 'The Light is There' and it slowly grows. Then larger dawns arrive. From beyond the mind, inspiration comes to man. A spirit within 'hears the word to which our hearts are deaf'. It sees through the bright light which blinded our thoughts, it draws direct from the glorious-truth. It comes to know the mysteries of Eternity. Thus all was plunged into the enigmatic Night, but now all is raised to meet the glorious sun of Truth. This is the mystery of the reign of he God of Death.

The mask of death 'has covered the Eternal's face' and the bliss has fallen asleep and so Death and ignorance govern the mortal world.

"The eyes of the creatrix Bliss are closed
And sorrow's touch has found her in her dreams
and she comes to our hearts and bodies and our lives
wearing a hard and cruel mask of pain' Consequently.

Our nature twisted by the abortive birth
Returns wry answers to life's questioning shocks,
An acrid relish finds in the world's pangs,
Drinks the sharp wine of grief's perversity. (S X 3.629)

Puritanical outlook has advocated the avoidance of pleasure and even saints and sages have dread 'Gods' sweetest sign,' Bliss. And yet every creature hunts for happiness and is ready to sacrifice eternity for a moments bliss. Indeed God created this world for his own play of delight. But what happened was that, 'an ignorant power took charge and seemed his will/And Death's deep falsity has mastered Life/All grew a play of chance simulating Fate/(S X 3.629). There is a pure secret air of felicity which our spirits breathe but our senses are incapable of having a continuous contact. It is this pure secret, air which sustains, "A will to live persists, a joy to be' This joy of life persists in everything and thrills in the drama of fate and tragedy. This joy pervades all actions of men, good or bad. It explores all beings for new bliss, taps all experience for the thrill of adventure. From the outward and sensual man probes deeper and in thought and art finds delight. At last the soul turns to things that are eternal and seeks to find God in every form. This immortal bliss at last climbs to the summits of consciousness above mind and there

In the vast golden laughter of Truth's Sun
Like a great heaven – bird on a motionless sea
Is poised her winged ardour of creative joy
On the still deep of the Eternal's peace. (S X.3.632)

The world is created for this great delight. And when such a slow transfiguration is at work, love that begins as animal desire changes into a

sweet intoxication in the ecstatic heart, an ardent companionship in the happy mind, and then becomes the field of spiritual longing. Then “A lovely soul passions for the Alone/The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God, A body is his chamber and his shrine/(S.X.3.632). The Divine Beloved leans from his lone dwelling and through our being embraces the whole world in his single breast. When this unity is established there is no strife or disharmony. Thus concluding the discussion on the evolution she says that the whole purpose of evolution is to see that spirit adventures in Time and wrestles with necessity. It was not to submit to necessity that the spirit took its birth in Time. And the greatest symbol of Necessity is death. In the assessment of the world also death has made a mistake. He is assailing the world as a finished product, while it is only in its childhood. The unmanifest is continually establishing new contacts for this manifestation. Savitri indicates that in her challenge Death must see the future of humanity. As evolution proceeds the creator wishes man to take greater initiatives.

The God of Death draws her attention to the fact that man cannot change if nature does not change. He shows her, ‘how hope which is an incurable malady of man, works’. Man has to obey nature and her laws. The human race is moving in circling boundaries.” He cannot go beyond the limitations of his mind. He is able to see the higher regions, but can not reach there. Even if he flies high, ‘he sinks back to his native soil.’ He prays to brilliant gods invain and disappointed turns to the void asking for ‘the calm Nirvana of his dream of self.” There is no aim in matter’s world, there is only “a will to be.” The lives of men, their works and creeds were not able to save themselves, but perished in the flow of Time. Philosophies that solve no problem sciences, ‘omnipotent

in vain' and politics and revolutions convulsing mankind' 'only to paint in new colours in an old face.' Everything proves to be futile.

“If mind is all, renounce the hope of bliss;
If mind is all, renounce the hope of Truth
For mind can never touch the body of Truth
And mind can never see the soul of God;
Only his shadow it grasps nor hears his laugh
As it turns from his to the vain seeming of things. (S.X.4.645)

It is a mixture of light and shadow, of right and wrong. Each thought is an alloy of error and truth. It is impossible to plant truth on earth and to bring God down to earth. What comes on earth is only the thought of truth and the name of God. The God of Death advises her to cast off her mind and life, if she wants to be happy. Even if there is a god, he never cares for the earth and men. It is impossible for the Divine Mother to contain herself in the fragile human frame. Briefly he advises her to leave her plan of attempting to change the law of God and find a way to happy heaven through the door of death.

Savitri retorts to Yama that boons can be offered to tired spirits and hearts that could not bear the wounds of time. Savitri assures that as a soul who has lodged the Mighty Mother's spirit in her, she cannot take refuge in "the white calm". She comments:

The world is a spiritual paradox
Invented by the 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 symbolized,

A language mispronounced, misspelt, yet true.
Its powers have come from the eternal heights
And plunged into the inconscient dim Abyss
And risen from it to do their marvellous work. (S.X.4.648)

But now situations change. Life, mind and body have already begun their mission. Man's soul crosses to paradise through death and heaven's sun forces its way through death and night. She describes herself:

My mind is a torch lit from the eternal sun,
My life a breath drawn by the Immortal guest,
My mortal body is the Eternal's house
Already the torch becomes the undying ray,
Already the life is the immortal's force,
The house grows of the householder part and one (S.X.4.648)

It is senseless to say that truth can never brighten human mind, when there is evidence of creation arising out of the void, matter from the bodiless force, life out of matter and from life, as the last step, mind and thought Glimpses of Truth are visible in the ignorant mind of man and he feels the immortal touch at times. As a representative of the human race she confesses her feeling of closeness to immortality, and an intimate closeness to all other human hearts. In such a condition it is impossible to be satisfied with an individual freedom from bonds. So she demands freedom from the menace of God of Death for humanity.

Death seems to be a little oppressed by her replies and speaks in a tone which reminded of that of life "Disdainful, weary and compassionate". The earth-mind sinks in despair after her play with. Fate, chance and Time and feels

crushed by its ignorance and doubt. In that situation some light or power “delivered from the huge inconscient’s grasp” has come for help. Hearing this god of Death comments that her wisdom transcends both the veil of forms and the contempt of forms. It is a wisdom rare among mortals and so advises her not to dissipate her strength on mean and petty things which will disturb the present order of things in this world. The spirits who have “too much of love’ are ‘violators of God’. The wise are tranquil as the great hills that reach towards the unreached sky. So he asks Savitri not to interfere with her heavenly strength in Time’s march and requests her to respect the might of gods and the ancient laws. She laughs at the idea of calmness’ praised by Yama. She opines that it is only the repetition of happenings in a stark round. If law never changes, there is no hope for soul of progress to the new and the unknown. The fixed and immutable law is good for animals and not for man. Finally she informs her decision:

If I am mighty let my force be unveiled
Equal companion of the dateless powers,
Or else let my frustrated soul sink down
Unworthy of God head in the original sleep.
I claim form time my will’s eternity,
God from his moments. (S.X.4.652)

Now death acknowledges her superhuman aspect and requests her not to interfere in petty matters like life on earth. By cancelling her chance for the grand release, she will be trampling the Gods under her feet. She replies to him that she is following the path ordained by the Divine and she is not deviating in

the least from the line indicated by God. Heaven expects both of them to be together. It is real greatness.

To make fine wisdom from coarse, scattered strands
And love and beauty out of war and night,
The wager wonderful, the game divine,
What liberty has the soul which feels not free
Unless stripped bare and cannot kiss the bonds
The lover winds around his playmates limbs,
Choosing his tyranny, crushed in his embrace? (S.X.4.652)

God created man so that he may become a collaborator with god. But for this he has to be completely free. So long as he is not free, he will be afraid of Death and become a plaything in the hands of Fate. Death demolishes Savitri's claim to know truth and to represent it here on earth. He says that reason after all stands only on the plank of doubt, and without reason man's life, is a tangle of mere dreams. He tells that truth has no home in man's irrational breast. Thus he indicates that neither by reason nor by unreason can truth be found. He concludes:

"Eternal truth lives not with mortal men.
Or if she dwells within thy mortal heart,
Show me the body of the living truth
Or draw for me the outline of her face
That I too may obey and worship her (S.X.4.655)

Savitri speaks to Death about the play of opposites which underlies all movements in the manifested universe. There has to be a collapse of logic

before one can understand truth as God himself. Truth and God are not different things.

If our souls could see and love and clasp God's Truth,
Its infinite radiance would seize our hearts,
Our being in God's image be remade
And earthly life become the life divine (S.X.4.663)

Truth has to be directly known and when direct knowledge dawns, there the very ground in which death stands give way. Still death expresses his doubt that how even there; it is possible to bridge the gap between 'her and the dream world she has made.' He challenges Savitri to show the strength of her spirit who has knowledge and Truth, and who has the power to conquer Time and Death, 'to transform earth's death to immortal life.' As the worlds' darkness had consented to Heaven light" a mighty transformation happens to Savitri when the incarnation thrusts aside its veil. The poet shares the process in yogic language:

As glides God's sun into the mystic cave
Where hides his light from the pursuing gods,
It glided into the lotus of her heart
And woke in it the force that alters, Fate
It poured into her navel's lotus depth,
Lodged in the little life-nature's narrow home,
On the body's longings grew heaven-rapture's flower
And made desire a pure celestial flame,
Broke into the cave when coiled world-energy sleeps
And smote the thousand – hooded serpent force

That blazing towered and clasped the world-self above,

Joined matter's dumbness to the spirit's hush

And filled earth's acts with the spirits silent power' (1.S.X.4.665)

As eternity looks into the eyes of Death, he stands stunned at her transformation. The awful silence is broken by the low calm utterance of Infinity. The celestial voice admits Death as its shadow and instrument, but asks him to relieve Satyavan from his grip, so that

'he may stand master of life and fate

man's representative in the house of God,

The mate of wisdom and spouse of light,

The eternal bridegroom of the eternal bride" (S.X.4.666)

Death realizes that it is futile to resist, still he makes frantic attempts to call Night, Hell, Inconscient and his own strength to support him but none responds. His body is eaten by light and his spirit devoured. He takes shelter under the retreating night and disappears from the scene. Even when death vanishes there is the unseen presence of death around Savitri and Satyavan. Death should also be transformed as to become a friend of man. Then only life and earth can co-exist. Savitri, along with Satyavan's spirit decides to descend to earth for the betterment of the world.

The descent of Savitri to the earth after her encounter with Death is a triumphant one. It helps the reader to open his eyes to certain cosmic problems which have been vexing him from the very beginning of the evolution of human mind. The 'avidya' which has been the root cause of the human dilemma is removed. Savitri faces death and changes its ferocious nature into one of generous benefaction. She thus becomes the harbinger of the next stage

in human evolution where death is either conjured or turned into a chance for further experiments. Thus is the result of a widening of human consciousness effected by Savitri's efforts. Sri Aurobindo in the Eleventh book of 'Savitri' describes how the formidable figure of the God of death changes into a loving, lovable figure. The same love which Savitri keeps for the whole universe seems to be capable of making the widening of human consciousness. In this respect, the attempt of Savitri to bring heaven down to earth deserves our attention.

In God's everlasting day Savitri is surrounded by eternal delights, grandeur, powers, scenes and forms. Everything here comes from the Eternal Source and there is no sign of Night. Even the earth nature changes and feels 'the breath of peace'. In every guise one embraces Godhead. The poet describes.

Each feeling was the Eternal's mighty child
And every thought was a sweet burning God.
Air was a luminous feeling, sound a voice,
Sunlight the soul's vision and moon light its dream.
On a living base of wordless calm
All was a potent and lucid joy (S XI 678)

Savitri finds that the omnipresent Reality is the only force working in the universe and it transforms everything that is painful on earth to be enjoyable here. She sees with wonder the change that has come over the God of Death in this sphere.

One whom her soul had faced as Death and Night
A Sum of all sweetness gathered into his limits

And blinded her heart to the beauty of the Suns.

Transfigured was his formidable shape (S XI 678)

This transformation convinces her that, 'All Nature's struggle, was its easy price/the universe and its agony secured worthwhile/(S XI 679). The God of Death is transfigured into love and becomes a four-fold being, Virat who 'expressed himself with Matter for his speech'. It is he who 'In the current of the blood makes flow the soul' He owns the will and intelligence which can work without the help of the mind. In him the Golden Child shadows his form as 'Hiranyagarbha' who is 'author of thoughts and dreams,/Who sees the invisible and hears the sounds/That never visited mortal air/and 'who builds the secret uncreated worlds'. There appears the third spirit 'A mass of superconscience closed in light/Creator of things in his all-knowing sleep/' (S XI 681). He is 'our seed and core, our head and base' and 'He is the center of the circle of God'. When he is awake, 'He is the Eternal and the Supreme'. The fourth spirit, 'the brooding bliss of the Infinite existed there with a body filled with bliss that makes the world and a head formed of Love and Delight. All forms of Love, Delight and Beauty are seen in him. All these four powers work harmoniously in that embodied light. Then a voice from the heart introduces itself as 'the inviolable Ecstasy' whose sight saves people from all kinds of sorrows. He explains:

Two powers from one original ecstasy born

Pace near but parted in the life of man;

One leans to earth, the other yearns to the skies;

Heaven in its rapture dreams of perfect earth,

Earth in its sorrow dreams of perfect heaven. (S XI 684)

They are kept away from each other because of 'enchanted fears'. But there is a chance for reunion which shall be decided by Time. The Voice advises Savitri and Satyavan:

“Meanwhile you two shall serve the dual law
Which only now the scouts of vision glimpse
Who pressing through the forest of their thoughts
Have found the narrow bridges of the gods.
Wait patient of the brittle bars of form
Making division your delightful means-
Of happy oneness rapturously enhanced
By attraction in the throbbing air in between. (S XI 684)

The power gives them another choice. It asks them, 'to cast off thy sympathy with the mortal hearts and:

‘Leaving thy borrowed body on the sod,
Ascend; O Soul, into thy blissful home
Here in the playground of the eternal child
Or in domains the wise Immoral tread
Roam with thy comrade Splendour under Skies
Spiritual lit by an unsetting Sun,
As godheads live who care not for the world
And share not in the toil of Nature’s Power:
Absorbed in their self-ecstasy they dwell (S XI 685)

Savitri smiles at this suggestion and declares emphatically: ‘I climb not to thy everlasting day/Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night/(S XI 685). She explains why she gives such an importance to the life on earth.

“Earth is the chosen place of mightiest Souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit’s battlefield;
The forge where the Archmason Shapes his works,
Thy servitude on earth are greater, King,
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven (S XI 686)

She tells frankly that she is familiar with all the glories of the perfect life of heaven. But as an inhabitant of earth ‘where Gods and demons battle at night’. She likes to dare the impossible”. She also feels that:

In me the spirit of immortal love
Stretches its arms out to embrace mankind.
Too far thy heavens for me from suffering men
Imperfect is the joy not shared by all (S XI 686)

She also requests him not to underestimate her potentiality. Then she pleads for her union with Satyavan because, “I know that I can lift man’s Soul to God/I know that he can bring the immortal down/Our will labours permitted by thy will/ (S XI 687)

Here Sri Aurobindo emphatically declares the speciality of the life on earth compared to hell or even to heaven. Life on earth is the one and only chance for soul’s development. When her mind is full of the love for mankind, it is impossible for her to enjoy heavenly happiness which is not shared by the miserable lot on earth. Now her only request to him is to give a chance for their return to earth which will help the progress of humanity and the gradual union of earth and heaven.

The Godhead answers that it is not possible to change human nature as long as earth nature remains unchanged. Earth remains subject to ignorance,

suffering and evil. She can have only ‘fragments of a star-lost gleam’ and ‘careless visits of the gods’. Though there are ‘high glimpses’ she can never have the lasting sight’. He reports that ‘Heaven’s call is rare, rarer the heart that heeds’. Even if a few listens, they never respond properly. Man hardly responds to greater things except in the hour of stress or when raised by some strong hand. Even then they slide back to the mud which is their natural element because, ‘To be the common man they think the best/To live as others live is their delight/’ (S XI 689). He also opines that this kind of firmness of nature is good, because if this were easily disturbed, it would break the settled balance of the created things. The role of man is that of the mediating stair between the inconscience and the super conscience. Though the call of the Divine is there in man, the Inconscience draws man to its breast of Night, Death and Sleep. He laments:

The inconscient could not read without man’s mind.

The mystery of the world its sleep has made.

Man is the key to unlock a conscious door.

But still it holds him dangled in its grasp.

It draws its giant circle round his thoughts,

It shuts his heart to the supernal light.(S XI 690)

The Godhead concludes by requesting Savitri to leave earth ‘to time’s tardy pace and to ‘the working of the inconscient will’. As ‘the soul of man is greater than his fate’ he is sure to ‘blaze its way through the mind’s barrier wall/And burn alone in the eternal sky’ (S XI 691) He prompts her to rise to the sphere of the Eternal and live in Timeless Eternity and Infinite Power. He

exhorts: 'Receive him into boundless Savitri/Lose thyself into infinite Satyavan/ (S XI 692).

But Savitri declares that she is adamant on saving the earth and the human race. She tells him:

My Soul and his indissolubly linked
In the one task for which our lives were born
To raise the world to God in deathless Light,
To bring God down to the world on earth we came
To change the earthly life to life divine
I keep my will to save the world and man (S XI 692)

Savitri now begins an argument for human beings on earth who should be saved from their problems and miseries. She tells:

'If thou and I are true, the world is true;
Although thou hide thyself behind thy works,
To be is not a senseless paradox;
Since God has made earth, earth must make in her God
What hides within her breast she must reveal
I claim thee for the world that thou hast made
If man lives bound by his humanity,
If he is tied for ever to his pain,
Let a greater being then arise from man,
The Superhuman with the Eternal mate
And the immortal shine through earthly forms (S XI 693)

On hearing her firm decision, the Godhead advises Savitri to force her will on fate. For that she has to 'discover the truth of God, man and the world'

ascending into her Timeless Self. Then the heaven-worlds disappear in Spiritual light and Savitri lives there as ‘A rapture and a being and a force,’ ‘Bearing the eternity of every Spirit/Bearing the burden of universal love/A wonderful mother of unnumbered souls’ (S XI 695).

There a voice commands her to choose an immense extinction in Eternity repeatedly. But she politely asks for boons. First she asks for a boon to keep the Almighty’s calm and peace within her in the midst of the roar and ruin of the Wild Time. Secondly she demands the capacity to see the oneness of the Lord in all hearts. The third time the voice gives her the refuge under her wings which is above ‘the whirlings of the world’. Then She prays for the ability to seize on man, woman and creatures in their grief and gather them into her arms like a mother. Then the voice offers her the wide Solitude of the rapture of her bliss. Then She requests the Godhead to embrace her which rends the living knot of pain. Then the voice responds.

Thy thoughts are mine, I have spoken with thy voice,
My will is thine, What thou hast chosen, I choose;
All thou hast asked to give to earth and men,
All shall be written out in destiny’s book
By my trustee of thought and plan and act,
The executor of my will, eternal Time (S XI 698)

Because she has chosen to share earth’s destiny, the voice promised.

I bind by thy heart’s passion thy heart to mine
And lay my splendid yoke upon thy soul
Now I will do in thee my marvellous works
I will fasten thy nature with my cords of Strength,

Subdue to my delight thy Spirit's limbs

And make thee a vivid knot of all my bliss

And build in thee my proud and crystal home (S XI 698)

The voice expresses her hopes about the future of the earth where the life on earth becomes a tree growing towards heaven. She assures to work on earth through Savitri:

I will pour delight from thee as from ajar,

I will whirl thee as my chariot through the ways,

I will use thee as my Sword and as my lyre

I will play on thee my minstrel'sies of thought (S XI 701)

Then the voice directs both Satyavan and Savitri to descend to life on earth as 'a dual power of God in an ignorant World'. Satyavan has to play the role of 'the Soul that gropes out of the beast to reach the humanity's heights' and Savitri is the Spirit's power, the revealing voice of the immortal world. In the present condition Mind plays the leader of the earthly life. But, 'There are greater destinies mind can not surmise/Fixed on the summit of the evolving Path'/(S XI 704) In future, 'a few shall glimpse the miraculous origin, 'a fire on the apex of the worlds' and shall discover the world's huge design/And step into the Truth, the Right, the Vast/'. When it is time for the hour of the Divine, then the Mighty Mother shall take birth and the Supreme Truth will be revealed to man. Then a mightier race shall inhabit the mortal world 'who is a thought, a will of the Divine'. There shall come as a high crown of all,' the end of Death, the death of Ignorance'. Then

The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze

And Matter shall reveal the spirits face.

Then Man and Superman shall be at one

And all the earth become a single life (S XI 709)

Finally 'The Spirit shall take up the human play/This earthly life become the life divine/'(S XI 710).As the musical voice ceased Savitri's soul sank like a star. In the headlong fall she kept within her heart the soul of Satyavan to be brought down to earth. Thus Sri Aurobindo pictures the descent of Savitri and Satyavan from heaven to earth, full of optimism based on the boons and promises of the Godhead and filled with hopes and expectations of a brighter future for mankind.

Through the decent of Savitri to earth denying the comforts of heaven, Sri Aurobindo creates for us, Indians a new notion to the idea of heaven and salvation. It is totally different from the ideas given by the trinity of vedantic gurus, Sankara, Madhva and Ramanuja. Sankara argues that the world does not exist and its appearance is only 'Maya'. His idea of Salvation is human Soul's merging with the Absolute Brahman (Nirguna Brahman). To Ramanuja Brahma is with attributes (Saguna). A devotee's attempt should be to get out of this world and to become a part of God, without of course shedding his individuality. According to Madhva, the blessed souls lives in a kind of heaven in the proximity of God always enjoying God's presence. These three seers never give any kind of importance to earthly life. As an extension of this thought the role of matter in human by life is totally ignored in the life of the spiritual people. In the same manner for the common man, spirituality seemed something alien. So for the Vedantic seers upliftment of worldly life was something unnecessary. Sri Aurobindo differs from them in projecting worldly life and matter and also in bringing heavenly life to earth. He strongly believes

that the role of a yogi is to make the common people think in a better way by widening their consciousness, to prepare them for a better life and thus bring the heavenly life to earth, instead of getting personal salvation 'from this miserable world'. Here the Christian idea of divine descent becomes relevant. In the Bible (New testament The revelation 21) it is stated.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning or crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.

Sri Aurobindo makes Savitri and Satyavan to come back to earth for the preparations necessary for the divinization of the earth. Savitri strongly states the significance of earth in the cosmic picture. She also denies her personal salvation and a life of comfort and happiness with Satyavan. Her love for Satyavan and the human race is capable of making her deny anything. She has got a clear picture of future developments and it assures her of the coming of heavenly life on earth. These aspects prompt us to think that at least in the idea of the divinization of the earth, Sri Aurobindo is influenced by Christian theology and his close relationship with Christianity in the early part of his life contributes enough circumstantial evidence. Kapali Sastri in his prayer to Sri

Aurobindo addresses him as the King who brought the Kingdom of God to earth and thus became rich in all aspects.

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CHAPTER 4
OTHER LONGER POEMS

From the epic 'Savitri' to the longer poems is a long way. One of the main reasons for this is that an epic, by its genre itself, is distinct from a poem, whether long or short. The description 'a moment's monument' is not only fit for a sonnet, but for all poems, long or short as compared to an epic. For the subject matter a poem deals with is limited in its scope and more handy for execution.

A Single individual can handle a poem with ease whereas he may have to devote a life time or a major chunk of it to write an epic. That was why, Dante after the publication of 'the Divine Comedy' was called a man who had gone to hell. He had undergone immense physical transformation in the process of writing it and put on an unworldly look so that children followed him as he walked along the road and pelted stones at him. What sustains the writer of an epic through his work is his immense will power.

It is this willpower which maintains a writer's spirit as his imagination traverses vast spaces and distant horizons. The editor of Mahabharatha with its more than one lakh slokas had no ordinary will power. Compared to Mahabharatha, Ramayana is much shorter. Still it has large dimensions and great influence in Indian spiritual and social mores. Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and Dante's 'Divine Comedy' have the whole universe plus other universes (perhaps imaginary) as their background. Still their authors take care not to miss any finer detail in their description. Their structural power and strong workmanship, their grandeur and boldness of execution do not deter them from giving minute decorative finishing touches to the tiny facets which are often over looked by casual readers. The same is true of western epics too.

When we come to the longer poems what is absent is the magnitude of the background. This makes a difference and that is why Mathew Arnold calls his 'Sohrab and Rustum' not an epic or a diminutive epic but an episode. When we deal from here onwards with the larger poems of Sri Aurobindo we pass on from the epic to the episodes. 'Urvasie', 'Love and Death', 'Rishi and Baji Prabhau' are in that way episodes which make certain milestones.

The poem 'Urvasie' sensuous and unbridled in the effervescence of romantic youth, tells the story of the half-divine hero, Pururuvas and the heavenly half-human apsara Urvasie. It is a poem about 1500 lines in four cantos. The poet tries to bring in his favourite suggestion of the union of heaven and earth and proclaims the necessity of man to lose himself in efforts for further progress. The poem begins with the picture of Pururavas after his victory in the war against the Titan, in a happy mood to breathe the mortal air and to drink into his soul 'the Virgin Silence' of the mountains. His attention is now diverted into the magic phenomenon of dawn, a fascination of the poet. Here is the elaborate description of the dawn reminding us of the description of the dawn at the beginning of 'Savitri'.

The grey lucidity and pearliness
Bloomed more and more, and over earth chaste again.
The freshness of the primal dawn returned,
Life coming with a virginal sharp strength,
Renewed as from the streams of Paradise.
Nearer it drew now to him and he saw
Out of the widening glory move a face
Of dawn, a body fresh from mystery,

Enveloped with a prophecy of light
More rich than perfect Splendours. It was she,
The golden Virgin, Usha, Mother of life,
Yet Virgin. (CP.U. 190)

In this mood of happy relaxation, he happens to catch the glimpse of a group of apsaras basking in Dawn's unfolding immaculate loveliness. And among them he sees the golden incomparable Urvasie. The poet describes the moment thus:

And seeing her Pururavas the king
Shuddered as of felicity afraid,
And all the wide heart of Pururavas
Moved like the sea – when with a coming wind
Great Ocean lifts in for expectancy
Waiting to feel the shock, so was he moved
By expectation of her face. (CP.U. 190)

Pururavas is inescapably caught in the meshes of love's sovereignty. Such a lovely and romantic atmosphere is suddenly crushed by darkened clouds and rain, a trick played by Cayshie, the giant. He carries Urvasie away 'as the storm lifts the lily.' Pururavas storms after him and the giant drops her in the snow. The form of Pururavas kneeling before Urvasie silently drinking her paradisaal beauty is sure to have place in the mind of the reader. In their journey in the chariot Thilothama interferes and reminds the king of his great human worth and responsibility. The king understanding the need to hush up desire withdraws and Urvasie leaves with her companion. This is a recurrent idea in Aurobindonian poems that if the human being has to attain sovereignty,

he has to enact the fiery meaning of sacrifice – to lose himself. In canto II we meet Urvashie in Indra’s hall in heaven declaring her infatuation for a mortal, Pururavas. This results in the banishment of Urvashie from heaven. However because of the interference of Indra, Bharat, the Master of revels sets a limit to her exile on certain conditions.

After his meeting with Urvashie, Pururavas grew “weary of walls and luminous carved imperial pillars” and becomes a wanderer “in the infinite and lonely hills.” At last he comes to a place covered with snow and sits in the posture of tapas. On the seventh day “Eden girls”, Thilothama and Urvashie appear before him, his steadfastness in love drawing them towards him like a magnet. In spite of Thilothama’s attempt to dissuade him, he proclaims his love for Urvashie by the question: “And what shall God profit me or his glory/who love one small face more than all the worlds? (CP.U. 205). Thilothama reminds them of the conditions attached to their union. The line which follows express an uninhibited passionate evocation of love’s fierce storm and its aftermath of fulfilled calm.

She, o’erborne,
Panting, with inarticulate murmurs lay,
Like a slim tree half seen through driving hail,
Her naked arms clasping his neck, her cheek
And golden throat averted, and wide trouble
In her large eyes bewildered with their bliss.
Amid her wind – blown hair their faces met.
With her sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts
Tumultuous up against his beating heart,

He kissed the glorious mouth of heaven's desire

So clung they as two shipwrecked in a surge. (CP.U.206)

They spent seven years in a closed universe of their own filled with love and sensuous pleasures.

Missing Urvasie in heaven, Gandharvas arrange to bring her back by playing a trick. They steal away the rams particularly beloved of Urvasie and disappear in a blinding rush of lightning. She cries out to Pururavas and when he springs up from bed, another lightning exposes him to her in the naked form. Thus the compact is broken and Urvasie is compelled to return to heaven. Totally broken, Pururavas wanders in search of her and reaches Kailas. He receives benediction from the Mother of the Aryans and later from the Mighty mother herself. She reminds him that he had wasted his high destiny on earth for the sensuous pleasures. The mother permits him to have the reunion with Urvasie. But he realizes that he has failed his greater self, his country and even humanity. He has won a kind of personal salvation, but the poet ends the poem in a sad note thus: "But far below through silent mighty space/The green and strenuous earth abandoned rolled/. (CP.U. 228)

Thus many Auroburdonian traits which are sustained throughout his poetic career can be seen already introduced even in this early poem. Life, to Sri Aurobindo, is always a struggle trying to scale greater heights, resisting or succumbing to temptations, undergoing the ecstasies or trauma of love. Here the action revolves round a temptation to which the hero yields. Srinivasa Iyengar tells : "Urvasie is Sri Aurobindo's 'Endymion', but an Endymion transferred, by sleight of hand to Aryasthan and presented in terms of immemorial Hindu thought" (SA. 107). Its forceful delineation of the drama of

man's temptation and fall makes it comparable in theme to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The wealth of sensuous elaboration, attractive combinations, pictures of colour and sound, unique epic similies, polysyllabic Indian proper names, fusion of personal patriotic and national perspectives and its suggestion of the union of the earth and heaven – all contribute a lot to achieve a high position for 'Urvasie' in the genre of epic romance.

If Pururavas was willing to abandon his kingly dharma on earth in order to rejoin Urvasie in heaven, in 'Love and Death' Ruru is ready to give up the mature 'fruit bearing' years of life in return for the life of his lady love. This poem which followed 'Urvasie' runs about thousand lines and is based on the story taken from the 'Adi Parva' of Mahabharatha. It is an epillion which marks notably the narrative skill of the poet. Sri Aurobindo has changed the name of the heroine from 'Pramadurara' to 'priyumvada'. Ruru is the grandson of Sage Bhrigu and Priyamvada the daughter of Maneka, the nymph and the Gandharva King. They are so much in love that the poet says: 'To him the earth was a bed for this sole flower,/ to her all the world was filled with his embrace/ (cp. 231). The poet gives a splendid description of the life of the lovers in their best of moods in a sensuous flowery language. Ruru in these moments feels that it is wonderful to live and to love. He exclaims:

“How good it is to live, to love!

Surely our joy shall never end, nor we

Grow old, but like the bright rivers or pure winds

Sweetly continue, or revive with flowers,

Or live at least as long as senseless trees. (CP. 233)

But this perfect happiness is marred by the unexpected death of Priyumvada bitten by a serpent. Ruru's life becomes dark and sorrowful, but he suppresses his pain and sorrow. "Then Fate was shaken, and the Gods/Grieved for him, of his silence grown afraid/" (CP. 237). Their attempt to divert the attention of Ruru by using the Uswuttha tree fails and consequently Ruru casts a curse on the tree.

His meeting with Madan or Kama presents us with some of the supreme passages and also the positive and negative aspects (capacities and helplessness) of the concept of the God of Love. At the beginning of the passage he gives a long list of the enchanting airs of paradisaal sensuality created by him. Towards the end he tells:

‘And in undisciplined huge souls I sow
Dire vengeance and impossible cruelties ;
Cold lusts that linger and fierce fickleness,
The loves close kin to hate, brute violence
And mad insatiable longings pale,
And passions blind as death and deaf as swords (CP. 242)

Later he admits :

..... But behind me, older than me,
He comes with night and cold tremendous shade
Hard is the way to him, most hard to find,
Harder to tread, for perishable feet
Almost impossible. (CP. 242)

Sri Aurobindo himself has acknowledged this passage as a perfect combination of the power of language, passion, truth of feeling, nobility and felicity of rhythm.

The interference of Gods in human affairs and the concept of the God of Love Kama or Madan is pictured in a purely Indian setting. The idea that the tyrant Gods torture human beings for their sport is expressed in the following lines: “Luxuriously the Gods have tortured./ Thy heart to see such dreadful, glorious beauty/ Agonize in thy lips and brilliant eyes” (CP. 240). There are instances in Hindu mythology of gods trembling with fear in the intense human suffering. Here also gods are moved by the suffering of Ruru. In his agony Ruru curses the Uswuttha tree and the tree is burned to ashes by the intense sorrow and anger of Ruru. The curse from the wailing mind and the descent of immortal Agni to fulfill the curse become admissible only to an Indian mind. The concept of the Yama, the God of Death as Dharma is totally Indian in conception. The depiction of Pathala reflects the influence of the descriptions of hell in many other texts. The heredity of the hero and the heroine – the former the son of Rishi and latter the daughter of an apsara – adds another Indian touch. The fact that Ruru is sacrificing the latter part of his life has added importance in the Indian situation. The duty of a Brahmin is to impart knowledge and guidance to the society, especially to the royalty. Naturally during the latter part of his life he becomes a better respected mature scholar. To sacrifice such a life for his beloved in this context raises a real challenge to Ruru, the Brahmin especially during the temptation scene. Thus it can be said to be a celebration of Brahminhood.

‘The Rishi’ is another poem which stands unique for its reverberating Upanishadic echo both in theme and style. The poem is in the form of a conversation between the Rishi and Manu, the king of the former ages who seeks knowledge from the Rishi of the North Pole. The king wants to know from him the ultimate truth that mankind possessed at the beginning of its racial history and which was lost irrecoverably. The Rishi remembers the different stages of his own tapasya. In his search for God he had to abandon active life, when he could not find joy in things like beauty, brightness, sympathy etc. He confesses: “Often I found him for a moment, stood/ It fell from me/” (CP. 299). So he decided to retire to the arctic region where “Pride could not follow, nor the restless will/come and go’ (CP. 299). Here in the cold unchanging hill” as a compensation for human company and nature’s seething life he gets silence which treads on the snow. An enchanting dialogue follows where the Rishi explains the process of expansion of his spiritual world. His first step was to defeat the fear of the body’s death. When it was done, a hidden power within him found release and his ‘winged soul went up above the stars’ searching for God. But neither the sun nor the planets could tell him the abode of God. They knew only their role in the universe. He asked the Devas and angels, but they were also ignorant of the details of God. Even the Trinity- Brahma, Vishnu and Siva-were not able to answer him and sat satisfied in their respective lonely eminences. But the Rishi never felt disappointed because

I knew the tedious bars

That I had fled,

To be His arms whom I have sought, I saw

How earth was made

Out of his being (CP. 303)

The Rishi's inner light guided him through the vital and mental regions and took him beyond the ranges of human thought. And finally he found that, "He dwells within us all who dwells not in/August that is /" (cp. 304). The Rishi realized that He is everything, essentially because he is nothing in particular. The one remains, the many changes and pass. Life on earth should be faced as a reality and both good and evil should be received with equal mental poise. He feels that :

Man with his wonderous soul of hate and love,
And beast and bird –
Yes, He creates the worlds and heaven above
With a single word. (CP. 310)

The Rishi reminded the king that it is 'to bring those heavens down upon the earth/we all descend" (cp. 310) and we have to understand that, 'we are but sparks of the most perfect fire,/waves of that sea." The Rishi advised man to search for God on earth itself and to perfect the human race. He reminded

For thou art He, O King, only the night
Is on thy Soul
By thy own will Remove it and recover
The serene whole
Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover
To God the goal (CP. 312)

The poem has a perfect Indian spiritual background and it echoes many of the popular philosophical concepts. In addition to the upanishadic ring in

content and style, a keen observer is sure to find reflections of the ‘Bhagavat Geetha in lines like, ‘work, but the fruits to God alone belong/who only is/’ (CP. 311) This naturally brings in the concept of Nishkamakarma (work without the expectation of fruits) very much familiar to the Hindus. There are many other traits which can be identified as totally Aurobindonian. The idea that it is not by escaping to heaven through Moksha (personal salvation) that a yogi achieves his final aim, but by bringing heaven down to earth, is his own principle. It is to be attained by fighting with opposing forces of life, by mastering them and finally by transforming life on earth itself to life divine. Thus life in this world becomes an inevitable medium for progress.

The Rishi tells :

Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O king,

Fear not to enjoy;

For Death’s a passage, grief a fancied thing

Fools to annoy,

From self escape and find in love alone

A higher joy (CP. 311)

The Rishi’s travel through the different stages of consciousness is a miniature of the yoga of Aswapati which forms a considerable part of his epic, ‘Savitri’. The contribution the Upanishads, Bhagavat Geetha, Yoga and various other Indian philosophical insights can be seen in the creation of the poem.

Patriotism has played a prominent role in the development of Sri Aurobindo as a visionary. In his youth he was carried away by nationalism so forcefully that he was imprisoned and got the label of a seditionist. “Baji Prabhau” is a poem in which an excellent harmony of patriotism and

nationalism creates almost a magical effect. As a writer who is well-versed in Indian spiritual and mystic literature, his lines expose sure signs of Sakthism in the guise of patriotism which illuminates the character of the hero. Historically it was the heroic sacrifice Baji Prabhau Deshpande, the reputed Maratha hero and warrior, who held the pass of Rengana for two hours with a small company of soldiers against lots of crises and difficulties. However through the poem Sri Aurobindo recreates the turbulent atmosphere of the war and thus gives a rebirth to the hero in his lines. On reading the poem the identification of the poet's personality with that of the hero is strongly felt. Sri Aurobindo always wanted to fight for his country's independence in a militant and forceful way. By writing a poem on a comparatively unimportant hero, he might have found a way by which, he could fulfill this urge. To him India was always 'Mother India' and through his 'Bhavani Mandir manifesto 1905' he invoked the sons of India to wake up from lethargy and to protect her from her enemies. He suggested:

We have to create strength where it did not exist before; we have to change our natures, and become new men with new hearts, to be born again. We need a nucleus of men in whom the Shakthi is developed to its uttermost extent, in whom it fills every corner of the personality and overflows the fertilise the earth.' These having the fire of Bhawani in their hearts and brains, will go forth and carry the flame to every nook and cranny of our land (IR. 15).

He explained that to get the power of that Sakthi the people have to be strong enough. To make ourselves fit to be the sons of Bhavani, who is also known as Durga, Kali or Sakthi, is the most important duty of a patriot.

There are two remarkable situations in the poem in which the hero exposes his reactions and attitudes to life. When Baji Prabhau is instigated by Malsure to guard the pass in the absence of Shivaji, he reacts by revealing his philosophical outlook to life and his relation with God. Delving deep into the comments made by him, we come across the gems of advaita philosophy. He tells:

Thanaji Malsure, not in this living net
Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind
Is a man's manhood seated. God within
Rules us, who is in the Brahmin and the dog
Can, if He will, show equal Godhead. Not
By men in mightiness achieved. Baji
Or Malsure is but a name, a robe
And covers one alone. We but employ
Bhavani's strength, who in an arm of flesh
Is mighty as the thunder and storm (CP. 283)

The influence of Sakthi or Kali is prevalent in Indian Spirituality as an all powerful force which dominates over all other powers. It is endowed with black colour and fierce expressions. The power of the Goddess is something very much familiar and realistic to the Saktheya and he feels the divine power in his body during his inspiration. There is a suggestion that behind Shivaji's incomparable leadership of the Marathas there was a spiritual power within. In a critical moment in the battle he reacts violently and attacks the enemies in a frantic manner. The poet says: "..... Then suddenly/upon Prabhau all the Goddesses came"/(cp.290). As a result he was

able to win over his enemies for a while. But again his enemies attacked fiercely and in spite of Baji Prabhou's attempts he fails miserably. He feels the fading of the god-like impulse in his heart and before his eyes he sees the form of Bhavani going out of him. The poet describes:

..... but even then
A stillness fell upon his mood and all
That god-like impulse faded from his heart
And passing out of him a naughty form
Stood visible, Titanic, Scarlet-clad,
Dark as a thunder, and in her Sovran grasp
The sword, the flower, the boon, the bleeding head-Bhavani'.

(CP. 291)

These pictures very clearly depict the beliefs and intuitions of the devotee of the Sakthi cult. Even while he is heroic and fights for his country vehemently he keeps the detachment of a yogi who sees god in everything. He also feels that he is only an instrument in the hands of Bhavani so that the final decision is hers. Through Baji Prabhou Sri Aurobindo portrays the Indian mind which keeps close to his heart the religious faiths and beliefs of his own country.

A search for Indian spiritual aspects in his short poems and sonnets is also profitable. Here also are seen scattered elements of spiritual concepts and yogic experiences, each of them treated independently. The themes range from 'Parabrahman' to the 'fur-footed Brahman', the cat. There are some poems which are mystic in their nature. Among them 'The Rose of God' has a remarkable place. "Mysticism rising to a climax of incantatory art – there we

have that poem of Sri Aurobindi's : Rose of God" – comments K.D. Sethna in his appreciation of the poem (SAP. 242). The poem filled with mystical metaphysics and psychology unfolds before the reader a new world in a succession of vibrant images. The poem begins by describing the spiritual reality above human consciousness, charged with glory, ever perfect. The poem ends in an invocation to the same reality to reveal itself by evolution in the human consciousness and to become progressively a part of the earth, or to transform earth to be a part of it. This, 'Rose of God' is called by Sri Aurobindo in his 'Savitri', "The Mother of the universe" and "The Mother of all godheads and strengths". This Prime Creatrix is the form of the five-fold divineness of being. It is a perfection crystallized from the substance of an absolute Bliss, an absolute Light, an absolute Power, an absolute Life and an absolute Love. These five divinenesses can act upon and transform the finite substance of the human being.

In the first stanza it figures as the Rose of Bliss, the original fount of creation which is linked with beauty. The perfection of form conveys delight because essentially delight composes it. God's joy in his own creative possibilities gives rise to a scheme of significant forms, the universe. The Rose of bliss here represents the ananda which he takes of His conscious Being. Bliss, the immediate substance of Beauty, creates by the passion of love its object, and by loving this object knows itself most intensely and most profoundly with the utter richness of 'the ruby depth of all being'. In the cosmic level play of love is fundamentally the secret of self-expression by which the universe emerges slowly by degrees; Truth vision and Truth organization come into play in order to project and establish in various related

centres and steady cosmic rhythms the contents of the All-Delight. The universe needs a guiding wisdom-sight and an executive wisdom force to guard it from drowning into a teeming amorphousness. So the Rose of light and Rose of power is to be there acting in our mentality. Rose of life is characterized as a divine desire that has a smiting drive and a multiform movement of colourful collectivity. It brings forward action, concrete achievement translating truth-will to truth-deed, Truth-vision, truth-contact. Bliss passion and Bliss multiplicity are translated into enjoyment of substantial grasp and embodied growth.

Desire is a longing to seize and possess with pleasure. But it knows only how to expand and take. The movement is incomplete without self-giving, a concrete happy growth by lovingly passing into others and achieving a multiple unification. The Bliss passion and Bliss multiplicity are thus fulfilled and the original Ananda leads back with the Roses of Light, Power and Life to itself through the Rose of Love.

The language used in the poem is profound and life-packed while the theme is the revelation of the spiritual reality. Briefly the two extreme aspects –The high above that is forever and down below that has to be – imposes its significances upon our spiritual sense by mystical and visionary words and images and also by an inner tone massively musical. It demands from the reader a deep knowledge of spirituality and mysticism.

A random selection of his sonnets point to the fact that the theme of his sonnets is related either to spiritual concepts or stages in the ascent of consciousness. In his poem ‘Parabrahman’ the poet tries to

define the absolute nature of god. His presence can be felt in everything and everywhere. Everything and every movement become part of Parabrahman, while he is not having a definite shape. The force within the form decides the self of things and 'That Force is He'. He is not bound by anything at all. The poet explains:-

He is not anything, yet all is He,

He is not all but far exceeds that scope;

Both Time and Timelessness sink in that sea;

Time is a wave and space a wandering drop (CP.62)

He concludes : “ He made an eager death and called it Life / He stung himself with bliss and called it pain” (cp.62). This aspect of the brahman is given expression in many other poems of Sri Aurobindo. In “The indwelling Universal” he tells : “ All eyes that look on me are my sole eyes” and “the one heart that beats within all breasts is mine” (cp.131) . This idea prompts him to call a cat, “an animal creature wonderfully human” and a “fur – footed Brahman” in the poem, “Despair in the staircase”.

Yogic experience has ever been part and parcel of Indian spirituality and Sri Aurobindo’s “Integral Yoga” gives a clear idea of the ascending of consciousness to the higher regions, meeting with the Superconscient and then bringing heaven down to earth. This can be said to be the proclaimed Motto of Aurobindonian yoga. In the two poems ‘Ascent’ (Silence) and ‘Descent’ he draws the picture of a yogi in his travel to the higher regions and that of a man receiving the descent of god on him respectively. Naturally a man who wants to reach the superior

realm, should keep himself away from “the cry and the struggle” of this world. The poet here exhorts man to make knowledge too high for thought” and “too deep for emotion” . The spirit is asked to step out of the narrow limits of the self and ‘be only eternity, peace and silence’. The same idea can be seen in a grand scale in the spiritual journey of Aswapathi through the different worlds in ‘Savitri’.

In the poem ‘ Beyond Silence’ he advances to the next step where he directs the spirit to go beyond the silence ‘ into the elasp of the Timeless’. In this region the spirit can “ Live self bound in his endless completeness” and have a heart close to the godhead for ever. There the experience of ‘endless fathomless love, Omnipotent Knowledge, Omniscient might, Pure light, dateless Truth etc. wait for the spirit. Thus the poet invokes the spirit immortal to live in this infinity which he describes as, ‘All in thyself and thyself in all dwelling”.

Sri Aurobindo in his poem ‘ Trance of waiting’ conveys the feeling of a yogi who waits for the heavenly descent. Standing in between the two worlds –“the ocean of life below with its passionate surges” and ‘the wisdom Supernal’ above – he optimistically waits ‘ for the fiat to come and tread the Eternal’. Another poem ‘Nirvana’ reveals the joy experienced by the yogi when, ‘All is abolished, but the mute Alone’. Here he genuinely celebrates the emptiness or easiness when there is ‘ only the illimitable permanent’ and also the freedom of spirit. In ‘Descent’ the yogi becomes a vessel into which the blessings of heaven is poured. He feels it like a mighty rapture in his cells and billows of light around him. Infinity crowds on him pressing a glory of powerful

eternal. All the world changes into a single Oneness. Mind , heart and body become one singing the eternal song. Then he feels “Light and might and immortal wisdom / elapsing for ever (cp.563)

Conversion from manhood to supermanhood is the theme of the poem ‘Transformation’. Sri Aurobindo here vividly describes the exciting change that happens all over his body which transforms his thrilled and branching nerves to ‘ fine channels of rapture opal and hyaline’. He expresses his feeling here :

“My Soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight

My body is God’s happy living tool

My Spirit a vast sun of deathless light (CP.161)

Thus Sri Aurobindo picturises his theory of the widening of human consciousness to the higher levels resulting in the oneness of heaven and earth.

‘Thought the paraclete’ is another poem which describes the journey of thought through the different levels of consciousness. Thought is not a giver of knowledge , but only a mediator between the inconscient and the superconscient. As “Thought the great winged wanderer paraclete/ Disappeared slow – singing a flame – word rune / self was left, lone, nude, immune/(CP.582)

Thought rises in the scale through the different layers and gradually ceases to be intellectual, becomes illumined , intuitive and then changes into overmental and then disappears seeking the last Beyond.

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CHAPTER 5
SYMBOLS

So far we have been mainly concentrating on the evolution of thought in the major poetical works of Sri Aurobindo. As the language of poetry is the language of its symbols we shall not be doing justice if we ignore or pass over this vital aspect.

When we speak of symbols we do not speak of them in a restricted technical sense. A 'symbol' has the strict meaning of a detached allusive 'figure'. It is distinguished from a simile or metaphor or image. We do not confine ourselves to the limitations for the present as we are here to examine Sri Aurobindo's poetic effects in a broad way. Here we use the word symbol in a large sense so as to include all figures of speech.

Sri Aurobindo evaluates Vedic poetry as living poetry and Rig-Veda as symbolic poetry embodying the spiritual wisdom of the early mystics. Himself being a mystic and having affinity with the spirit of mystic expression, it is no wonder that many of his symbols are Vedic in origin. A random collection of some of the Vedic symbols from 'Savitri' is sure to convey its affinity with the Vedas. Some of the common symbols seen both in Savitri and Rig-Veda like dawn, guest, animal, child and fire are treated here with examples from both.

a. Dawn

There are two situations quoted from Rig-Veda where the symbol of dawn is used:

1. Projecting forward her illumination, she enters into communion with the rest that are to come (Rig Veda. 1.113.8.10)
2. Lo. Dawn queen of the plentitudes..... She has created her host of ruddy cows. (Rig Veda 1.124.11)

In 'Savitri' Sri Aurobindo praises 'Dawn' which is presented as a messenger.

A brief perpetual sign recurred above
glamour from unreached transcendences
Iridescent with the glory of the unseen,
A message from the unknown immortal Light
A blaze upon creation's quivering edge
Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues
And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours. (S.I. 1.4)

While describing the changes made by "the transfiguring touch on 'the inert, black quietude there comes the next beautiful image.

A wandering hand of pale enchanting light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink,
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge (S.I. 1.3)

In consequence of the visit of the dawn, a great many things happen.

Interpreting a recondite beauty and bliss
In colours hieroglyphs of mystic sense,
It wrote the lines of a significant myth
Telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns,
A brilliant code penned with the sky for page (S.I. 1.4)

The arc of the poem's action is from "dawn to greater dawn": something unique that happens during the day transforms the next dawn and makes it 'a greater dawn'. It is not only a dawn in which the gods are awake and gives the hint of a fairer future for man, but also a dawn that finds earth very close to heaven and men very near to gods. Dawn thus represents hope.

b Guest

In Rig Veda the image of 'guest' is used on three occasions.

1. The guest of all human beings, may the Fire draw to us the protection of Gods (Rig-Veda IV.1.20).
2. The purifier he is rubbed bright and pure and our benignant guest (Rig Veda VI.8)
3. He is wide in his light like a seer of the day..... He is the immortal in mortals; he is the waker in the dawn, our guest (Rig Veda VI. 4-2).

In 'Savitri' there are at least two occasions where the poet refers to the guest.' Aswapati, after the cosmicisation of his soul, transfers himself to Eternity. Here the poet exclaims: "A seer was born, a shining guest of Time" (S.I.3.25)

In another passage the poet speaks about the rare occasions when man's inner faculties become active and the usual inrushes of desire and ego interests have gone out, man gets a chance to be in contact with his inner being.

In moments when the inner lamps are lit

And life's cherished guests are left outside,

Our spirits sits alone and speaks to its gulfs. (s. I. 4.47)

The guest in all these examples represents 'the soul' 'the immortal in the mortals'. In his 'Integral yoga' Sri. Aurobindo speaks about controlling thoughts (silencing of the mind) who are 'life's cherished guests' and enjoying the loneliness with one's own 'gulfs'.

c Animal

Two instances of using the animal symbol can be seen in Rig Veda.

1. He moves like a beast that wanders at will and has no keeper. (Rig Veda. IX. 96-19).

2. Like a hawk, a kite, He settles on the vessel and upbears it (Rig Veda 11.4-7)

Discussing the present unquestioned rule of the unconscious where the lower nature sits satisfied within the framework and the higher nature is bound down, Sri Aurobindo says : And the animal browses in the sacred fence/ And the gold Hawk can cross the skies no more (S.I. 2.18).

Here the animal represents the unconscious world ruled by brute forces and irrationality. Hawk, representing divinity also becomes helpless in making the in- conscience aspire to the higher regions.

(d) Lid

In the Isa Upanishad we get the following passage.

The face of the Truth is hidden by golden lid;
That remove O! fostering sun, for the law of
The truth, for sight (Isa Upanishad. 15).

Due to the widening of consciousness Aswapati goes beyond the grasp of the mental level. The rigorous claws of the soul subjecting itself to the rule of Nature is struck off. Sri Aurobindo tells :

All the grey inhibitions were torn off
And broken the intellect's hard and lustrous lid's;
Truth un-partitioned found immense sky-room;
An empyrean vision saw and knew;
The bounded mind became a boundless light,
The finite self mated with infinity (S.I. 3. 25)

e Child

The child is a recurring symbol on Rig Veda.

1. Son of two mothers (Rig Veda III. 55-7)
2. Two are joined together, powers of truth, powers of Maya – they have built the child and given him birth and they nourish his growth (Rig Veda. X. 5-3)
3. Two mothers of differing hues move and nourish alternatively the child for common good (Rig Veda I. 95-1)

In Savitri after attaining a steady base on the supra terrestrial existence, the young evolving god in Aswapati, is looked after both by Night and Dawn.

Where the God-child lies on the lap of Night and Dawn/And the everlasting puts on Times Disguise (S.I. 3.36)

In the living oneness of widening of consciousness he understands the perfect reconciliation between the uniqueness of the individual and the oneness of the universal. The poet conveys the secret of manifestation in a beautiful image. The external goddess moved in her cosmic house sporting with God as a mother with her child. (S.III. 3. 327)

f Fire

The fire has a significant role both in the ritualistic and philosophic interpretation of the Vedas. It represents both the receiving and aspiring capacities as the sacrificial fire and the internal flame in mortals. In the Rig Veda we find.

That which immortal in mortals and possessed of the Truth, is a God and established inwardly as an energy working out in our Divine Powers. (Rig Veda IV. 2-1)

At the initial stage of the development of the soul of Aswapati Sri Aurobindo speaks about the role of this flame in mortals: A spirit that is a flame of god abides,/ A fiery portion of the wonderful, Artist of his own beauty and delight./Immortal in out mortal poverty. (S.I. 3.23)

Agni which directs the Becoming to the Being kindles the soul and it goes up in search the ‘Godhead of immortality.’ It is the leader in front, ‘Purohita’, the guide of the human spiritual journey, the summoned of the godheads and the Godhead in man.

The image of two fires joining with each other is seen in two places in ‘Savitri’ but in quite different moods and contexts. Describing the peculiarities of the world of greater life the poet says:

Emotion elapsed emotion in two hearts,
They felt each other in the flesh and nerves
Or melted each in each and grew immense
As when two houses burn and fire joins fire (S.II. 6.186)

In the ‘Heavens of the Ideal’ Aswapati finds that each idea is only a partial truth and each claim to be the supreme. But he is consoled by the knowledge that:

Yet were there regions where these absolutes met
And made a circle of bliss with married hands;
Light stood embraced by light, fire wedded fire. (S.II. 12.281)

Not only in poetry, but in the elucidation of his philosophy also he has used very meaningful symbols. Sri Aurobindo’s symbol (fig.1) with its intersecting triangles, water and lotus carries with it deep insights. It is an expression of the totality of his ideas. His teaching is centered round the

evolution of a divine destiny for human race. This process happens in the combination of two movements, the evolution and the involution. The first is the ascending evolution in nature which is a steady slow progress from in-conscience to super conscience. This is manifested by the gradual development from the in-conscient matter like stone to plant and from plant to animal which is a transformation from matter to life. Sri Aurobindo argues that man is a transitional being and Nature is not satisfied in him. So she endeavours to bring out a new being with a higher consciousness than the mental. He believes that man who at present lives in the mental consciousness is capable of acquiring a new one, the Truth consciousness. The life in this consciousness is expected to be perfectly harmonious, beautiful, happy peaceful and fully conscious. To Sri Aurobindo the attempt of man to reach this higher consciousness is only the prompting of the inner being to express its own supernal light. This inner being is a ray of consciousness kept in the night of in-conscience to fight against “the ruthless forces of the unseen.” Finally this consciousness going through the different stages reaches the region of eternal day which Sri Aurobindo calls ‘the Supramental: Only the ascent to the Super mind can create a peaceful life by remoulding the individual.

But the process of evolution is possible only with the help of a downward flow of divine grace. The duality of the divine and anti-divine is felt only in the lower regions and as human consciousness rises up in the scale of evolution, gradually it loses its intensity and finally everything get absorbed in one Supreme Sri Aurobindo points out his ‘Integral Yoga’ as a sure and earliest path to reach the realization of the life divine. This would help man to see oneself in all and to raise his consciousness to higher levels. Thus the human

nature gets divinized. Sri Aurobindo says: To become ourselves is one thing to be done, but the true our self is that which is within us and to exceed our self of body, life and Mind, is the condition for this highest being, which is our true and divine being to become Self-revealed and active (Sy – 120).

Through this integral yoga he aims at the evolutionary leap of man from the mental being to the Supramental being, a transformation of man, the Self-conscious being to a Supra-conscious being. The flame of evolutionary efforts of man is always fed by the fuel of divine help from above supporting him in every way. He states that what exists in spirit-mind, life and matter – is only spirit in different forms. Thus he refutes the idea of Maya or illusion. By the process of involution the infinite potentiality, the spirit creates innumerable forms. The inverse movement evolution helps the involved to evolve. Thus creation can be described as a double movement involution and evolution, descent and ascent. The heavenly power which descends on the levels of mind, life and matter rises the potential of man so as to transform himself and to transcend himself. Integral yoga arms the Sadhaka with the necessary equipment for this great task of unconditional opening and the complete surrender to the supermind.

Sri Aurobindo opines that only by a change of consciousness can one pass from ignorance to knowledge. The way to the Truth is to pass from the external to a direct and intimate inner consciousness, to heighten it by inner will and aspiration. Through the true realization of the divine, the centre shifts to the true centre of Supramental Truth world where everything is transformed into their true nature. This experience of the soul is described by the poet in his poem, 'Transformation'. The Sadhaka feels 'the greater personality' in him.

“I am not a vassal of the flesh,
A slave to nature and her leaden rule;
I am caught no more in the senses narrow mesh
My soul un-horizoned widens to measureless sight,
My hobby is God’s happy living tool,
My spirit a vast sun of death less light. (CP .T. 161)

The central clue to his yoga system and the core of the philosophy is well represented in the Aurobindonian symbol with the intersecting triangles having the lotus in water at the region of intersection. (fig. 1) The unfailing aspiration that calls from below and the supreme grace that answers it and their conjunction which realizes the great and difficult task is represented in his symbol. The inverted triangle stands for the Supreme grace which opens from below to handle victoriously the physical nature and annihilate its difficulties. The sole condition needed for the grace to descend is brought about by total sincere surrender, an exclusive self opening to the divine power represented by the triangle pointing upwards. The divine life on earth created as a result is represented by the lotus in water. The descent of the absolute into Nescience and ascent Nescience to the Supreme Knowledge are the two ladders represented by the intersecting triangles. They give a revealing picture of the whole involution – evolution process of creation.

The spirit being absolute remains static while the Sachidananda aspect of the spirit acts as the root of the eternal involution – evolution. While ‘Sachidananda’ is the ‘Being’ creation is ‘the Becoming’ aspect of the Supreme Spirit. The inverted triangle with the three corners holds the triplet Sat-Chit-Ananda of the Supreme Spirit. The triangle pointing upwards stands for the

becoming aspect in the form of Mind-life-Matter, the triplet of creation. Sat-Chit-Ananda is Existence – Knowledge – Bliss. Sat is spiritual existence which does not depend on the body. Chit' is knowledge which is not confined to any one subject, but knowledge of the totality. 'Ananda' is eternal bliss without opposites like sorrow or misery. Thus it represents the nature of the Supreme Spirit. So every stages of involution in the human consciousness would mean a faint reflection of all these qualities and a graded recovery of all these pristine forms. Man, who is in a stage of recognizing his qualities can take some steps upwards to the next stage, that of Superman. Through integral Yoga man is given a chance to invoke the super mind, the direct and operative agent in the matter of evolution and to make the process easier and the evolution speedier. Sri Aurobindo opines:

In all that is done in the inverse, the Divine through his Shakthi is behind all action but he is veiled by his Yogamaya and works through the ego of the jiva in the lower nature. In yoga also it is the Divine who is the Sadhaka and the Sadhana; it is his Shakhi with her light, Power, Knowledge consciousness; Ananda acting upon the Adhara and when it is opened to her, pouring into it these divine forces that makes the Sadhana possible. But so long as the lower nature is active the personal effort of the Sadhaka remains necessary. (LY. 21. 620)

The effort from the part of the Sadhaka are aspiration rejection and surrender Involution was a very gradual process, and so evolution also moves in a very slow pace Yoga here comes to the help of Sadhaka in cutting short the time taken.

Man's consciousness should be taken to a higher level of sublime consciousness where Truth consciousness pure knowledge, great harmony and divine bliss shall reign supreme. This is the world represented by the Lotus. This vision of the yoga chakra (lotus Symbol) of the once Madame Richard, who became the Mother was explained by Sri Aurobindo himself as the opening of consciousness to the Divine. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother live in constant consciousness that they are but instruments of the Divine will in transforming life, mind and matter into fit channels of manifestation of the spirit to bring divine life on earth. Mother plays the role of the power (Shakthi) that comes down and leads the aspirant up to the higher world of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's symbols parallels the interpretation of Srichakra representing the descent of Shakthi and the ascent of Shiva.

The Mother's symbol (fig:2) is represented as a central circle surrounded by four petals at the inner level and then twelve petals in the border; here the central circle represents the Divine consciousness surrounded by four petals-wisdom, strength, harmony, perfection--embodying Maheswari, Mahakali, Mahalekshmi and Mahasaraswathi. The twelve petals outside stands for twelve powers of the Mother strengthening her for her work. It is the symbolic design representing the white consciousness with the Mahasakthi at the centre in her four aspects and twelve attributes. While Sri Aurobindo became the medium of Divine consciousness, the Mother served as the bridge between Sri Aurobindo and the world of Sadhakas.

The symbol of Sri Aurobindo society (fig.3) an extension of Sri Aurobindo's symbol has additional lines joining the apexes of intersecting triangles forming a diamond. Sri Aurobindo explains that the significance of

the diamond is that it represents, the mother's light at the intensest. Auroville, the city of dawn is a concrete representation of Sri Aurobindo ideal – a spirituality elevated world amidst the material world bringing together all who would like to participate in a forward march to the creation of a divine world. The symbol (fig.4) is a dot at the centre, with an inner circle, surrounded by four petals. The dot at the centre represents unity, the Supreme. The inner circle stands for the creation, the conception of the universal city; The petals are for the power of expression, realization.

Tantric Symbols

Within the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo we come across another group of symbols closely connected with the traditional yogas. The most important are the tantric symbols which bear physiological, psychological, spiritual and occult explanations in the development of human consciousness. The Chakara are described as focal points of power in the human body which are only partially open Yoga makes man aware of the chakras and by prescribed processes activate and open them fully so as to release the imprisoned faculties into a freedom of knowledge, power and joy leading to an ultimate union of the liberated soul with its source, the infinite. According to Sri Aurobindo there is a consciousness which pervades the entire human being, animating and enlivening it on all its levels. This consciousness lodged in an inner or subtle body extends behind and above the physical. It has several centers of operation, stations of a self-formulation and action in forms suited to the governing principles of the different regions or planes in manifestation. There are seven important centers or chakras (Lotuses) to which Sri Aurobindo gives the following explanations (fig.5).

First centre is that of the physical consciousness, *Muladhara*, situated at the base of the spine which governs the physical being down to the sub-conscious (fig.6). This centre controls all the movements of a purely physical nature and those deriving from the sub-conscious. The next centre, below the navel, *Swadhisthana* governs the smaller vital movements of petty desires, passions greed and the like (fig. 7). The chief vital centre in the navel region is *Manipuraka* where the powerful movements of the vital force, mighty passions, ambition etc. originate (fig. 8). The fourth chakra, in the region of the heart commands the higher vital, the emotional and the psychic within. Known as *anahatha padma*, this centre gives birth to noble movements of consecration, surrender, love and harmony (fig . 9). The opening of this centre prepares the way for the emergence of the psychic being.

Visuddha chakra, the throat centre governs the movements of the physical part of the mind which seek to express in speech what it perceives or receives from higher levels (fig.10). when it opens, there comes a power to imbibe the higher consciousness in the physical mind and grow into its light. The *ajna-chakara* situated between the eyebrows commands the inner thought, inner vision and will. Its opening results in an extra ordinary mental will effectuating power and a force of creation (fig.11). This centre serves as a channel of communication between the Higher consciousness and the inner mind as also the outer mind. The highest and the last *Sahasrara* situated above the head, is the centre of communication between individual consciousness and the Infinite consciousness around and above (fig. 12). When it opens, it acts as a lid opened between the Higher consciousness and the ordinary mind. The Conscious Energy that is lying latent, Kundalini, is to be awakened and freed

into an expanding and ascending movement where she meets the Superconscient self, the Lord of the Being and there ensues a wide and intense liberation into 'the Bliss of Ananda'.

Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus 'Savitri' presents itself as a symbolic representation of his philosophical ideas on a grand scale. The title itself- Savitri-A legend and a symbol conveys an impression about the content of the poem. It can be considered a manual of yoga, a poetic philosophy, an experiment in mystic poetry and also a rare experience. The poet himself states.

"Savitri is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences." (OH. 249).

To him the whole story which was something in praise of chastity and conjugal love in 'Mahabharatha' becomes symbolic of the desire of the human soul for a divine life, resulting in the establishment of the same on earth. He writes about the symbolism of the tale of Satyavan and Savitri; "the tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharatha as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is as shown by 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 to rise from mortal to immortal planes. Dyumatsena, Lord of the shining hosts, father of Satyavan is the divine mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial Kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the character 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 here the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life (OH.265).

The legendary characters attain symbolic nature as the poem proceeds. Death makes his presence felt throughout the epic as the 'God of Death' and at the end this mighty lord of darkness is transformed into the Lord of Light. Savitri, an embodiment of all embracing love fills the poem with her divine qualities and finally fulfills her mission. Satyavan also remains a symbol, that of an aspiring soul who shares and works for the betterment of the earth. DyumatSena's blindness and Satyavan's death can also be seen as gradations and intensities of darkness which are ripples on the surface of the evil in the depth. Aswapati, unlike Dyumatsena, decides to try for a better future for mankind, breaks the mental cage, explores 'the vasts of God', meets the Divine Mother and secures the boon of Her descent on earth. Narad the sage plays the role of a catalyst that prompts the action towards the desired consummation. He in Aswapati's court influences the King, the queen and their daughter differently, Yet the diverse actions coalesce towards the same end.

'Savitri' is filled with symbols from various fields ranging from the Vedas to banking and even to telecommunications. Through the poem the poet spans the earth and heaven, encompasses diverse occult worlds, and projects the drama of life, death and immortality on the cosmic stage. A search for a selection among the thousands of symbols used by him makes us feel like Rajanikant Mody; 'Savitri is no composition of an ordinary poet, but that of a

poet and seer of the Supermind, chosen by the Divine for the fulfillment of the next step in the evolution of mankind.' (PS. 392)

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CONCLUSION

We shall conclude by trying to make an assessment of the significance of Sri Aurobindo's Spiritual Contributions to the times in which we live.

The most important, in this context, is the emphasis, his example and practice given to the supramental awareness as opposed to religious ritualism. He does not prescribe a code of conduct which alone will fetch one Bliss in the other world. His emphasis is on an enquiry in the upanishadic tradition of abhi, abhi-no fear, no fear. The spiritual journeys which Aswapati and Savitri undertake are fearful in the extreme for ordinary mortals. Literature on such journeys has not ceased to engage human imagination even today. The fact that novels liked those of Dan Brown, Paulo Coelho are best sellers shows that such themes still continue to fascinate human mind. While Dan Brown's novels are in the nature of an intellectual enquiry, those of Coelho recreate the mystic tradition.

The spirit of search that motivates the mind of a mystic has its intellectual and emotional sides. The pursuit of mystic is experiential. His purpose is not to contradict any other man's experience. If possible he may experiment with another's method and attitudes. Look at the way by which Sri Ramakrishna experimented with the Christian and Muslim ways of worship and meditation. Similar attempts have also been made by many Muslim and Christian mystics, though they all ultimately stuck to their own methods. The names of A' Kempis, Kabir, Rumi are notable here.

Sri Aurobindo's insistence on the spirit of research and experimentation provides a key to solve the problems caused by religious rivalries and fanatic attitudes in India. Religions have their usefulness. If they concentrate on evolving a process of co-existence with mutual respect, it would be a great

blessing to the multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi linguistic country that is India. Even the so called materialists can have no quarrel with mysticism. As far as Sri Aurobindo is concerned. 'Matter is Brahman.'

Sri Aurobindo's intellectual range extends from Charvakaism to the solitary heights of Sankara's Adwaita. He does not leave unturned any system of thought in his pursuit of Truth. We can find in him echoes of Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Aquinas, Madhwa, Marx and Freud – to name a few. What makes one wonderstruck is the insight he has got into the philosophical system of the world. The ease with which he goes from one to its opposite extreme reminds one of playing on a swing. But the core of the arguments never bores you. It is scintillating in its sharpness and dexterity. And it is presented in poetic symbols of great efficiency and endurance. The chapter in this thesis on the symbols of Sri Aurobindo is indicative of the wide range of their sources.

What Sri Aurobindo describes in terms of his symbols of ascent and descent is in fact an attempt to reconcile the seemingly opposite views of spiritualism and materialism. If matter is Brahman it means that the supramental nature of Brahman is involved in the seemingly gross matter. Hence his mystical conclusion is that there must have been an involution before the beginning of evolution. Matter and Brahman are thus equal in importance. Matter is the dynamic aspect of Brahman which also has an inert state of self absorption. This certainly is a revolutionary concept from the point of view of Indian spiritual tradition. Sri Sankaracharya considers the latter stage as the original state of Brahman. Ramuja and Madhva ignore this state.

The latest findings in quantum physics more or less agree with the findings of Sri Aurobindo. According to it nature is a dynamic activity. Even the so called Sunyata is a play of electrical and gravitational impulses. “The play is the thing” to quote a Shakespearian expression. The players become what they are by the play. The play (God’s leela) is self willed because those who are engaged in it are not mere puppets. Only then matter is Brahman. There can be no moksha or liberation outside this play. That is why Sri Aurobindo wants to bring down ‘heaven’ to earth. Otherwise heaven shall remain only an idea.

To concentrate on this world is of equal importance as to meditate upon the other world. We, the Indians, have so far been neglecting this world under certain mistaken spiritual motions. Caring for this world does not mean indulging in the sensual pleasures of this world. Indulgence will not help us to make the best of both worlds. Herein comes the importance of Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga.

The integral yoga is not satisfied with self realization. Sri Aurobindo wants to bring down the fruits of his experience to divinize the earth. He cries with Savitri;

I climb not to thy everlasting Day

Even as I have shunned thy external night

Earth is the chosen place of mightiest soul (S.XI. 685)

Aswapati and Savitri are typical examples of integral yogis. Such a yogi can realize his unity with God in the three modes of dwaita, adwaita and vishishtadwaita. Sri Aurobindo envisages this stage as different aspects of a single spiritual experience.

The image of Sri Aurobindo that arises out of these considerations is not as that of an iconoclast or rebel, but of an arbiter who tries to reconcile seemingly opposite points of view. His arbitration is not an external patchwork but an organic integration, for he bases himself upon his self-realization.

Danah Zohar in her book, “The Quantum Society” speaks of certain features of a philosophical system which is demanded by the new social reality based on quantum mechanics. One is happy to say that Sri Aurobindo’s theories satisfy most of these. The features are the following:

- a. It must be holistic.
- b. It must go beyond the individual/collective dichotomy.
- c. It must be plural. It should both insist on either this truth, or no truth. It should accept both this and that.
- d. It must be responsive.
- e. It must be bottom-up or emergent, i.e. it must be democratic.
- f. It must be green.
- g. It must be spiritual. It must have teleological dimensions.
- h. It must be a dialogue with science.

A search for the Indian spiritual tradition in Aurobindonian poems was interesting and informative. Strongly I felt the need to be familiar with the spiritual traditions and so the introduction of the thesis gives an idea about the different spiritual thoughts and tracts which dominated the religious society in India. Vedantic aspects like Dwaita, Adwaita and Vishishtawadita and non-vedantic thoughts like Budhhism, Jainims and Charvakaism are dealt with so as to convey their basic concepts. Tantrism, Saivism, Sakthism and Vaishnavism are also inevitable parts of Indian spirituality. It can be seen that in India

spirituality and material life are kept in water – tight compartments and they are treated almost like opposites. Herein we see the importance of Sri Aurobindo who puts forward suggestions of an ever-new future for the human race. He felt that the negation of spirituality in material life and the negation of body in spirituality lead to lopsidedness and loss of integrality. He wants to combine both the worlds and “bring heaven down to earth’ with the help of a transformation in man, who, to him, is a transitional being at present. For that process of transformation he recommends his integral yoga.

In his epic ‘Savitri’ Aswapati, the representative of the human aspiring soul, undergoes this transformation. The spiritual journey of Aswapati begins with the realization of the internal individual divine, progresses through the cosmicisation of the soul and finally ascends to the Truth consciousness. This journey reflects the pictures of the many worlds described in the puranas. The silencing of the mind, the rushing in of evil thoughts, the feeling of hellish darkness etc. create a happy reconcillation between spiritual ideas and scientific and psychological approaches to the subject. The Absolute power is here represented as a female principle. The patriotic attitude and the ‘Sakthi’ element in the poet can be seen here imprinting a strong mark. On the summit Aswapati meets the divine Mother. Here also the limitations of the present human being are hinted at. Aswapti realizes that all by himself he can do nothing to change human destiny. So he prays to the Divine Mother to come to earth for the rescue of humanity. Thus Sri Aurobindo establishes the necessity of divine interference to the progress of the human race. Yoga, an essential part of Indian spirituality plays a leading role in the journey of Aswapati. The first chapter is devoted to the detailed discussion of this fantastic experience.

Savitri represents the divine element who has descended to earth as a response to the request of Aswapati. Here Sri Aurobindo changes the prayers and austerities of Savitri in the original story to an inner journey in search of her spiritual self. Through this process she attains enough strength and confidence and recognizes the need to go beyond the walls of matter to save mankind. This results in the recognition of her divine self and she faces the most fatal problem of humanity as a human being in all her helplessness. The second chapter is an analysis of the internal search of Savitri for her divine self and its consequences.

The confrontation between Savitri and the God of Death and her victory over him deserves special attention as it is something unprecedented in human history. It also brings forth wide and deep discussions on various subjects like the evolution of the universe, the concept of the ideal and love, the relationship between earth and heaven and the concept of God and His relationship with man and earth. Death finally becomes a gateway which is essential for the progress of man. The God of death is transformed into a luminous form. The suggestion of the Divine voice to be in the God's everlasting day' leaving "the vexed world' is denied by Savitri. She feels that 'Imperfect is the joy not shared by all.' She comes back to earth with Satyavan's soul kept safe in her hands. Thus the poet introduces a totally new suggestion in the hitherto known Hindu Spirituality, bringing heavenly life to earth. The third chapter is a detailed discussion on her travel with the god of Death and her victorious return to earth.

Many of the poetic and spiritual ideas which found their full expression in the epic can be seen lurking in various stages and in different forms in his

other poems. 'Urvasie' and 'Love and Death' shares a highly romantic atmosphere and both celebrates love. The poets' patriotism reveals itself in 'Baji Prabhou' where he expresses his adoration for this country as 'Shakthi'. 'Rishi' is a representative spiritual poem remarkable for its throbbing upanishadic touch. Many of his short poems are also highly spiritual and philosophical and describes different stages of Integral yoga. The fourth chapter is a study of four of his longer poems and ten short poems in this background.

A study of Aurobindonian poems can never be complete without a peep into the symbols used in the poems. Being mystic in its language, style and ideas, the use of Symbols demands explanation. A random selection of some of the vedic and tantric symbols, and some used for the expression of his philosophical ideas are taken for consideration in the fifth chapter. Going through the works of Sri Aurobindo can surely be said to be a rare experience as it changes the outlook of the reader and his notion of the cosmos. The idea about his own self and its role in the universe are sure to undergo a radical transformation. The tedious task of understanding Sri Aurobindo was made possible for me only because of the help of the works of scholars like Sri. A.B. Purani and Sri. M.P. Pandit. I am grateful to them. After the whole search, I feel that man has the right at least to dream about changing the miserable mortal life to a life divine.

Before closing one important point is worth remembering. As mentioned earlier 'Savitri', perhaps, is the only epic with a feminine avatar.

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APPENDIX

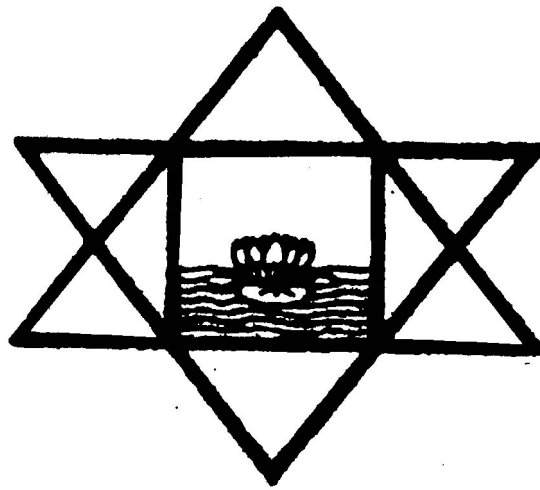


Fig. 1. Sri Aurobindo's Symbol; rpt. in towards tomorrow – An Introductory Booklet (TT). Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Society, 1996) 17

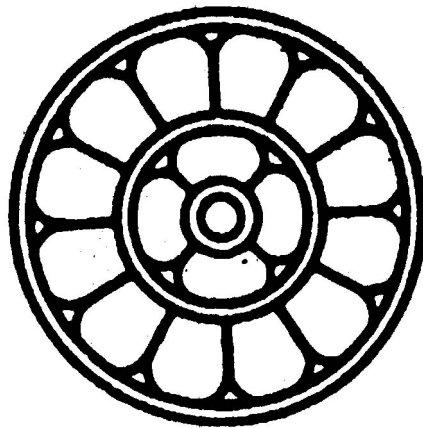


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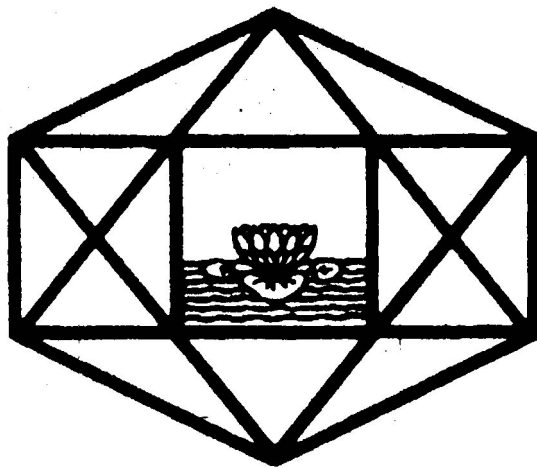
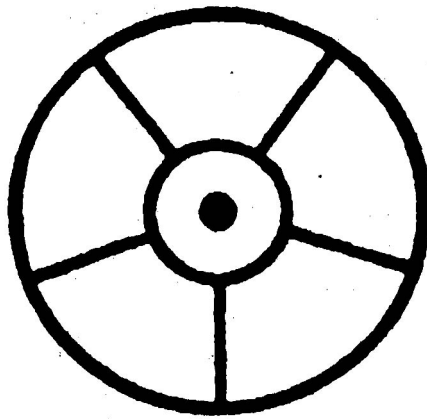


Fig.3. The Symbol of the Sri Aurobindo Society; rpt. in towards tomorrow – An Introductory Booklet. (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Society, 1996) 17.



**Fig.4. The Symbol of the Auroville; rpt rpt. in towards tomorrow –
An Introductory Booklet. (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Society,
1996) 17**



Fig 5. The Centres of Lotuses

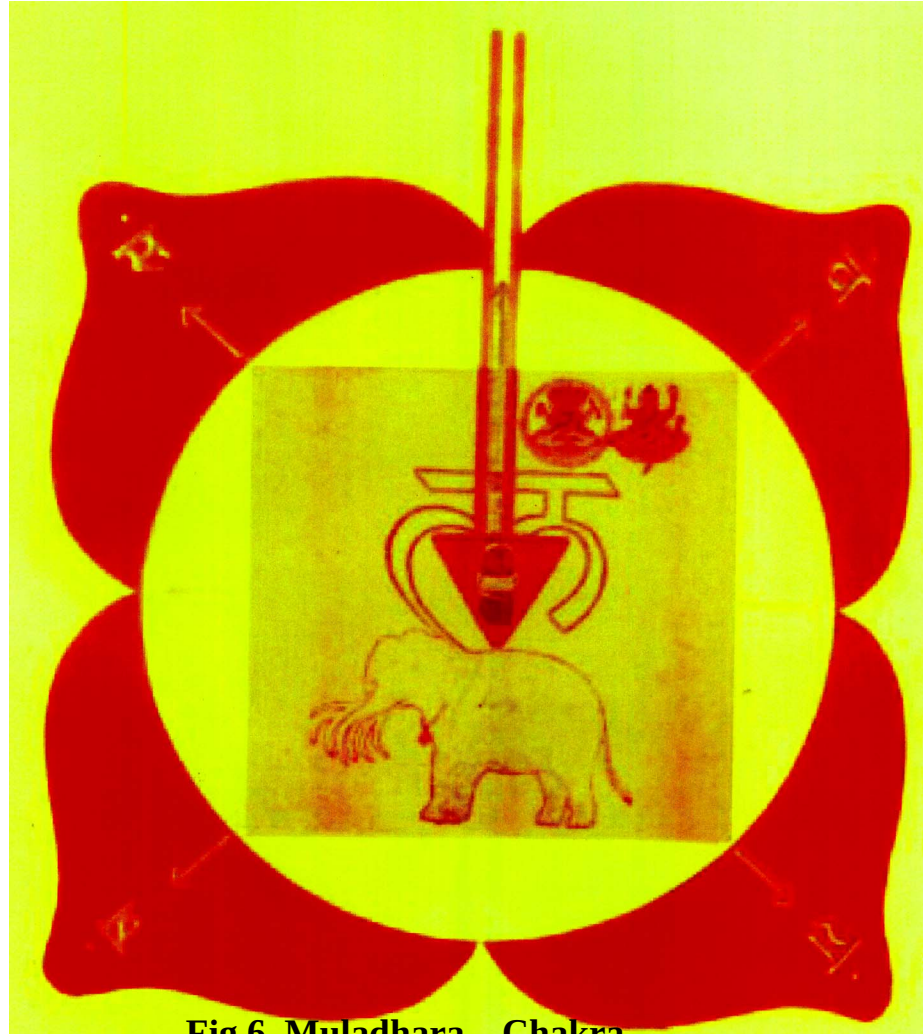


Fig 6. Muladhara – Chakra

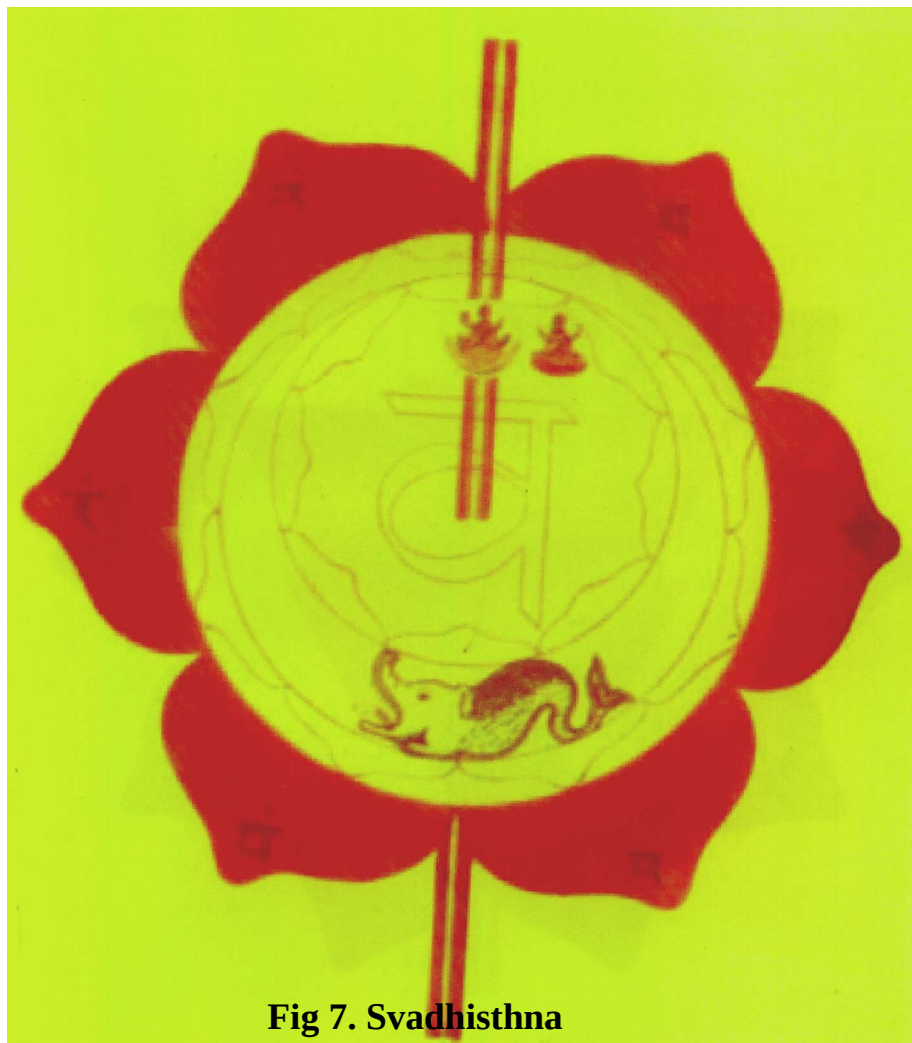


Fig 7. Svadhisthna



Fig 8. Manipura

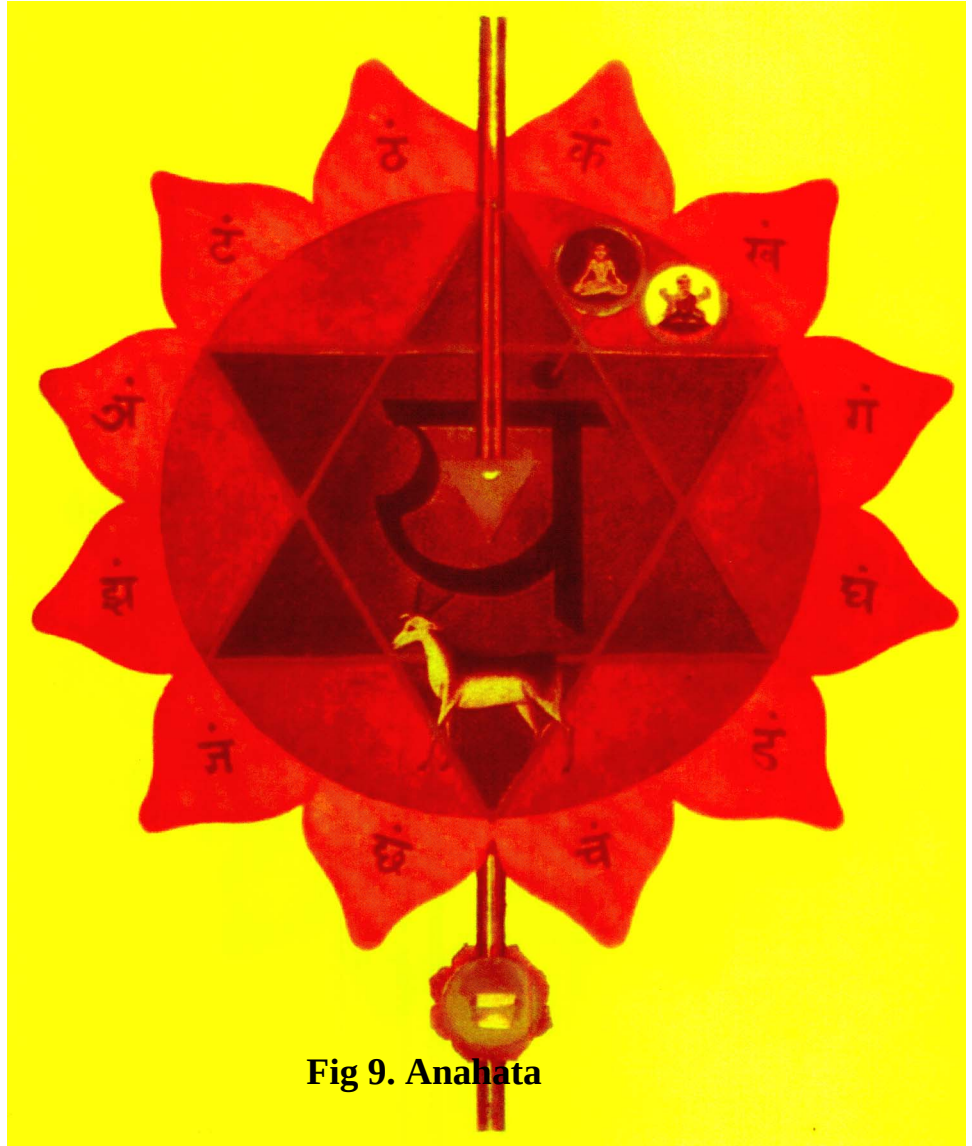


Fig 9. Anahata

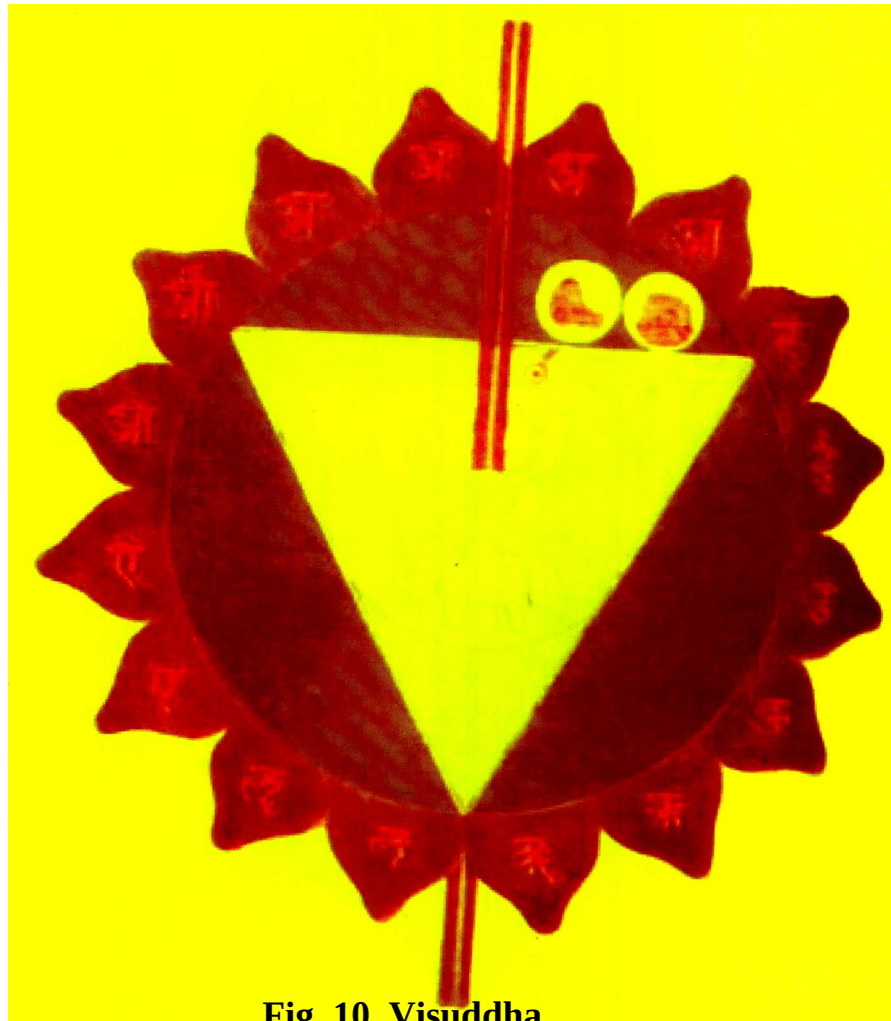


Fig. 10. Visuddha



Fig. 11. Ajnya

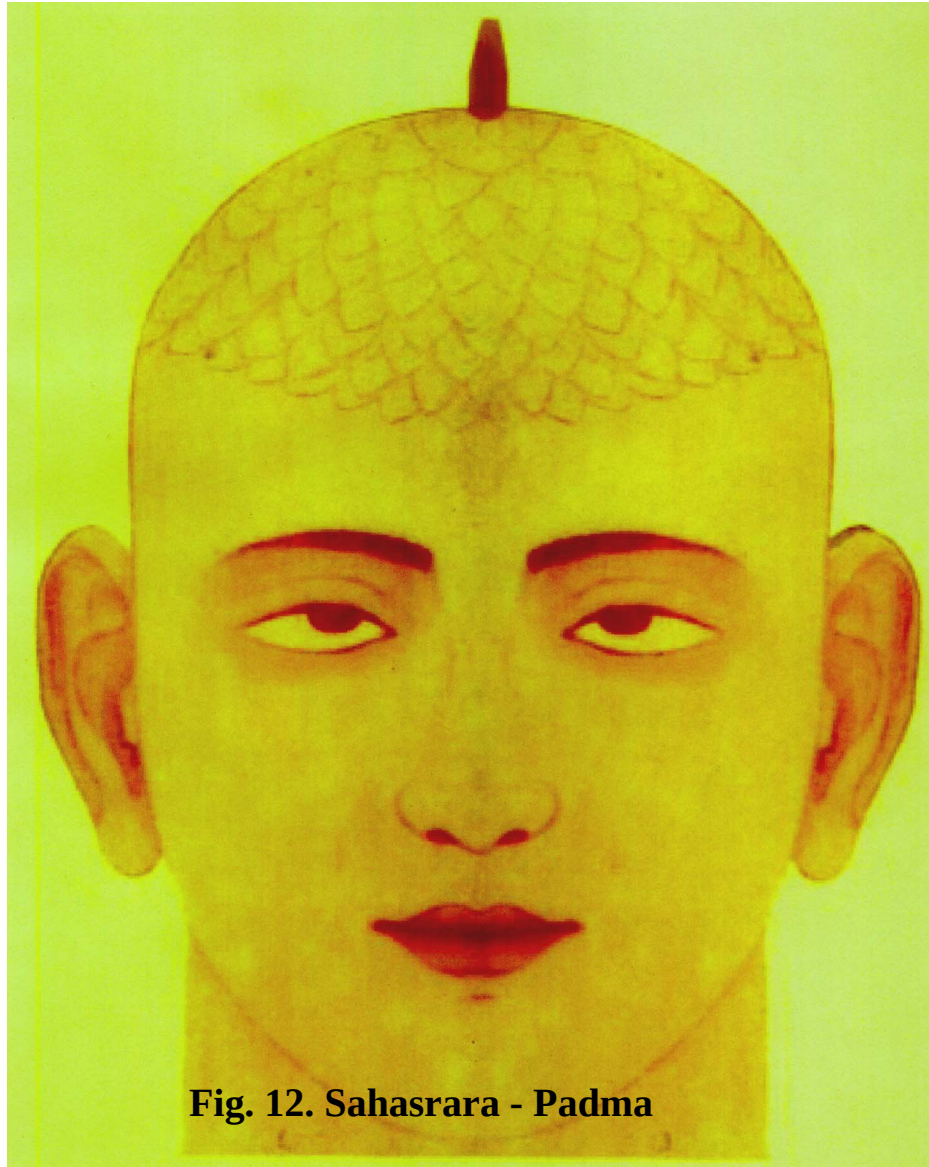


Fig. 12. Sahasrara - Padma