

Sri Aurobindo's Savitri : An Apocalyptic Literature



Prof. Dr. Madhumati M. Kulkarni

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an Apocalyptic Literature*

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M.A. Ph.D.

2018

**Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion,
Gurudev Ranade Mandir, Tilakwadi, Belagavi-590 006.**

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First Edition : 2018

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Published by : Academy of Comparative Philosophy
and Religion, Shree Gurudev Ranade
Mandir, Tilakwadi, Belagavi-590 006.
Ph : 0831-2467240

ISBN :

Pages : XVIII + 370

Price : Rs. 350/-

Printed at : **M/s. IMPRESSIONS**
B-2 Akshar Arcade,
3360/4, Gondhali Galli Cross Road,
BELGAUM - 590 002
☎ : 0831-2421232



*Books are perennial springs of knowledge,
Books are eternal treasures of wisdom,
Books are riches none can steal,
Books are physicians who alone can heal,
Buy books, read books, present books,
But never, never steal books.*

-MMK



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The Mother and Sri Aurobindo

FOREWORD

The title of the thesis indicates that it is a study of Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri* from the point of view of revelations and various visions the future of mankind. This is not a prediction by any expert astrologer, but that which Sri Aurobindo saw from his spiritual experience which had reached supramental level. He has mentioned that what he has written in *Savitri* had come from real experience in his life time. As he made progress in spiritual experience, he revised the text of *Savitri*.

In order to realise this prediction, both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were actively engaged in their life time and put in enormous efforts to bring down supramental consciousness on earth. After Sri Aurobindo left his body in Dec. 1950, he continued his efforts from the subtle physical and the from her Mother end still living on earth. As a consequence the Mother was able to bring down supramental consciousness on the earth on February 29, 1956. Its active working in the earth atmosphere is confirmed by the Mother in the following words:

".....I may tell you by the very fact that you live on earth at this time - whether you are conscious of it or not, even whether you want it or not - you are absorbing with the air you breathe this new supramental substance which is now spreading in the earth atmosphere. And it is preparing things in you which will manifest very suddenly, as soon as you have taken decisive step".

Collected works of the Mother, Vol 9, p.337 - Mother

All of us have every reason to believe what is stated by the Mother. During the last fifty years there has been extra-ordinary progress in all technological areas including medicine, surgery etc. We use computers and mobile phones. These have been extremely useful in our daily life. We hear about rockets taking space-ships to the Moon and planet Mars.

Savitri is written in 24,000 lines. To study such a work in minute detail and then pick up the necessary knowledge to write a thesis needs extraordinary effort. As is mentioned in *Savitri* on p.3. "All can be done if the god touch is there" Smt. Madhumati certainly had that god-touch which made her to take up such an extraordinary task and successfully complete it. It really deserved the award of Ph. D. degree. Not only this, but it has helped her to lead a spiritually oriented life along with her equally spiritually oriented husband Shri Manohar Kulkarni.

The readers of this book will certainly be benefitted by the rich spiritual experience of Smt. Madhumati M. Kulkarni. I am thankful to her for having given me an opportunity to have a glimpse of illuminating thesis on *Savitri*.

Dr. K.S. Amur
Sri Aurobindo Society
Shivageri, Dharwad.
24-07-2017

Publisher's Note

Prof Dr. Madhumati M. Kulkarni, Chief Editor of Pathway to God - a quarterly journal in English published by ACPR, has been rendering selfless service since last several years. Her services are indeed invaluable and commendable.

As an ardent disciple of Maharshi Sri Aurobindo, we have actually observed her practising rigorously his Integral Yoga and leading a pious life on spiritual path.

Being an English Professor and Head of the Dept. of English at Gogte College of Commerce, Belagavi wherein she has not only rendered yeomen service to the student community of various disciplines but also in all the nearby institutions in Belgaum as a resource person and motivational speaker on Mind Management, Mind-Mapping and Time Management. Her editorship and services are a remarkable contribution to our Academy.

The present work on Sri Aurobindo's masterpiece *Savitri* holds a mirror to her spiritual life. We are very proud to publish this monumental work through our Academy. That she has borne the total expenditure of printing the book speaks volumes for her magnanimity and charity.

We offer her services at the Lotus-feet of Shri Gurudev and wish her and her family long life of health, peace and prosperity.

Adv. Maruti Zirali
Secretary, ACPR
Hindwadi, Belagavi

19-02-2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many great souls and eminent personalities have helped and encouraged me during my research project. I remain ever indebted to the following:

- * My Guiding Teacher Dr. S.S. Kulkanri, Goa University, Bambolim, Goa.
- * Late Sri Shivabhi Amin, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
- * Late Sri M. P. Pandit, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
- * Late Prof. Sri R.H. Kulkarni, Dharwad, Karnataka,
- * Major S.S. Galgali, Belgaum, Karnataka,
- * Dr. Mangesh V. Nadkarni, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry,
- * Dr. B.V. Nemade, Former Head of the Department of English, Goa University, Bambolim, Goa.
- * Dr. A.K. Joshi, Head of the Dept, of English and Dean of the Faculty, Goa University, Bambolim, Goa,
- * Dr. M.K. Naik, Former Head of the Department of English, Karnatak University, Dharwad, Karnataka,
- * Dr. G.S. Amur, Former Head of the Dept. of English, Babasaheb Ambedkar University Aurangabad, Maharashtra
- * Dr. C.V. Venugopal, Head of the Dept. of English, Karnatak University, Dharwad, Karnataka,
- * Prin. G.B. Sajjan, Arts & Commerce College, Babaleshwar, Karnataka.
- * Prof. S.C. Bagi, Lingaraj College, Belgaum. Karnataka,

- * Dr. A.B. Kalkundrikar. Prof. Meera N. Kulkarni and Prof. A.K Naik of Gogte College of Commerce, Belgaum, Karnataka.
- * UGC Authorities for sanctioning me study leave under Faculty improvement Programme,
- * Deputy Director of Collegiate Education, Dharwad, Karnataka,
- * Members of Karnatak Law Society, Belgaum, Karnataka,
- * Library Authorities of Sri Aurobindo Society, Panaji Branch, Goa for permitting me to use books from their Library.

I am beholden to them all.

Prof. Dr. Madhumati M. Kulkarni

PREFACE-I

There is purpose in each stumble and fall.

Nature's most careless lolling is a pose

Preparing some forward step, some deep result.

Sri. Aurobindo's Savitri: BK Ten, Canto Four, P.658

That is exactly what happened in my case from the day Sri Aurobindo and the Mother goaded this mortal frame called Madhurnati to take up Sri Aurobindo's challenging yet fascinating *magnum opus Savitri* for my research project. I did stumble, I did fall only to rise up to their plans and expectations so much so that today I confess with utmost humility that my Ph.D. Degree is only a means, a by-product, while the process of self-transformation is the end, the main product. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had planned so as to draw me under their wings, in their folds to unfold to me the mystery of the universe and the Divine Plan. Hence I ardently offer this book at their Lotus-Feet in my adoration and supplication.

I must share with you how *Savitri* came to me. Way back in 1983 when I joined Gogte College of Commerce, Belgaum as a professor of English, on voluntary transfer from Karwar, one of my colleagues and Sanskrit scholar Prof. Meera Kulkarni had been translating *Savitri* into Marathi and would often ask me the meanings of English words in the text. It was thus that the seeds of *Savitri* were sown in my mind and brain and they lay dormant for a long time.

... On the gross level. I must owe my indebtedness to my Guiding Teacher Prof. Dr. Sheshagirirao S. Kulkarni, Dept of English, Goa University. In fact long

before my registering as a research student under him he had sought in my crude frame infinite potentialities which would lead me some day toward sustaining the force of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Being a hard task-master and a perfectionist he trained me in the spiritual discipline which is a prerequisite for pursuing any study related to such a great visionary as Sri Aurobindo. From then on my Guide was an ancient Rishi of Gurukula system and I was his obedient disciple. I prostrate before him.

During the course of my research work I met several enlightened souls who inspired me by their insightful words. I reminisce with reverence Late Sri M.P. Pandit and Sri Shivabhai Amin of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. In fact I spent over a week with Shivabhai Amin who threw much light on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*.

Nothing on this earth happens by chance and my thesis that lay in my library for over one and a half decades was forcing me to bring it to the light of the day. In those days I had been a panel translator for Kannada version of *All India Magazine* published from Pondicherry. I once casually asked its Chief Editor, Dr. K.S. Amur an ardent follower of Sri Aurobindo regarding printing and publishing of my thesis. In this way things started moving. And now Dr. K.S. Amur has written foreword for this great work. I am extremely grateful to him for his write up.

Needless to say it was a project demanding my penance and all my energy. I was pushed forward during my trying moments by the moral support and cooperation of my husband Mr. Manohar V. Kulkarni, B.E., M.I.E., a leading Chartered Engineer of Belgaum and my son Dr.

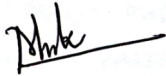
Raghu, Dean Ing, currently in Frankfurt Germany. Both of them despite their own work were all along with me. This task would not have been accomplished without the blessings of my parents and in-laws.

I heartily thank Adv. Mr. M.B. Zirali and all the members of the Board of Trustees of ACPR for publishing my thesis in the book form. I thank Adv. Zirali for his words of appreciation and also for the keen interest he took in the publication of this work.

I thank profusely the entire team of Impressions for undertaking the printing of this monumental work. My special thanks to Mr. Atul Bhatkande, Manager, Editorial section who coincidentally happens to be my past student at Gogte College of Commerce, Belgaum.

I am sure the apocalyptic significance of *Savitri*, the revelatory nature of various planes of consciousness analyzed in this book will help researchers as well as spiritual aspirants of Sri Aurobindo and his philosophy especially *Savitri*.

I feel myself rewarded if this book enables spiritual aspirants and general readers in finding their path toward the divine life.



Dr. Madhumati M. Kulkarni

18-07-2017

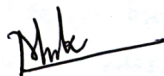
PREFACE-II

This doctoral thesis on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is an outcome of a long ordeal and striving. I would not have completed it without the help and encouragement of my Guiding Teacher, Dr. S.S. Kulkarni. I received valuable help, guidance, inspiration and encouragement also from the late M.P. Pandit. Shri Shivabhai Amin (both from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry), the late R.H. Kulkarni (of Dharwad), Major S.S. Galgali (of Gogte Institute of Technology, Belgaum), Dr. M.V. Nadkarni (of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry), Dr. B.V. Nemade, former Head of the Department of English, Goa University, Dr. A.K. Joshi, present. Head of the Department of English and Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Goa University, Dr. M.K. Naik, formerly Head of the Department of English, Karnatak University. Dharwad. Dr. G.S. Amur, retired Head of the Department of English, Marathwada University (now named Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University), Aurangabad. Dr. C.V. Venugopal, Head of the Department of English, Karnataka University, Dharwad. Principal G. B. Sajjan of Arts and Commerce College Babaleshwar, Professor S. C. Bagi. Lingaraj College. Belgaum, Dr. A. B. Kalkundrikar, Prof. Meera N. Kulkarni and Prof. A. K. Naik Head of the Department, of English - of Gogte College of Commerce, Belgaum.

During the final stage of my research project, the University Grants Commission was kind enough to grant me one year's study leave from 15-6-1993 to 14-6-1994, under the Faculty Improvement Programme. I am extremely thankful to the U.G.C. authorities for this.

Likewise, I am deeply indebted to the Deputy Director of Collegiate Education, Dharwad, the authorities of Karnatak University, Dharwad, the members of Karnatak Law Society, Belgaum, to my Principal, Dr. G.B. Naik for relieving me in time to finalise my thesis and to the authorities of Sri Aurobindo Society, Panaji Branch, Goa for permitting me to make use of books from their library all through my stay at Panaji.

Goa University,
15th August, 1994.



Madhumati M. Kulkarni



Dedication

*I offer this Book at the
Lotus-Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother
Whose perennial source of hope and light
Guided my steps in ascending spiritual heights.*

- MMK





*SRI AUROBINDO
AND HIS
SAVITRI: A LEGEND AND
A SYMBOL*



I CHAPTER

SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS *SAVITRI* : A LEGEND AND A SYMBOL

1. Life of Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo is so very well-known today that no detailed account of his biography need be furnished for an understanding of the significance of his life. As stated in an Ashram Publication commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry¹:

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on 15th August 1872. In 1879, at the age of seven, he was taken with his two elder brothers to England for education and lived there for fourteen years. Brought up at first in an English family at Manchester, he joined St. Paul's School in London in 1884 and in 1890 went from it with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he studied for two years. In 1890 he passed also the open competition for the Indian Civil Service, but at the end of two years of probation failed to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the Service. At this time the Gaekwar of Baroda was in London. Sri

Aurobindo saw him, obtained an appointment in the Baroda Service and left England for India in January 1893.

Sri Aurobindo passed thirteen years, from 1893 to 1906 in the Baroda Service, first in the Revenue Department and in secretariate work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and, finally, Vice-Principal in the Baroda College. These were years of self-culture, of literary activity for much of the poetry afterwards published from Pondicherry was written at this time and of preparation for his future work. In England he had received, according to his father's express instructions, an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East.² At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, assimilated the spirit of Indian civilisation and its forms past and present. A great part of the last years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity, ... The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda Service and join openly in the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

The political action of Sri Aurobindo covered eight years, from 1902 to 1910...

Sri Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in 1907 and acquitted. . . In May, 1908 he was arrested in the Alipur Conspiracy Case as implicated in the doings of the revolutionary group led by his brother Barindra, but no

evidence of any value could be established against him and in this case too he was acquitted. After a detention of one year as under trial prisoner in the Alipur Jail, he came out in May 1909,... For almost a year he strove single-handed as the sole remaining leader of the Nationalists in India to revive the movement... But at last he was compelled to recognise that the nation was not yet sufficiently trained to carry out his policy and programme.... Moreover, since his twelve months' detention in the Alipur Jail, which had been spent entirely in practice of Yoga, his inner spiritual life was pressing upon him for an exclusive concentration. He resolved therefore to withdraw from the political field, at least for a time.

In February 1910, he withdrew to a secret retirement at Chandernagore and in the beginning of April sailed for Pondicherry in French India... Sri Aurobindo had left Bengal with some intention of returning to the political field under more favourable circumstances; but very soon the magnitude of the spiritual work he had taken up appeared to him and he saw that it would need the exclusive concentration of all his energies. Eventually he cut off connection with politics, refused repeatedly to accept the Presidentship of the National Congress and went into a complete retirement. During all his stay at Pondicherry from 1910 onward he remained more and more exclusively devoted to his spiritual work and his Sadhana.

In 1914 after four years of silent Yoga he began the publication of a philosophical monthly, the *Arya*. Most of his more important works, *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Isha Upanishad*, appeared serially in the *Arya*. These works embodied much of the inner knowledge that had come to him in his practice of Yoga. Others were concerned with the spirit and significance of Indian civilisation and culture (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*), the true meaning of the Vedas (*The Secret of the Veda*), the progress of human society (*The Human Cycle*), the nature and evolution of poetry (*The Future Poetry*), the possibility of the unification of the human race (*The Ideal of Human Unity*). At this time also he began to publish his poems, both those written in England and at Baroda and those, fewer in number, added during his period of political activity and in the first years of his residence at Pondicherry. The *Arya* ceased publication in 1921 after six years and a half of uninterrupted appearance. ...

Sri Aurobindo began his practice of Yoga in 1904. At first gathering into it the essential elements of spiritual experience that are gained by the paths of divine communion and spiritual realisation followed till now in India, he passed on in search of a more complete experience uniting and harmonising the two ends of existence, Spirit and Matter. Most ways of Yoga are paths to the Beyond leading to the Spirit and, in the end, away from life; Sri Aurobindo rises to the Spirit to redescend with its gains bringing the light and power and bliss of the

Spirit into life to transform it. Man's present existence in the material world is in his view or vision of things a life in the Ignorance with the Inconscient at its base but even in its darkness and nescience there are involved the presence and possibilities of the Divine. The created world is not a mistake or a vanity and illusion to be cast aside by the soul returning to heaven or Nirvana, but the scene of a spiritual evolution by which out of this material Inconscience is to be manifested progressively the Divine Consciousness in things. Mind is the highest term yet reached in the evolution, but it is not the highest of which it is capable. There is above it a Supermind or eternal Truth-Consciousness which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light and power of a Divine Knowledge. Mind is an ignorance seeking after Truth, but this is a self-existent Knowledge harmoniously manifesting the play of its forms and forces. It is only by the descent of this Supermind that the perfection dreamed by all that is highest in humanity can come. It is possible by opening to a greater Divine Consciousness to rise to this power of light and bliss, discover one's true self, remain in constant union with the Divine and bring down the supramental Force for the transformation of mind and life and body. To realise this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo left his body on 5th December 1950.

The corpus of Sri Aurobindo's complete works is astoundingly tremendous. In 1972, on the occasion of his 'birth centenary, his collected works were published in thirty volumes of large uniform size. They included all the works known at that time and covered nearly 16,000 pages. Their titles are:¹³

1. *Bande Mataram*
2. *Karmayogin*
3. *The Harmony of Virtue*
4. *Writings in Bengali*
5. *Collected Poems*
- 6-7. *Collected Plays and Short Stories*
8. *Translations*
9. *The Future Poetry*
10. *The Secret of the Veda*
11. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*
12. *The Upanishads*
13. *Essays on the Gita*
14. *The Foundations of Indian Culture*
15. *Social and Political Thought*
16. *The Supramental Manifestation*
17. *The Hour of God*
- 18-19. *The Life Divine*
- 20-21. *The Synthesis of Yoga*
- 22-24. *Letters on Yoga*
25. *The Mother*
26. *On Himself*
27. *Supplement*
- 28-29. *Savitri*
30. *Index and Glossary.*

These works include the various kinds of literature Sri Aurobindo produced: journalistic writings; poetry,

poetic plays and epics; translations; literary criticism; spiritual writings and philosophical works; socio-political writings; autobiographical writings and letters.

Aurobindo has to his credit a very remarkable record as a great scholar and man of letters. He has written voluminously... and on a variety of subjects. His great originality, his rare mastery over the material he handles, and his inspired language combined to invest his writings with a quality and dignity which is very conspicuous. The subjects that he has specially written about are literature, politics, spirituality, philosophy, culture, yoga and society. In almost every one of these subjects his contribution has been unique.⁴

2. Savitri : A Legend and a Symbol

Sri Aurobindo has transformed his philosophical teaching into a supreme poetic revelation in *Savitri*. It is as extraordinary a poetic masterpiece as *The Life Divine* is a philosophical treatise. Its magnitude is as considerable as that of *The Life Divine*. It consists of 23,813 lines in blank verse.

Though *Savitri* was completed by Sri Aurobindo in 1950 'The first versions were written as early as 1899, in Baroda' and was 'composed and revised, composed and revised, over a long period of time.,⁵

Describing *Savitri* as 'a work by itself unlike all the others', Sri Aurobindo himself says, '*Savitri* was originally written many years ago as a narrative poem in two parts, each of four books - rather Part Two consisted of three books and an epilogue.⁶ He further adds, 'I made some

eight or ten recasts of it originally under the old insufficient inspiration. Afterwards I am altogether rewriting it...⁷ Speaking about its final shape he said, 'In the new form it will be a sort of poetic philosophy of the Spirit and of Life ... covering most subjects of philosophical thought and vision and many aspects of spiritual experience...'⁸ In view of this, it is indeed true that *Savitri* 'is not the intellectual expression of the power of speech itself taking form in words which ... is like the prophetic history of the earth, embodying in itself the fulfilment of man's life on earth'.⁹ As such, the canvas of *Savitri* is as wide as the cosmos... It takes into its purview worlds of being that are concerned with humanity which are not perceived by it because of its limitations of ignorance. .. These levels act upon human consciousness. They also include higher planes of consciousness which have not yet manifested here but which are pressing upon the earth-consciousness for manifestation. They contain beings, powers and presences, that live on these planes of Light, Consciousness and Bliss, the world of Truth.¹⁰ Furthermore, *Savitri* deals with 'The problem... of man's imperfection and his unquenchable thirst for perfection, of his groping in the Darkness of ignorance and his seeking for Light, of his mortality and his thirst for immortality.'¹¹ In keeping with the twentieth century belief, *Savitri* maintains that 'man's problems are all inner psychological and spiritual' in nature. Therefore, 'the roots of man's conflicts are within him... This inner conflict projects itself into his outer life.' In this way,

Savitri reveals that 'Great spiritual battles... are fought within man's soul. . . as in the case of Christ and Buddha.' After all, 'all the inner spiritual experiences of man' are 'real, concrete and direct.'¹²

This fact may, and generally does, escape the notice of the ordinary reader of *Savitri* which is a 'record of 'a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind, and it is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences.'¹³ All such extraordinary characteristics of *Savitri* make it a poem which demands a minimum of capacity of vision' and a broad cosmopolitan enlightened outlook familiar with the latest advances in several branches of human knowledge.¹⁴ Because of this, *Savitri* is not a rendering, or a vision of the world in terms of the current laws of human evolution... It enunciates a new law... a new world of consciousness transcending—and yet fulfilling at the same time — the evolution attained by man up till now... It succeeds in making the rare experience concrete to our minds.'¹⁵ In this way, '*Savitri* is full of diverse excellences woven together... it does not reject any strand of life, it includes and absorbs every theme of import in man's evolution towards deity. Ancient motifs and motifs of our own day are equally caught up'¹⁶ in it. 'It is Legend as well as Symbol, a story with many themes and levels of development at the same time that it is instinct with a mystical light.'¹⁷ It is 'hieratic poetry, demanding a keen sense of the occult and spiritual to compass both its subjective and objective values' and presents an 'audacious and multi-dimensioned picture of

a highly yogic state of embodied being.¹⁸ This is but natural because 'Sri Aurobindo put forth' 'colossal labour' 'to build this unique structure' which reminds one "of those majestic ancient temples like Konarak or of a Gothic cathedral like Notre Dame before which we stand and stare with speechless ecstasy, your soul takes a flight beyond time and space."¹⁹ Yet another important characteristic of *Savitri* is that 'like the *Veda* which is the Book of Knowledge for the current age,' it 'is the Revelation for the New Age of the Spirit that is dawning.'²⁰ '*Savitri* is thus a new kind of poem, a poem whose making was Yoga Sadhana and whose reading too should be such Sadhana.'²¹ it is a new poem in its declaration that 'man should change, and his world should change, and that the Superman or the Supramentalised man of tomorrow, inhabiting a transformed world or supernature, should render earth and heaven equal, transfiguring our life mundane... into the Life Divine with its immaculate intensities, life-movements and realisations.'²² As Raymond Frank Piper, a Western philosopher-critic observes, in *Savitri* :

[Sri Aurobindo] created what is probably the greatest epic in the English language.... it is the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful and perfect cosmic poem ever composed. It ranges symbolically from a primordial cosmic void, through earth's darkness and struggles, to the highest realms of Supramental spiritual existence, and illumines every important concern of man, through verse of unparalleled massiveness.magnificence, and metaphorical brilliance.

Savitri is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the Absolute.²³

It is as much 'about Satyavan and Savitri' as it is 'on a different level about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; and it is about us too - it does something to us, it does involve us in the action that is only superficially about a husband and a wife but has really a terrestrial, even a cosmic, significance.'²⁴

As it is rightly observed, '*Savitri* has been regarded by some distinguished critics as a magnificent achievement making a new beginning in cosmic art.'²⁵ For, 'Sri Aurobindo had a Homeric mastery of the natural and supernatural... Like Dante and Milton he produced, in *Savitri*, an epic of universal significance. Like Goethe, he picked up an ancient story and developed it as a legend summing up the past, a symbol projecting the future and a philosophy based on his own experience. He fulfilled the promise of the subjective epic and of introspective lyricism which had opened so brilliantly with Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats.'²⁶ *Savitri* is indeed, 'the epic of the new age, an epic which is more revealingly autobiographical than *Paradise Lost* or *Hyperion*, more radiantly inclusive than *The Divine Comedy* and more intimately and intensely human than *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*.²⁷ "Like Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *Savitri* has a universality in its theme, being concerned with the destiny of Man and his relations with the Divine. Like the two Indian epics, *Savitri* has a romantic inwardness, an insistent

stress on the mystical , ... ¹²⁸ What is more, 'The spiritual experiences of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the quarry from which the epic hews its subtle and fascinating material for this purpose.'¹²⁹ 'In a deeper sense, the poem is more than a triumph of individual talent. It is a whole tradition come alive again, in a modern medium, concentrating centuries of development, not of a race and a culture, but of many races and cultures. At the heart of the poem is an oecumenical image of Man, an awareness of destiny, ... Like his own Aswapathy, our poet is the Representative Man: ... Both events and locale are within us. Our lives are its grand theatre... the action takes place, as the poet is careful to indicate, in the inner or "soul-space", in "a larger self that lives within us, by ourselves unseen" ... All its action, the plunge into the inner realms, the debate, the encounter with Death or destiny, is seen under the aspect of a cosmic drama or myth. ' 'But its main motive is always love' and its 'real theme is self-knowledge,' or "the soul's (everlasting) search for lost Reality" and, ... immortality'.³⁰ 'The exploration of the world-stair and the corresponding planes of the being in man' presented in *Savitri* ' is a resounding recovery of dimensions for which the only parallel is in the archetypal Vedic and occult poetry.'³¹ It is a vision, an experience, a realisation',³² a sort of poetic source-book of the origins of the Cosmos, a dramatisation of the present predicament, and a Book of Prophecy about the future' a 'momentous and comprehensive ... relation of events and projection of future possibility'.³³ That is why it

is rightly observed that 'By any standards, *Savitri* is a most remarkable epic; it is surely among the greatest poetic achievements of this century.,³⁴ In *Savitri's* supreme heroism' Sri Aurobindo 'saw in a seed form the symbolic affirmation of life on earth... as he progressed in his Yoga of transformation' and 'each major siddhi' of his ' saw him on the peaks of a higher level of consciousness,... he attempted to write the poem of *Savitri* from that new level of consciousness.'³⁵ This is borne out by Sri Aurobindo himself who says in one of his letters, 'I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level; each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level.'³⁶ Hence the observation made by 'Sri Krishna Prem, a fine scholar and a great Yogi' :

Sri Aurobindo has closed a gulf that has yawned in the human psyche for many many centuries. In the ancient world, poetry... was — above all — revelation. Its subject matter was the eternal truth which dwells in the heart of all life... The poet... was the Seer, the Prophet, the Magician, and his speech was mantra and enchantment...

Gradually,... head sundered itself from heart, knowledge from feeling...

*In this poem (Savitri) the fissure has been closed. Savitri... is neither subjective fancy nor yet philosophical thought, but vision and revelation of the actual inner structure of the Cosmos and of the pilgrim of life within its sphere... worlds of Light above, worlds of Darkness below and we see also ever circling life.*³⁷

The same opinion is echoed in such other observations as the following :

...In Savitri, Sri Aurobindo presents a synthetic and integral vision of the essentials of all yogic and religious realisations of the world. The seven planes, of existence, and the seven worlds of Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind, Sat, Chit and Ananda are revealed to the pilgrim soul in its ascent to the light. In fact, the occult cosmogony and geography of the entire universe are unveiled to the spirit's eye. Savitri is the story of the evolution of man through the various stages of his development,—the physical- material creature, the vital-rajasic man and the satwic-mental being. Sri Aurobindo discusses too the various planes and parts of mental man, his sufferings and limitations, his potentialities and possibilities, as well as the problem of Freewill, Determinism, Karma, the Psychical centres, the Chakras and their coiled-up power. The whole gamut of life is covered as it were in one titanic sweep.

Savitri is a perfect utterance of the unmanifest, manifesting itself through eternal time. It is the cumulative aspiration of ages upon ages divinely directed to transform the earth-nature into its spirit-nature. Its theme is the transfiguration of Death into the radiant godhead of Immortality through love divine. Savitri is an epic of affirmative spirituality with the descent of the Divine as its oft-repeated refrain. Its objective is... the fulfilment of the very heavens upon the earth....

*Savitri is the first luminous testimony of Truth-Consciousness to the emerging New Race, and the last testament of Truth to the old humanity. It is the mother of a new radiant future, the age of Truth, ... the mother of a new spiral of celestial evolution taking with her the truth of all the by-gone cycles of human existence. It is a proclamation in the language of self-effectuating Mantra of the birth of cosmic man in the household of Matter.*³⁸

It is of utmost significance and importance that all observations made by these and other various readers, admirers and critics of *Savitri* are directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, based entirely on the two reported talks on *Savitri* given by the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, the first called "A Talk of the Mother on *Savitri*" and the second entitled "On *Savitri*"³⁹ They are 'a report written from memory'.⁴⁰ The date of the first talk as mentioned at its end is '5-11-1967'.⁴¹ The Mother's observations on *Savitri* contained in these talks are astonishingly all-inclusive. On the one hand they cover the characteristics of *Savitri* discerned and articulated by numerous scholars and critics such as those mentioned above. On the other "A Talk of the Mother on *Savitri*" clearly spells out almost all the characteristic features of *Savitri* both as apocalyptic literature in general and as a twentieth century Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature in particular. What is still more remarkable about the "Talk" is that all those characteristics of apocalyptic literature which are found mentioned and analysed in such renowned books as *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1987) and

The Encyclopedia of Religion (1987) are either clearly included or implied in it. In view of such overwhelming relevance of the "Talk" to the central purpose of the present thesis, several portions of it such as the following need to be quoted extensively :

... Savitri is a revelation, it is a meditation, it is a quest of the Infinite, the Eternal. If it is read with this aspiration for Immortality, the reading itself will serve as a guide to Immortality. To read Savitri is indeed to practise Yoga, spiritual concentration; one can find there all that is needed to realise the Divine. Each step of Yoga is noted here, including the secret of all other Yogas. Surely, if one sincerely follows what is revealed here in each line one will reach finally the transformation of the Supramental Yoga. It is truly the infallible guide who never abandons you; its support is always there for him who wants to follow the path. Each verse of Savitri is like a revealed Mantra which surpasses all that man possessed by way of knowledge, and I repeat this, the words are expressed and arranged in such a way that the sonority of the rhythm leads you to the origin of sound, which is OM.

...yes, everything is there: mysticism, occultism, philosophy, the history of evolution, the history of man, of the gods, of creation, of Nature. How the universe was created, why, for what purpose, what destiny - all is there. You can find all the answers to all your questions there. Everything is explained, even the future of man and of the evolution, all that nobody yet knows. He has described it all in beautiful and clear words so that spiritual adventurers

who wish to solve the mysteries of the world may understand it more easily. But this mystery is well hidden behind the words and lines and one must rise to the required level of true consciousness to discover it. All prophecies, all that is going to come is presented with a precise and wonderful clarity. Sri Aurobindo gives you here the key to find the Truth, to discover the Consciousness, to solve the problem of what the universe is. He has also indicated how to open the door of the Inconscience so that the light may penetrate there and transform it. He has shown the path, the way to liberate oneself from the ignorance and climb up to the superconscience; each stage, each plane of consciousness, how they can be scaled, how one can cross even the barrier of death and attain immortality. You will find the whole journey in detail, and as you go forward you can discover things altogether unknown to man. That is Savitri, and much more yet. It is a real experience - reading Savitri. All the secrets that man possessed, He has revealed,- as well as all that awaits him in the future; all this is found in the depths of Savitri. But one must have the knowledge to discover it all, the experience of the planes of consciousness, the experience of the Supermind, even the experience of the conquest of Death. He has noted all the stages, marked each step in order to advance integrally in the Integral Yoga.

All this is His own experience, and what is most surprising is that it is my own experience also. It is my Sadhana which He has worked out. Each object, each event, each realisation, all the descriptions, even the

colours are exactly what I saw and the words, phrases are also exactly what I heard. And all this before having read the book. I read Savitri many times afterwards, but earlier, when He was writing He used to read it to me. Every morning I used to hear Him read Savitri. During the night He would write and in the morning read it to me. And I observed something curious, that day after day the experiences He read out to me in the morning were those I had had the previous night, word by word. Yes, all the descriptions, the colours, the pictures I had seen, the words I had heard, all, all, I heard it all, put by Him into poetry, into miraculous poetry. Yes, they were exactly my experiences of the previous night which He read out to me the following morning. And it was not just one day by chance, but for days and days together. And every time I used to compare what He said with my previous experiences and they were always the same. I repeat, it was not that I had told Him my experiences and that He had noted them down afterwards, no He knew already what I had seen. It is my experiences He has presented at length and they were His experiences also. It is, moreover, the picture of Our joint adventure into the unknown or rather into the Supermind.

These are experiences lived by Him, realities, supracosmic truths. He experienced all these as one experiences joy or sorrow physically. He walked in the darkness of inconscience, even in the neighbourhood of death, endured the sufferings of perdition, and emerged from the mud, the world-misery to breathe the sovereign

plenitude and enter the supreme Ananda. He crossed all these realms, went through the consequences, suffered and endured physically what one cannot imagine. Nobody till today has suffered like Him. He accepted suffering to transform suffering into the joy of union with the Supreme. It is something unique and incomparable in the history of the world. It is something that has never happened before, He is the first to have traced the path in the Unknown, so that we may be able to walk with certitude towards the Supermind. He has made the work easy for us. Savitri is his whole Yoga of transformation, and this Yoga appears now for the first time in the earth-consciousness.

*And I think that man is not yet ready to receive it. It is too high and too vast for him. He cannot understand it, grasp it, for it is not by the mind that one can understand Savitri. One needs spiritual experiences in order to understand and assimilate it. The farther one advances on the path of Yoga, the more does one assimilate and the better. No, it is something which will be appreciated only in the future, it is the poetry of tomorrow of which He has spoken in *The Future Poetry*. It is too subtle, too refined,- it is not in the mind or through the mind, it is in meditation that Savitri is revealed.*

And men have the audacity to compare it with the work of Virgil or Homer and to find it inferior. They do not understand, they cannot understand. What do they know? Nothing at all. And it is useless to try to make them understand. Men will know what it is, but in a distant future. It is only the new race with the new consciousness

which will be able to understand. I assure you there is nothing under the blue sky to compare with Savitri. It is the mystery of mysteries. It is a super-epic, it is super-literature, super-poetry, super-vision, it is a super-work even if one considers the number of lines He has written. No, these human words are not adequate to describe Savitri. Yes, one needs superlatives, hyperboles to describe it. It is a hyper-epic. No, words express nothing of what Savitri is, at least I do not find them. It is of immense value—spiritual value and all other values; it is eternal in its subject, and infinite in its appeal, miraculous in its mode and power of execution; it is a unique thing, the more you come in contact with it, the higher will you be uplifted... It is the most beautiful thing He has left for man, the highest possible...

...read Savitri; read properly, with the right attitude, concentrating a little before opening the pages and trying to keep the mind as empty as possible, absolutely without a thought... I tell you, if you try to really concentrate with this aspiration you can light the flame... of purification in a very short time... Try and you will see how very different it is, how new, if you read with this attitude... You know it is charged, fully charged with consciousness; as if Savitri were a being, a real guide. I tell you, whoever, wanting to practise Yoga, tries sincerely and feels the necessity for it, will be able to climb with the help of Savitri to the highest rung of the ladder of Yoga, will be able to find the secret that Savitri represents. And this without the help of a

Guru... For him Savitri alone will be the guide, for all that he needs he will find in Savitri...

*Indeed, Savitri is something concrete, living, it is all replete, packed with consciousness, it is the supreme knowledge above all human philosophies and religions. It is the spiritual path, it is Yoga, Tapasya, Sadhana, everything in its single body. Savitri has an extraordinary power, it gives out vibrations for him who can receive them, the true vibrations of each stage of consciousness. It is incomparable, it is truth in its plenitude, the Truth Sri Aurobindo brought down on the earth... one must try to find the secret that Savitri represents, the prophetic message Sri Aurobindo reveals there for us. This is the work before you, it is hard but it is worth the trouble.*⁴²

*But you must not read it as you read other books or newspapers. You must read with an empty head, a blank and vacant mind, without there being any other thought; you must concentrate much, remain empty, calm and open; then the words, rhythms, vibrations will penetrate directly to this white page, will put their stamp upon the brain, will explain themselves without your making any effort.*⁴³

It does not matter if you do not understand it — Savitri, read it always. You will see that every time you read it, something new will be revealed to you. Each time you will get a new glimpse, each time a new experience; things which were not there, things you did not understand arise and suddenly become clear. Always an unexpected vision comes up through the words and lines. Every time you try to

*read and understand, you will see that something is added, something which was hidden behind is revealed clearly and vividly. I tell you the very verses you have read once before, will appear to you in a different light each time you re-read them. This is what happens invariably. Always your experience is enriched, it is a revelation at each step.*⁴⁴

Savitri alone is sufficient to make you climb to the highest peaks. If truly one knows how to meditate on Savitri, one will receive all the help one needs. For him who wishes to follow this path, it is a concrete help as though the Lord himself were taking you by the hand and leading you to the destined goal. And then, every question, however personal it may be, has its answer here, every difficulty finds its solution herein; indeed there is everything that is necessary for doing the Yoga.

*He has crammed the whole universe in a single book. It is a marvellous work, magnificent and of an incomparable perfection.*⁴⁵

In truth, the entire form of Savitri has descended "en masse" from the highest region and Sri Aurobindo with His genius only arranged the lines -in a superb and magnificent style. Sometimes entire lines -were revealed and He has left them intact; He worked hard, untiringly, so that the inspiration could come from the highest possible summit. And what a work He has created! Yes, it is a true creation in itself. It is an unequalled work. Everything is there, and it is put in such a simple, such a clear form; verses perfectly harmonious, limpid and eternally true... I have read so many things; but I have never come across

anything which could be compared with Savitri. I have studied the best works in Greek, Latin, English and of course in French literature, also in German and all the great creations of the West and the East, including the great epics; but I repeat it, I have not found anywhere anything comparable with Savitri. All these literary works seem to me empty, flat, hollow, without any deep reality-apart from a few rare exceptions, and these too represent only a small fraction of what Savitri is ... I tell you once again there is nothing like it in the whole world. Even if one puts aside the vision of reality, that is, the essential substance which is the heart of the inspiration, and considers only the lines in themselves, one will find them unique, of the highest classical kind. What He has created is something man cannot imagine. For, everything is there, everthing.⁴⁶

Chapter Notes :

1. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Publication Department, Sri Aurobindo And His Ashram (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1985), pp.1-5.
2. It may be observed that Sri Aurobindo's education in England gave him a wide introduction to the culture of ancient, of mediaeval and modern Europe. He was a brilliant scholar in Greek and Latin. He had learned French from his childhood in Manchester and studied for himself German and Italian sufficiently to study Goethe and Dante in the original tongues. (He passed the tripos in Cambridge in the first class and obtained record marks in Greek and Latin in the examination for the Indian Civil Service."
3. *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*, p. 47
4. R.R.Diwakar, *Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo : Life Sadhana & Teachings of Sri Aurobindo* (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1988), p. 81
5. Kireet Joshi, *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* (Delhi : The Mother's Institute of Research, 1989), p.106.
6. Sri Aurobindo. *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Tenth Impression, 1984), p. 728
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. pp. 731-2
9. A. B. Purani, *Lectures on Savitri* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Society, Second Edition, 1989), p. 1

10. A. B. Purani, *Sri Aurobindo's Savitri : An Approach and a Study* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Third Edition, Third Impression 1986), pp. 31-2
11. Ibid. p.33
12. Ibid. p. 34
13. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri: Legend and a Symbol*, p. 794
14. A. B. Purani, *Sri Aurobindo's Savitri : An Approach and a Study*, p. 35
15. *Ibid.* P. 38
16. *K.D.Sethna*, *Sri Aurobindo—the Poet* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1970), p. 162
17. *Ibid.* p. 156
18. *Ibid.* p. 155
19. Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), p.192
20. M. P. Pandit, *Readings in Savitri* Vol.1 (Pondicherry : Dipti Publications, 1969), p.vii.
21. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo : A Biography and A History* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Fourth (Revised) Edition, 1985), p. 637
22. *Ibid.* p. 636
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.* p. 637
25. V . K . Gokak. *Sri Aurobindo, Seer and Poet* (New Delhi : Abhinav Duplication, 1973), p.6
26. *Ibid.* p. 20

27. Ibid. p. 21
28. Sisirkumar Ghose, *The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo : A Short Survey* (Calcutta : Chatuskone Private Ltd.. 1969), pp. 102-3
29. Ibid. p.106
30. Prema Nandakumar, *A Study of Savitr* (Pondicherry : All India Books, Second Printing, 1985), p. 405.
31. Ibid. p. 421
32. Mangesh Nadkarni. *Savitri : A Brief Introduction (Four Talks)* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Society, 1984). p. 5
33. Ibid. pp. 12-3
34. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, p.727
35. Quoted in Mangesh Nadkarni, *Savitri : A Brief Introduction (Four Talks)*, pp. 15-6.
36. V. Madhusudan Reddy, *Savitri : Epic of the Eternal* (Pondicherry : Aurodarshan Trust., 198-1).. pp. 5-6
37. Mona Sarkar, *Sweet Mother : Harmonies of Light* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram. 1978). pp.21-34
38. Ibid. p.21
39. Ibid . p. 32
40. Ibid. pp. 24-32
41. Ibid. p.22
42. Ibid. pp.21-2
43. Ibid. p.22
44. Ibid, pp.23-4



*THE CONCEPT OF
APOCALYPTIC
LITERATURE AND ITS
APPLICATION TO SAVITRI*



II CHAPTER

THE CONCEPT OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE AND ITS APPLICATION TO *SAVITRI*

The dictionary meanings of the term apocalyptic are : '1. of or like an apocalypse; affording a revelation or prophecy. 2.pertaining to the Apocalypse or biblical book of Revelations.'¹ Obviously, these meanings refer us to the term apocalypse for further elaboration. The meanings of 'apocalypse' as given in the dictionary are: '1. See Revelation of St. John the Divine. 2.any of a class of Jewish or Christian writings on divine revelation that appeared from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 350. 3 . revelation ; discovery; disclosure.'² Even these definitions once again refer us to "Revelation of St. John." The meaning of Revelation of St. John, as given in the dictionary is : 'the last book in the New Testament; the Apocalypse.'³ Now, the various dictionary meanings of the term "revelation" associated with St. John are : '1. the act of revealing or disclosing; disclosure. 2. something revealed or disclosed, esp. a striking disclosure, as of something not before realized. 3. *Theol.* a) God's disclosure of Himself and His

will to His creatures, b) an instance of such communication or disclosure, c) that which is disclosed, d) that which contains such disclosure, as the Bible'.⁴

These dictionary meanings of the terms "apocalypse" and "apocalyptic" no doubt, provide us with some clarification but not all. Therefore, for a far more adequate and helpful elaboration of any meaningful conceptual framework of "apocalyptic literature" we have to consult the various encyclopaedias. For example, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* has the following to say on the term "apocalyptic literature":

apocalyptic literature, literary genre that flourished from about 200 BC to about AD 200, especially in Judaism and Christianity. Written primarily to give hope to religious groups undergoing persecution or the stress of cultural upheavals, apocalypses (from the Greek apokalypsis: "revelation") describe in cryptic language, understood by believers, the sudden, dramatic intervention of God in history on behalf of the faithful elect. Accompanying or heralding God's dramatic intervention in human affairs will be cataclysmic events of cosmic proportions, such as a temporary rule of the world by Satan, signs in the heavens, persecutions, wars, famines, and plagues.

Although apocalyptic writers do examine the present, determining whether current afflictions are fulfillments of past apocalyptic prophecies, such writers generally concentrated on the future -on the future

overthrow of evil, on the coming of a messianic figure, and on the establishment of the Kingdom of God and of eternal peace and the righteousness. The wicked are described as consigned to hell and righteous or elect as reigning with God or a messiah in a renewed earth or heaven.

The Book of Daniel in the Old Testament and the Revelation to John in the New Testament represent apocalyptic writing, and several intertestamental books contain apocalyptic themes.

*Apocalyptic themes have been revived in modern literature and frequently appear in science fiction.*⁵

Continuing this very trend of giving a rather inclusive description of the various characteristics of "apocalyptic literature", *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987) includes one elaborate entry on "Apocalypse". Some portions of this article relevant to the purpose of this thesis are as follows:

APOCALYPSE. [*This entry consists of three articles, an introduction to the nature of apocalypse as a literary genre and two companion articles that discuss in greater depth the apocalyptic in Judaism: Jewish Apocalypticism to the Rabbinic Period and Medieval Jewish Apocalyptic Literature.*]

An Overview

Apocalypse, as the name of a literary genre, is derived from the Apocalypse of John, or Book of Revelation,

in the New Testament. The word itself means "revelation." but it is reserved for revelations of a particular kind: mysterious revelations that are mediated or explained by a supernatural figure, usually an angel. They disclose a transcendent world of supernatural powers and an eschatological scenario that includes the judgment of the dead.

The Book of Revelation (about 90 CE) is the earliest that calls itself an apocalypse (Rv.1:1), and even there the word may be meant in the general sense of "revelation." The usage as a genre label became common from the second century on, and numerous Christian compositions are so titled (e.g., the Apocalypse of Peter; the Apocalypse of Paul)... The title is found in some Jewish apocalypses from the late first century CE (e.g., 2 Baruch and 3 Baruch), but may have been added by later scribes. The ancient usage is not entirely reliable. The title was never added to some major apocalypses (e.g., those contained in / Enoch),..

The Jewish Apocalypses. *The genre is older than the title and is well attested in Judaism from the third century BCE on. The Jewish apocalypses are of two main types. The better known of these might be described as historical apocalypses. They are found in the Book of Daniel (the only apocalypse in the Hebrew scriptures), 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and some sections of 1 Enoch. In these apocalypses, the revelation is given in allegorical visions, interpreted by an*

angel. The content is primarily historical and is given in the form of an extended prophecy ... but the emphasis is on the replacement of the present world order by one that is radically new ... These apocalypses often had their origin in a historical crisis. The Book of Daniel and some sections of 1 Enoch were written in response to the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes... 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch were written in the aftermath of the war against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem.

The second type of Jewish apocalypse is the otherworldly journey. In the earliest example of this type, the " Book of the Watchers" in 1 Enoch (third century BCE), Enoch ascends to the presence of God, following which the angels take him on a tour that ranges over the whole earth to the ends of the universe. More characteristic of ., this type is the ascent of the visionary through a numbered series of heavens. [See Ascension.] The standard number was seven,... More mystical in orientation, these apocalypses often include a vision of the throne of God. The eschatology of these works is focused more on personal afterlife than on cosmic transformation, but they may also predict a general judgment.⁶

Origins of the Genre. The origins of this genre remain obscure. Descriptions of journeys to the heavens or the netherworld were fairly common in antiquity...⁷

The Genre in Christianity. The apocalyptic genre

declined in Judaism after the first century CE, although heavenly ascents continued to play an important part in the Jewish mystical tradition. By contrast, the genre flourished in Christianity. The Book of Revelation in the New Testament has its closest analogies with the Book of Daniel and the historical apocalypses... apocalypses of Peter, Paul, and others proliferated into the Middle Ages. The genre was also adapted by the gnostics... The gnostic apocalypses differ from Jewish and Christian ones in their emphasis on salvation in the present through gnosis, or saving knowledge...

*The mystically oriented ascent-type apocalypse continued to exist in Christianity quite apart from gnosticism and left an imprint on world literature in Dante's *Commedia*. The historical apocalypticism of the Middle Ages was more widely influential. A crucial figure here was Joachim of Fiore, a twelfth-century abbot who looked for a new age of the Holy Spirit, to be ushered in by the defeat of the Antichrist. Historical apocalypticism merges easily into millenarianism, where the emphasis is less on supernatural revelation than on the coming Utopian age.*

Other Usage. *Some scholars apply the terms apocalypse and apocalypticism to the study of millenarian and eschatological thought in various cultures... The modern colloquial use of the word apocalypse to denote a*

*catastrophic disaster retains one motif associated with the word in antiquity, but loses the context of revelation that was decisive for the original meaning of the word.*⁸

Jewish Apocalypticism to the Rabbinic Period

Although scholars have found it extremely difficult to reach consensus with regard to the question of the point of view that will render a clear and overall definition of the term apocalypticism, it is safe to say that the term can be applied to a group of writings that pertain to the revelations (The Greek term apokalupsis means "revelation") of divine cosmological and historical secrets. These writings were composed ... from the fourth century BCE onward. The history of apocalypticism can be divided into the following parts: (1) Jewish apocalypticism until the institutionalization of rabbinic Judaism (about 100 CE); (2) Jewish apocalypticism in the Mishnaic and Talmudic period until the Islamic rise and conquest of the Orient (from C.100 to 600 CE); (3) Christian and gnostic apocalypticism in the early centuries of the common era; (4) medieval Jewish and Christian apocalypticism (from the early days of Islam until the thirteenth century); and (5) apocalypticism from the thirteenth century onward. For the sake of brevity, the focus of discussion here will be on the first type of apocalypticism. It is here that the major features and

characteristics of apocalypticism have been shaped, although later types of apocalypticism have developed several new qualities.

The point of view in this discussion of apocalypticism is that of scripture. Since scripture, in its variety of books and views, shaped the Jewish mind and world view in antiquity, any religious corpus of writings that was created in subsequent generations annexed itself to scripture and sought scripturelike authority...

Apocalypticism is gradually shifting from the back-stage position it so often used to occupy in scholarship to the front of the stage. Scholars have become increasingly aware of the importance of apocalypticism for a better understanding of certain concepts and religious positions maintained in the Hebrew scriptures, for a more profound evaluation of certain historical and ideological processes in the so-called intertestamental period; ... and for a deeper comprehension of the rise of Christianity and gnosticism.

Apocalypticism is first of all a series of writings bearing special literary qualities, but it is also a religious point of view. In recent years it has become customary to speak of apocalypticism in terms of a literary genre. However, curiously enough, the more attention scholars give to the subject the more difficult it becomes for them to gain an overall picture and characterization of the

phenomenon... it is in the context of the scriptural world, in the widest sense of the term, that apocalypticism is best understood and most adequately evaluated...⁹

Major Features of Apocalypticism: *Although the scope of apocalyptic writings is not great, it is a highly complex corpus of writings with some rather idiosyncratic features. The major difficulty in any attempt to draw the features of apocalypticism is its close resemblance to scripture. But... the only way to do justice to apocalypticism is by realizing the novelty of the positions taken compared to the point of view of scripture. There are several components that are totally absent from scripture but definitely present in apocalypticism. Focusing on those components is vital for defining the origins of apocalypticism...*

There are three subjects the concentration upon which here will most clearly bring out the major features of apocalypticism. These are the two concepts of vision and knowledge and the new modes of dualistic thinking that developed in the framework of apocalypticism. Although one could with equal justice refer to other components in apocalypticism that were operative in singling it out in comparison to scripture—such as apocalyptic angelology and the periodization of history—the three components referred to above seem to be of major importance...¹⁰

Vision and Knowledge.... *Several apocalyptic writings contain descriptions of visions experienced in*

heaven by visionaries who have been translated up to heaven in order to gain firsthand information of the heavenly domains and of the return to earth of those visionaries in order to report their experiences. Such heavenly or otherworldly journeys are reported in the cases of the apocalyptic visionaries whose literary names are " Abraham," " Isaiah," " Zephaniah," and in the " testaments" attributed to Abraham. . . , Levi . . . and Jacob; in the Christian apocalypses, the Revelation to John and the Apocalypse of Paul; and in several gnostic writings, such as the Paraphrase of Shem (the list is by no means exhaustive). It is important to notice in this connection that early Jewish apocalypticism does not contain visions of the under world.

A later development of apocalypticism can be found in the *heikhalot* (" heavenly palaces") literature, which incorporates the writings of Jewish mystics of the Talmudic period and also contains descriptions of heavenly ascensions. The *heikhalot* writings are of utmost importance to the student of apocalypticism not only because they reflect the on going process of apocalyptic activity but also from another point of view: they contain detailed descriptions of the practices—magical (or theurgic) and ascetic—that the mystics have to apply as preparatory techniques for achieving heavenly ascents. In addition to that, these writings specify the measures one has to take during those ascensions to protect oneself from all the dangers lying in

wait. The basic assumption here is that people who undergo such experiences are exposed to all kinds of physical and psychic risks, such as hostile angels, destructive (supersonic?) voices, and psychic breakdowns. It is therefore of utmost importance to be well prepared for that heavenly journey and to observe all kinds of rules and regulations in the course of it. The main idea here is that the soul of man, as well as his body (both externally and internally), has to be ritually cleansed before entering the heavenly domains...

From the religio-phenomenological point of view, the type of revelation that entails a heavenly journey is of utmost importance ... People are always interested in what the heavens, or outer space, look like, in what they contain, and in how atmospheric, astronomical, and meteorological changes come about. In the scriptural worldview man is conceived of as a remote observer of those matters... In this respect matters changed radically in the framework of apocalypticism: with ascensions in the center of its experiential core, apocalypticism revolutionized the scriptural worldview. Most heavenly ascents in apocalypticism entailed a vision of the godhead seated on his throne of glory in the heavenly throne room, surrounded by hosts of angels... These visions of the divine throne room may be classified as the mystical core of apocalypticism: they point to a new direction in the manner in which God is

revealed to man. While in scripture God reveals himself in an earthly environment, ... in apocalypticism the visionary sees himself as being transferred to heaven so as to see God there. An ascent that is undertaken as a private initiative ... is principally a mystical experience. In scriptural prophecy, however, the experience of the prophet does not allow for an ascent; consequently, God is conceived as himself descending to terrestrial domains.

...Apocalypticism, rather than being a literary epigone of scriptural prophecy and wisdom literature, displays a religious temperament that not only has its own interesting literary qualities but also engenders original forms of religious experiences and thinking that result in the attainment of new modes of cognition.

The kind of knowledge displayed in apocalypticism is a total reversal of the kind of knowledge known from scripture...

Apocalypticism is almost by definition preoccupied with the revelation of secret knowledge. " Secret Knowledge" means any kind of knowledge that was not accessible to people who had previously been dependent for its acquisition on scripture and on the modes of cognition presupposed therein, including prophecy and inspired wisdom... Thus, the ultimate knowledge of nature, ... reaches its highest degree in apocalypticism when it comes in the form of either heavenly ascents or the revelation granted to

visionaries through the mediation of angels.

But the knowledge of nature is not the only area in which apocalypticism was alleged to offer a more profound understanding than scripture. Another such area is the knowledge of history and the awareness of its undercurrents, which link together events from the creation of the world to the final acts of redemption so as to become a coherent whole in which the purposeful direction of God becomes manifest... Once again, the apocalyptic milieu facilitates a new kind of knowledge. That which had purposefully been hidden away in scripture, in particular in regard to the unfolding of the divine plan in history, became known through apocalyptic activity. In other words, the esoteric attitude maintained in apocalypticism toward scripture entailed an expectation to receive additional stages of revelation, that allegedly had been hidden away even from the scriptural writers themselves.

Dualism. *Another major aspect of the radical break of apocalypticism with scripture is the apocalyptic concept of dualism. Briefly, good and evil as conceived of in scripture are two ways of life (Dt. 30:15). They relate to the moral choice that confronts man in his daily behaviour. In scripture, evil as such is no independent metaphysical entity. Even Satan, as he is conceived of in scripture, is not the rebellious, mythical figure he becomes in apocalypticism ... In apocalypticism, on the other hand, we find a clear*

dualistic outlook. In fact, there are two types of dualism in apocalypticism. The first is more mythological in nature and we find it, for instance, in the Enoch cycle (and most specifically in the first part of 1 Enoch), where a rebellious group of angels led by Satan challenges the supremacy of God...

Another type of dualism is found in the Qumran writings,... The theory expounded there tells of how God divided dominion over this world between the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness. The chosen Sons of Light are under the dominion of the former, while the rest of mankind, particularly the wicked Sons of Darkness, are under the rule of the latter. The role of the Angel of Darkness,... is to tempt the Sons of Darkness into wickedness and evil doing and thus bring destruction upon them. This schematic theory has a more metaphysical quality than in the case of the first type of dualism. In both cases, however, we find that the dualism maintained is of a rather moderate nature: God is in control of events. In 1 Enoch the rebellious angels are punished and kept in a desolate place until the days of the final salvation, and in the Qumran writings the theory is that the Angel of Darkness and all of his forces will be destroyed before the eschatological salvation of the Sons of Light. This moderate type of dualism should be compared with the gnostic type of dualism,... This gnostic dualism is much more radical in its outlook than its counterparts in

*apocalypticism. When compared to scripture, apocalyptic dualism is much more outspoken and sharply phrased than the good-evil dichotomy in scripture.*¹¹

Medieval Jewish Apocalyptic Literature

From a literary point of view, the apocalyptic treatises are, like their themes, extravagant. They revel in fantastic descriptions of their heroes and antiheroes, richly narrating the events that they reveal, and often regard their protagonists as symbols for the cosmic forces of good and evil. Another feature of apocalyptic literature is its revelatory character; knowledge of heavenly secrets and mysteries not attainable through ordinary means are revealed, . . .¹²

These rather exhaustive extracts selected and quoted from the two encyclopaedias enable us to identify the various essential features of apocalyptic literature.

The quotation from *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* highlights the following as conceptual features of apocalyptic literature as a genre :

1. Apocalyptic literature is religious since it is 'written primarily to give hope to' 'religious groups' of 'believers' 'undergoing persecution or the stress of cultural upheavals'. It is understood by believers and accepted uncritically.
2. It effects "disclosure", "unveiling", or "uncovering"

by describing 'the intervention of God in history,' 'the inbreaking of God in human affairs'. This in turn, would render apocalyptic literature not merely religious but also occult, mystical, prophetic and vision like.

3. It employs 'cryptic language' which is nevertheless 'understood by believers'.
4. It presents 'current afflictions' but generally concentrates on 'themes such as the future overthrow of evil, the coming of messianic (salvatory) figure' 'and the establishment of the Kingdom of God and eternal peace and righteousness', 'a renewed earth or heaven'.
5. While doing so, apocalyptic writings also present 'cataclysmic events of cosmic proportions, such as a temporary rule of the world by Evil' 'and demonic spirits, signs in the heavens', etc.
6. Apocalyptic literature is symbolic, allegorical or metaphoric in its presentation of the struggle between Good and Evil. In the course of such presentation, it creates its own myths and mythology, and mythical or mythological characters identified by believers as meaningful.
7. Apocalyptic literature shows the wicked as punished and the righteous as saved and rewarded. Thereby it seeks to assert the fulfilment of preordained divine

purpose or divine justice.

In the same manner, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* also emphasises numerous generic qualities of apocalyptic literature such as the following:

1. Apocalypse (as applied to the *Book of Revelation*) means in the general sense "revelation".
2. Apocalyptic literature envisages the end of the world.
3. It presents the leading characters in it as persons undertaking otherworldly journeys and ascending to the presence of God. Such ascents are 'mystically oriented'.
4. Apocalyptic literature lays 'emphasis on salvation' of humankind 'in the present through *gnôsis*, or saving knowledge'.
5. 'The revelations' made by apocalyptic literature are 'of divine cosmological and historical significance.' Apocalypticism offers "secret knowledge" in the areas of Nature and history and its undercurrents, 'which link together events from the creation of the world to the final acts of redemption so as to become a coherent whole in which the purposeful direction of God becomes manifest' and 'the secret ways of God and his ultimate plan with regard to the history

of his people' are revealed.

6. "Apocalypticism is best understood and most adequately evaluated" in the context of the scriptural world in the widest sense of the term', because it has 'close resemblance to scripture.'
7. 'Apocalyptic writings contain descriptions of visions experienced in heaven by visionaries who have been translated up to heaven in order to gain firsthand information of the heavenly domains and of the return to earth of those visionaries'.
8. Apocalyptic literature states 'that people who undergo such experiences are exposed to all kinds of physical and psychic risks, such as hostile angels, destructive (supersonic?) voices, and psychic breakdowns.' Therefore, they are 'well prepared for that heavenly journey and' 'observe all kinds of rules and regulations in the course of it. The main idea here is that the soul of man, as well as his body (both externally and internally), has to be ritually cleansed before entering the heavenly domains.' In this way, it 'is of utmost importance' that 'the type of revelation' made in apocalyptic literature 'entails a heavenly journey'.
9. The 'heavenly ascents in apocalypticism' entail 'a vision of the godhead seated on his throne of glory in

the heavenly throne room'.

10. Apocalyptic literature 'displays a religious temperament that not only has its own interesting literary qualities but also engenders original forms of religious experiences and thinking that result in the attainment of new modes of cognition.'
11. Apocalyptic literature is characterised by 'the apocalyptic concept of dualism' regarding 'good and evil.
12. This 'apocalyptic dualism is much more outspoken and sharply phrased' in apocalyptic literature 'than the good-evil' dichotomy in scripture.'

The seven characteristics emerging from *the New Encyclopaedia Britannica* can be easily discerned in *Savitri*. Both as "A Legend" and "A Symbol" Sri Aurobindo's poem is 'religious'. He himself makes it obvious in "The Tale of Satyavan and Savitri" by saying that -

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of

*spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life.*¹³

Needless to say, both the Veda and the Mahabharata (mentioned by Sri Aurobindo) are part of the sacred writings of India. In this sense they are religious. Since Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is based on them it is, as apocalyptic literature, 'religious', 'written primarily to give hope to 'religious groups' of 'believers' 'undergoing persecution or the stress of cultural upheavals'. As "A Talk of the Mother on *Savitri*" makes it abundantly clear, Sri Aurobindo's poem is meant for the 'believers' in him and his teachings as well as in the Mother and her teachings. The reading of *Savitri* gives to these devotees and followers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother infinite 'hope', solace and succour. It is understood by them and accepted uncritically as demonstrated by the quotations furnished in Chapter I from the critical observations made by various scholars and readers of *Savitri*.

Secondly, as apocalyptic literature, *Savitri* effects "disclosure". "unveiling", or "uncovering" by describing 'the intervention of God in history', 'the inbreaking of God in human affairs'. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy revealing the apocalyptic nature of the whole universe by means of the primordial *Sachchidananda* and its involution and evolution from the Inconscient to the Superconscient is nothing but an occult, mystical, prophetic and visionlike description of 'the intervention of God in history', 'the inbreaking of God in human affairs'.

As far as the 'cryptic language' in which apocalyptic literature is written is concerned, it is the experience of numberless common readers of *Savitri* that its language is extremely difficult, almost beyond comprehension. Yet, it is 'understood by believers' in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and their teachings.

Savitri deals with 'current afflictions' in the form of the problem of pain, suffering, misery and death inflicted on humankind as a whole. It deals with the problem of all such evil and concentrates on 'the future overthrow' of all evil in the form of pain, suffering and death when human beings consciously participate in Nature's preordained ascent from the Inconscient to the Superconscient through Matter, Life, Mind, Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind and Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo has introduced the character of Savitri as 'a messianic (salvatory) figure", as an *Avatār*, in fact, the

only feminine *Avatār* in the world"¹⁴ as the heroine of his epic. Departing from the original story in the Mahabharata, Sri Aurobindo has conceived and introduced Savitri in his poem as the very Divine World Mother descended into earth-consciousness for the purpose of 'the future overthrow of evil' and for 'the establishment of the Kingdom God' in the form of the Divine Life or the Supramentalised Life and 'eternal peace and righteousness', an entirely 'renewed earth'.

By way of 'cataclysmic events of cosmic proportions, such as a temporary rule of the world by Evil' 'and demonic spirit, signs in the heavens', etc., Sri Aurobindo has introduced in *Savitri* terrifying events, scenes and characters in several Cantos, notably in Book Two, Canto VII: "The Descent Into Night" and Canto VIII: "The World of Falsehood, The Mother of Evil and the Sons of Darkness".

Savitri is a symbolic, allegorical and metaphoric presentation of the struggle between good and evil represented by the Inconscient (Ignorance or *Avidya*) and the Superconscient (Knowledge or *Vidya*) which forms are assumed by *Sachchidananda* for its delightful play (*Lila*) in the form of Involution-Evolution of Consciousness. In dealing with all these themes *Savitri*, like all apocalyptic literature, operates within the scope of its own myths and mythology and mythical and mythological characters

introduced throughout the poem. Note, for example, 'A dwarf three-bodied trinity' (Thought, Intelligence and Reason) introduced in Book Two, Canto X¹⁵ and 'The Triple Soul-Forces' of Savitri consisting of the three Madonnas with their respective attendants ('The Mother of the seven sorrows' or 'Madonna of suffering, Mother of grief divine,' 'the Mother of Might and 'Madonna of Light, Mother of joy and peace') introduced in Book Seven, Canto IV.¹⁶

By way of asserting the fulfilment of preordained divine purpose and divine justice, *Savitri* as apocalyptic literature introduces the idea of the salvation of the whole cosmos" by means of a cosmic transformation of Inconscience into Superconscience which would establish on earth Life Divine putting an end to all pain, suffering, evil, unrighteousness and wickedness.

It needs to be noted here, however, that for the purpose of satisfying the fourth and the seventh characteristics mentioned above *Savitri* makes use of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Yoga propounded systematically in his epoch-making prose work, *The Life Divine*. (A gist of this philosophical and spiritual basis of *Savitri* will be furnished in the next Chapter: "The Spiritual Basis of *Savitri* as an Indian Illustration of Apocalyptic Literature".)

Equally adequately, *Savitri* fulfils the twelve characteristic requirements of apocalyptic literature

extracted from *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. However, quite a few of the twelve characteristics are common to the entries in both the encyclopaedias.

For example, the first feature mentioned in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* deals with the characteristic of apocalypse as a term meaning "revelation".

The second feature mentioned in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* is similarly common: it says that apocalyptic literature envisages the end of the world. As we have just seen, *Savitri* satisfies this characteristic by introducing the idea of the transformation of the earthly life into the Life Divine thereby putting an end to the world as it is now.

The third feature of apocalyptic literature mentioned in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, however, is new. (It points out that apocalyptic literature presents persons undertaking otherworldly journeys and ascending to the presence of God.) Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* fulfils this requirement by presenting not only the central character of Savitri but also her human father, Aswapathy, as undertaking otherworldly journeys and ascending (or descending inwardly) to the presence of the Divine Mother and 'The Calm immortal' in various ways. Aswapathy, for example, undertakes heavenly journeys first as "The Traveller of the Worlds" in the whole of Book Two, and then ascends to the presence of "The Divine Mother" in Book Three. Savitri, likewise, undertakes an inward journey into the realms of her inner

being in search of her soul. She is presented as launching herself upon this inward journey in Book Seven, Canto III: "The Entry into the Inner Countries". This journey of hers concludes in Book Seven, Canto V: "The Finding of the Soul".¹⁷ Of course, Savitri's journey into the Inner Countries of her being and the journeys Aswapathy undertakes both as the Traveller of the Worlds and as the adorer and seeker of the Divine World Mother are inward Journeys and not outward ascents to heaven and to the presence of God. There is this variation in the journey motif in *Savitri* because, after all, it is an Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature though undoubtedly apocalyptic through and through. At the same time, however, this Indian specimen fulfils the Western requirement by introducing another type of journey in the case of Savitri which is outward. In the middle of Canto I: "Towards the Black Void" of Book Nine¹⁸ she is presented as travelling 'in her lover's steps,... Into the perilous silences beyond', the various parts of the vast kingdom of Death. This is a clearly outward ascent and lasts until the end of Book Ten of the poem.¹⁹ More significantly, she is presented as going through still more obviously outward ascents into the higher and highest parts of the Realms of the Supreme (God) in Book Eleven which consists of only one canto, viz., Canto I: "The Eternal Day: The Soul's Choice and the Supreme Consummation"²⁰ it is important to note that in this context she, the heroine of the apocalyptic poem, is in

the very presence of God (the Supreme) in His Eternal Abode at the highest heights of the celestial worlds.²¹ Therefore, like Aswapathy's contact with the Divine Mother, Savitri's arrival in the presence of the Supreme satisfies the third characteristic regarding the otherworldly journeys mentioned in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* as a characteristic feature of apocalyptic literature. All the otherworldly journeys and ascents of Aswapathy and Savitri are 'mystically oriented' as required by *The Encyclopedia*.

The next characteristic is regarding 'emphasis on salvation of humankind in the present through *gnôsis* or saving knowledge'. *Savitri* satisfies this requirement in ample measure by emphasising the importance of the 'adventure of consciousness' to be undertaken by each and every human being in order to collaborate with Nature who is carrying on her evolutionary ascent from the Inconscient to the Supersonscent. As has been rightly pointed out, 'According to Aurobindo's theory of cosmic salvation, . . . enlightenment comes to man from above (thesis), while the spiritual mind (supermind) of man strives through yogic illumination to reach upward from below (antithesis). As a result, 'a gnostic individual is created (synthesis).' The gnostic individual... eventually 'leads to the freeing of the individual from the bonds of individuality and, ... all mankind will eventually achieve *moksha* (liberation).'²² This theory of salvation of humankind through *gnôsis* is elaborately expounded as a philosophical system in Sri

Aurobindo's prose work, *The Life Divine*, no doubt. But *Savitri* is nothing but a supremely poetic presentation of the same spiritual system of philosophy emphasising the importance of acquisition of '*gnôsis* or saving knowledge' by means of Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo's emphasis on salvation by saving knowledge is further indicated in the case of Aswapathy's Yoga - "The Yoga of the King" - which includes the attainment of "The Secret Knowledge" to which the whole of Canto IV of Book One of *Savitri* is devoted.²³ This knowledge enabled Aswapathy to develop his ordinary mental consciousness into the Supramental consciousness which endowed him with the ability to ascend to the presence of the Divine Mother in Her Heavenly Abode. Similarly, Savitri also is required to attain to Supramental *gnôsis* in order to be able to find out her own soul which was attended by the supreme 'being' who 'stood immortal in transience,/ Deathless dallying with momentary things,' 'Comrade of the universe, the Transcendent's ray'. The apocalyptically perfect and effective quality of the saving knowledge acquired by Aswapathy and Savitri is convincingly brought out through Aswapathy's appeal to the Divine Mother²⁴ and through all the dialogue of Savitri with Death²⁵ as well as in her glorious encounter with the Supreme.²⁶

The fifth characteristic of apocalyptic literature, according to *The Encyclopedia of Religion* stipulates that the revelations made by it should be of divine cosmological

and historical significance and should offer secret knowledge in the areas of Nature and history and its undercurrents 'which link together events from the creation of the world to the final acts of redemption so as to become a coherent whole in which the purposeful direction of God becomes manifest' and 'the secret ways of God, and his ultimate plan with regard to the history of his people' are revealed. As the Mother's "Talk on *Savitri*" explains, this requirement is also fully satisfied by Sri Aurobindo in his poem. *Savitri* presents in a mystical manner the whole history of the universe including the history of the evolution. Encyclopedic knowledge has gone into the composition of the poem. In the result, *Savitri* has become all-inclusive. In his systematic and over-elaborate explorations of the various worlds through which Aswapathy, the Traveller of the Worlds, moves, as also in Savitri's finding of her soul and her ascent first into the kingdom of Death and then into the transcendental realms of the Supreme, Sri Aurobindo has endowed all his apocalyptic revelations with the required 'divine cosmological and historical significance'. Almost in each one of the forty-nine cantos of his epic, he continually goes on explicating the significance of 'Nature and history and its undercurrents', 'which link together events from the creation of the world to the final acts of redemption' of the whole cosmos in the form of the Life Divine. All these accounts of Sri Aurobindo clearly 'become a coherent whole

in which the purposeful direction of God becomes manifest', 'the secret ways of God and his ultimate plan with regard to the history of his people' are revealed.

In the words of the Mother, as we have seen, '*Savitri*... is the supreme knowledge above all human philosophies and religions. It is the spiritual path, it is Yoga, Tapasya, Sadhana everything'; 'it is of immense value--spiritual value and all other values; it is eternal in its subject, and infinite in its appeal, miraculous in its mode and power of execution;' 'it is a quest of the Infinite, The Eternal.' Others also have noted *Savitri's* 'close resemblance to scripture'. For example, it is rightly observed that '*Savitri* realises' the 'secret truth of the Upanishads for the earth, by transforming' its heroine 'into the golden bride of God through an act of Grace.'¹²⁷ It is an epic of affirmative spirituality with the descent of the Divine as its oft-repeated refrain. Its objective is not *nirvana* or *kaivalya* or *moksha* or any particular brand of *mukti* or bliss of Brahman: it is the fulfilment of the very heavens upon the earth.¹²⁸ 'In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo presents a synthetic and integral vision of the essentials of yogic and religious realisations of the world.'¹²⁹ What is more, 'there is a spiritual affinity between the poetical expression of the *Veda* and that of *Savitri* ... the subject-matter of *Savitri* has an affinity with the subject-matter of the *Veda* ... The vision of *Savitri* is surcharged with a constant play of the light of inspiration and revelation from

which the *Vedic* seers received their hymns'.³⁰ Most importantly, Sri Aurobindo himself has called attention to the close affinity between his poem and 'the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle' in his note on "The Tale of Satyavan and Savitri" which has already been quoted in full. These observations are just a few of innumerable similar observations made by many other scholars, critics, readers and admirers of *Savitri*. As is clear from their tone, these observations go to prove that as apocalyptic literature *Savitri* bears a 'close resemblance to scripture' as required by *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Needless to add that the 'apocalypticism' of *Savitri* 'is best understood and most adequately evaluated' 'in the context of the scriptural world in the widest sense of the term'. The only point to be emphasised in this context is *Savitri*'s 'close resemblance' is to the scripture and scriptural writings of India. But this is as it should be. After all, *Savitri* is an Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature. In this way, it satisfies the sixth characteristic extracted from *The Encyclopedia of Religion*

Savitri fulfils quite adequately the seventh characteristic of apocalyptic writings since it contains in abundance 'descriptions of visions experienced in heaven by visionaries who have been translated up to heaven in order to gain firsthand information of the heavenly domains and of the return to earth of these visionaries'. The Aurobindonian (and therefore Indian) equivalents of such 'descriptions of

visions experienced' 'by visionaries' are contained (1) in the whole of Book Two of *Savitri*; (2) in Book Three, Canto II: "The Adoration of the Divine Mother" and Canto IV : "The Vision and the Boon" ; (3) in Book Four, Canto IV: "The Call to the Quest"; (4) in the first six Cantos of Book Seven; (5) in the whole of Book Nine; (6) in all the four Cantos of Book Ten; and (7) in Book Eleven. The 'descriptions of visions' presented in these parts of *Savitri* may not be those which are 'experienced in heaven' only. They include visions experienced in heaven as well as visions experienced in other realms, external like the various parts of the Kingdom of Death and the vast Infinity of the Supreme. But they go to show that *Savitri* does contain 'descriptions of visions'.

Both Aswapathy and Savitri as 'people who undergo' occult and mystical 'experiences' are presented by Sri Aurobindo as persons 'exposed to all kinds of physical and psychic risks, such as hostile angels, destructive (supersonic?) voices, and psychic breakdowns.' In his account of Aswapathy's experiences as "The Traveller of the Worlds", Sri Aurobindo shows the various 'kinds of physical and psychic risks, such as hostile angels, destructive (supersonic?) voices, and psychic breakdown.' In his account of Aswapathy's experiences as "The Traveller of the Worlds" Sri Aurobindo shows the various 'kinds of physical and psychic risks' to which Aswapathy is exposed. Particularly in Canto VII: "The Descent into Night" and Canto VIII: "The World of Falsehood, the Mother of Evil

and the Sons of Darkness" of Book Two Aswapathy faces 'hostile angels, destructive... voices, and psychic breakdowns.' Similarly, Savitri is exposed to 'physical and psychic risks' first in her search for her soul described in Book Seven, Canto II, Canto III, Canto IV and Canto V, and then again in all her experiences in the company of Death described in Book Nine and Book Ten as a whole. In addition to these 'physical and psychic risks' in facing 'hostile angels.' she also hears, from time to time, 'destructive (supersonic?)voices', as in Book Seven, Canto I, Canto II, Canto III and Canto VI.

But both Aswapathy and Savitri are 'well prepared' for their respective journeys and observe all kinds of rules and regulations in the course of them, so that they ultimately remain unharmed. As characters presented in apocalyptic literature they thus fulfil 'the main idea ... that the soul of man, as well as his body (both externally and internally), has to be ritually cleansed before entering the heavenly domains.' All this proves that *Savitri* satisfies the eighth characteristic of apocalyptic literature (emerging from the entry in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*) as adequately as it does the other characteristics.

The ninth characteristic stipulates that the 'heavenly ascents in apocalypticism' entail 'a vision of the godhead seated on his throne of glory in the heavenly throne room'. *Savitri* fulfils this requirement but in a modified form. Both Aswapathy and Savitri, as characters in apocalyptic

literature, achieve, "a vision of the godhead'. In Book Three, Canto II and Canto IV, Aswapathy is granted 'a vision of the godhead' in the form of the Divine Mother. But the godhead is not 'seated. . . in the heavenly throne room' . Similarly, Savitri comes face to face with the Supreme as 'the godhead' in Book Eleven : "The Book of Everlasting Day". But the Supreme, again, is not 'seated on his throne of glory in the heavenly throne room'. Savitri's 'vision of the godhead' takes place in several parts of the Supreme's Infinity which is transcendental. In this way, the 'vision of the godhead' granted to Aswapathy and Savitri is different but only slightly. The difference does not affect the fundamental requirement regarding 'a vision of the godhead'.

Savitri can be described as pre-eminent in fulfilling the tenth requirement of apocalyptic literature for, as numerous scholars and critics have repeatedly pointed out, *Savitri* 'displays a religious temperament that not only has its own interesting qualities but also engenders original forms of religious experiences and thinking that result in the attainment of new modes of cognition.' once again, the Mother's unforgettable pronouncements on *Savitri* in her "Talk" become relevant here. The Mother lays bare the all-inclusive nature of *Savitri's* religious temperament in such utterances as those quoted in Chapter I. The utterances selected from "A Talk of the Mother on *Savitri*" abundantly prove that as apocalyptic literature *Savitri* 'displays a

religious temperament that not only has its own interesting literary qualities but also engenders original forms of religious experiences and thinking that result in the attainment of new modes of cognition.' The 'new modes of cognition' emerging from *Savitri* are as much from the spheres of 'mysticism, occultism, philosophy, the history of man, the history of the gods and the history of creation, as from the areas of the latest theories of Emergent Evolution and the accounts of the origin of the universe propounded by the most modern scientists in the twentieth century. With regard to the 'interesting literary qualities', 'original forms of religious experiences and thinking' and 'new modes of cognition', it is rightly observed that:

The most outstanding power of Savitri as poetry is its power of Truth, its Light of Knowledge...for the poet does not speak from the ground of mind nor does he primarily deal with what is understood as " thought" ... This is not to say that there is no thought element in Savitri only the thought is not analytical or even imaginative mental stuff but is present in compressed form,... the form of condensed light of Truth which can reveal or cast its light upon various lines or masses of thought. . . This concentrated expression when taken up by the mind goes on revealing and suggesting chains or lines of "thought concerning not only the particular field covered by the Vision but various other fields of knowledge, sometimes covering the whole of life. The

*expression and the words when taken up by the mind do not end by yielding an intellectual sense only, but go on reverberating in the mind, sinking and coming to the surface with a wealth of suggestions that are like overtones in a rich musical note, ..*³¹

As apocalyptic literature characterised by 'the ... concept of dualism' regarding 'good and evil', Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is distinctly Indian. In the *Veda* which is simultaneously scripture and apocalyptic literature, the dualism regarding good and evil is expressed in terms of *Vidya* and *Avidya*, i.e., Knowledge (Gnosis) and Ignorance. *Vidya* and *Avidya*, however, are, in the concept of the *Veda*, both contradictory and complementary at one and the same time. The dualism between them is quite pronounced as they represent respectively the Superconscient and the Inconscient. They are not merely complementary but, at the highest level, identical with each other in being manifestations of *Sachchidananda*. In its Involution-Evolution, *Sachchidananda* assumes the form of Inconscience. But it assumes this form not in order to continue as entirely contradictory to Superconscience. On the contrary, *Sachchidananda* becomes the Inconscient in order to undertake 'the adventure of consciousness' through evolution with a view to reassuming its original status of *Sachchidananda*. As repeatedly pointed out, after its involution into the Inconscient, *Sachchidananda* goes on evolving from the Inconscient (or Nescient) into the Subconscient, from the Subconscient into the Physical

(Matter), from the Physical into the Vital (Life), from the Vital into the Mental (Mind) and then progressively into the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Overmind and the Supermind. At this level of its evolution, *Sachchidananda* as the Inconscient fully evolves into a status capable of ultimately transforming itself back into itself. In this way, the dualism between the Inconscient and the Superconscient (the equivalents of 'evil' and 'good' in Sri Aurobindo) is quite sharp and seemingly irreconcilable until *Sachchidananda* or Divine Consciousness reaches its evolution from the Inconscient to the higher levels of the Mind. When the evolution is complete, however, the so-called dualism between the Inconscient (evil) and the Superconscient (good) turns into complete and integral identity of the two. This, in fact is the 'dialectics' of Sri Aurobindo's system of the Integral philosophy elaborately propounded in *The Life Divine* and apocalyptically introduced into the supremely poetic form of *Savitri*. Nevertheless the opposition between the Inconscient and the Superconscient at the beginning of evolution satisfies the requirement regarding "good and evil" as 'the apocalyptic concept of dualism'.

Lastly, this 'apocalyptic dualism is much more outspoken and sharply phrased' in *Savitri*, the Indian specimen of twentieth century apocalyptic literature, 'than the good-evil dichotomy in scripture', in the form of the Indian *Puranas* for example.

This is best illustrated in Book Nine and Book Ten in which Sri Aurobindo introduces Death as an apocalyptic character trying to prevail against Savitri who stands for and demands immortality.

This twelfth characteristic of apocalyptic literature laid down in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, however, is not entirely satisfactorily fulfilled by Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. The reason for this is simple. *Savitri* is an Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature largely based on the ancient Indian apocalyptic writings such as the *Veda* and the *Upanishads*. As already seen, in all these examples of Indian apocalyptic literature, the concepts of *Vidya* and *Avidya* play an important role. The dichotomy or 'dualism' between evil and good prevails only until Consciousness in the form of *Avidya* finally succeeds in transforming itself into *Vidya* through the evolutionary means. Since Sri Aurobindo introduces in *Savitri* not only the essence of the apocalypticism of the *Veda* and the *Upanishads* but also the essence of the entire corpus of writings on Emergent Evolution produced all over the world in the twentieth century, *Savitri* becomes simultaneously an Indian specimen as well as a universal specimen of twentieth century apocalyptic literature. **Its dialectical synthesis is that when the Divine Consciousness, *Sachchidananda* descends, an evolving Consciousness ascends from its Inconscient plane so as to achieve union with the descending *Sachchidananda*, the dualism or dichotomy**

between *Vidya* and *Avidya* ceases to be and the Gnostic Man emerges to bring about cosmic emancipation.

The foregoing analysis of the seven features of apocalyptic literature extracted from *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* as also the twelve characteristic features taken from *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, and their applications to *Savitri* as a frame of reference emphasises two important points: (1) the generic features of apocalyptic literature are, no doubt, numerous; but (2) the one most predominant and fundamental feature is that apocalyptic literature is a "revelation", "unveiling", "disclosure", "unfolding" of the mystery and meaning of the various aspects of life both as it is at present and as it is going to be in the future. For the purpose of this thesis, therefore, it will be most fruitful and meaningful to exclusively dwell upon the characteristic of *Savitri* as apocalyptic literature unravelling the occult, mystical, spiritual as well as scientific "unveiling", "disclosure" and "revelation". Such revelations made in *Savitri* can be variously classified since this supreme poem of Sri Aurobindo is so all-inclusive that everyone of its aspects cannot be covered in any exposition, however exhaustive it tries to be. Secondly, all revelatory features of *Savitri* cannot be understood by the human mind at the present juncture. To remind ourselves once again, of the Mother's "Talk", *Savitri* is apocalyptic literature more of the future than of the present. As such, greater and more significant aspects of the epic

are going to be unravelled in the future. In view of this, it is the purpose of this thesis to restrict itself to the revelatory nature of *Savitri* only in the following areas :

1. The Revelatory Nature of Human Life recorded in *Savitri*;
2. The Mystery of Man and Apocalyptic Nature of his Being;
3. The Apocalyptic Aspects of Consciousness on the Physical Plane of Existence;
4. Unveiling of the Mystery of Consciousness on the Vital Plane;
5. The Mental Plane of Consciousness and its Apocalyptic Qualities
6. The Hidden Meaning of Consciousness on Levels beyond the Surface Mental Plane : the Higher Mental Plane, the Illumined Mental Plane, the Plane of Intuition, the Overmental Plane and the Supramental Plane.

These aspects of *Savitri's* apocalypticism will be with reference to certain representative passages selected from most of the forty-nine cantos of the poem. However, it shall not be exhaustive since it is impossible to examine all the 23,813 lines. Our study shall therefore, be necessarily selective. Hopefully, it will serve the purpose of illustrating the point that the explication of *Savitri* as revelation can be multifarious.

Before commencing our explication of the revelatory nature of *Savitri* with reference to the selective and limited areas mentioned above, however, we shall briefly examine "The Spiritual Basis of *Savitri* as an Indian Specimen of Apocalyptic Literature", as already resolved by us.

Chapter Notes :

1. Laurence Urdang and Stuart Berg Flexner, eds., *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language : College edition* (New Delhi : Allied Publishers Private Limited, Reprinted 1977), pp.62-3
2. Ibid. p.62
3. bid. p.1129
4. bid.
5. Robert McHenry, ed., *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 1 Micropaedia (Chicago : Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1992), p.482
6. Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 1 (New York : Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p.334
7. Ibid. p.335
8. Ibid. pp.335-6
9. Ibid. pp.336-7
10. Ibid, P. 339
11. Ibid. pp.339-42
12. Ibid. p.343
13. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri : A Legend and a Symbol*, p. I x
14. A. B. Purani, *Sri Aurobindo's Savitri : An Approach and A Study*, p.33
15. Sri Aurobindo. *Savitri : A Legend and a Symbol*, pp. 245-56

16. Ibid. pp. 503-21
17. Ibid. pp. 488-531
18. Ibid, pp.577
19. Ibid, pp. 668
20. Ibid. pp. 671-712
21. Ibid. pp. 683-97
22. Robert McHenry, ed., *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Micropaedia, Vol.1 (Chicago : Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. 1992), p.707
23. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, pp.46-73
24. Ibid. pp.341-6
25. Ibid. pp.588-666
26. Ibid. pp.685-97
27. V. Madhusudan Reddy, *Savitri : Epic of the Eternal* P. 6
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid. p.5
30. A. B. Purani, *Sri Aurobindo's Savitri : An Approach and a Study*, p.36
31. A. B. Purani, *Sri Aurobindo's Savitri : An Approach and a Study*, pp.92-3



*THE SPIRITUAL BASIS
OF SAVITRI AS AN
INDIAN ILLUSTRATION
OF APOCALYPTIC
LITERATURE*



III CHAPTER

THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF *SAVITRI* AS AN INDIAN ILLUSTRATION OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

The whole corpus of Sri Aurobindo's writings emanated from his encyclopedic knowledge and seer-like wisdom and realisation. In almost all his works he gave expression, directly or indirectly, to his teaching which is supremely spiritual in its comprehensive nature. *Savitri* is no exception to this. As is rightly pointed out, his spiritual teaching, no doubt, 'arose out of his own being and becoming, out of what he was, what he experienced and what he did.'¹ Consequently, it incorporates both his philosophy and his Yoga,—philosophy constituting 'the theoretical portion of it' and his Yoga representing 'the practical side of it.'²

The basic foundation of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual teaching can be described as an integrated synthesis of three strands, viz.. (1) the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* which he closely studied at the Alipore jail; (2) the dynamic spirituality of the Tantras, the knowledge of which formed an integral part of his philosophical, metaphysical and

spiritual thinking; and (3) his own original theory of evolution vis-a-vis the various theories of evolution ancient as well as those which emerged in the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century,— chiefly the theories of Creative Evolution and Emergent Evolution. Any meaningful study of the apocalyptic aspect of his *Savitri* necessarily demands a workable familiarity with the salient features of each one of these strands.

Sri Aurobindo's deep study of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* was combined with his own intuition and spiritual experiences. Therefore, when he undertook the study of the *Vedas* later, it 'reinforced the conclusions he had already reached.'³ For our convenience, let us term as Vedantic that aspect of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy which is based on his study of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*. Like Vedanta therefore, part of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical basis maintains, that 'the Spirit exists, the Spirit alone exists. All else is a willed manifestation of the Spirit'⁴. The Spirit is characterised as Sachchidananda. In this form it is immanent in all manifestations, including matter. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo refused the idea of any essential duality between, or mutual contradiction of spirit and matter. According to him, the only thing that exists, is the Spirit. As such, matter, life and mind are also spirit but in different forms. He does not recognise the existence of Maya or illusion in connection with matter or material world. The whole material phenomena are entirely the manifestation of the Spirit. As he maintains, the Spirit can be described as

infinite potentiality. By a process of involution and evolution, and out of its own initiative, the spirit issues forth in innumerable forms. It is infinite. Therefore, it is neither diminished nor affected by the creation of its innumerable forms and universes. But the Spirit also undertakes the inverse movement of evolution by means of which it begins to evolve after its involution in Nescience or the Inconscient. According to Sri Aurobindo, thus, creation is a double movement of involution-evolution, or a descent and ascent. The involution of spirit is inevitably followed by evolution. As a result, the Chit aspect (consciousness) of Sachchidananda has attained the stage of self-consciousness in man. As Consciousness in man, Chit is capable of apprehending the Spirit. But normally it is limited by its own individual existence. In spite of that it realises its limitations by becoming more and more self-conscious and experiences misery or sorrow as the limitations. As a result, it develops an aspiration to know and possess the Spirit for the purpose of shedding its limitations in order to enjoy its own original status of Sachchidananda. But the Spirit as Sachchidananda can be realised by direct intuition alone and not by the intellect or reason. It is when he posits the idea of intuition that Sri Aurobindo declares that Yoga can give a helping hand in acquiring intuition. By means of Yoga, all the five senses, together with the mind and the intellect can be stilled so that the highest spiritual poise is reached. When the highest poise is reached, the Spirit reveals itself to man who is self-conscious. Then the individualised human soul

can enjoy its own identity with the Spirit. As Sri Aurobindo emphasises, Yoga enables the individual to still his mind and make it a fit receptacle for the Spirit. The practice of Yoga destroys all modifications of Chitta in the individual human being. Because of his deep study of *the Upanishads* and the *Gita* Sri Aurobindo emphasises the fundamental need to have (1) faith in the existence of the Spirit, (2) faith in the possibility and the capacity of the human soul to enjoy unitive experience with the Spirit, (3) faith in intense practice of Yoga in order to have that experience and to retain the spiritual poise, and (4) faith in transformation and sublimation of life and conduct in the light of spiritual experience. He set his own example by launching himself on the greatest spiritual adventure of modern times in a scientific manner with the Inner Lord in himself as his sole guide. The result of his spiritual adventure was the emergence of his Integral Philosophy and Integral Yoga which are capable of revealing to all the supreme spiritual light he himself had realised.

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual intuition is mystic in so far as inner spiritual experiences are concerned. But in explaining the spiritual experiences with reference to the known facts and to evolution and science it is entirely rational. No doubt, the spiritual basis of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is basically Indian and Vedantic in approach but in propounding it Sri Aurobindo displays a remarkably open mind. What is more, in an encyclopedic manner he ranges over practically all the known systems of thought and spiritual practices and formulates his own ideal and

his own spiritual powers. He synthesises all the known spiritual practices in the world. Because of his masterly synthesising genius, his spiritual philosophy becomes an integrality and not mere hugeness and massiveness. It is not a mere co-ordination or eclecticism but a real synthesis.

This synthetic and integral basis of his philosophy is lucidly and exhaustively presented in his *The Life Divine*. It is in this prose work that Sri Aurobindo demonstrates that there is life involved in matter and in other forms of existence. It is there because it has evolved from the first protein molecule and from the unicellular to the multicellular existence until it has reached *Homo sapiens*, the apex of the evolution of today. All this indicates that throughout the development, Consciousness has emerged and there has been its individualisation to the extent of the formation of a psychic entity. As a result, human beings have self-consciousness together with the power to know the very source and fountain-head of things as developed. The self-consciousness in man aspires and tries to reach the Divine, the Source of all sources. At this stage, the soul of man is dazed at the perfection, immanence, transcendence, infinity and sorrowless joy of the Divine. As a result, it realises the contrast of its own insignificance and evanescence and sorrowfulness. Therefore, there rises from the depth of man's heart the ardent prayer to the Divine to lead him from falsehood to Truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. This prayer represents the aspiration

of the human being to the realisation of the soul and the knowledge of the possibility of reaching perfection one day. Because of the aspiration, man starts thinking about ways and means of fulfilling his spiritual ambitions. His soul's quest begins with aspiration and during this quest, the soul discovers Yoga.

Another important aspect of the spiritual basis of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy derived from the Vedanta is that, as an Indian, he looks upon life as a totality. Secondly, his philosophy is not based on preconceived ideas. Neither does he draw upon mere imagination or sentiment. Similarly, he does not depend upon mere subjective experiences or hallucinations. His theories are not clothed entirely in mystic language alone, though he does not avoid mysticism or mystic experiences. They need not be, because mysticism has been rehabilitated in modern philosophy and is recognised as a part of life and as a part of data.

The rational and scientific nature of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy is proved by the fact that it is based on his own intuition and experiences about evolution and on the latest evolutionary trends as revealed by modern science. In doing so, he is in line with other modern philosophers who also take into account the trend of evolution and speak about superman and the coming race. What distinguishes Sri Aurobindo from them is that, unlike them, he experimented with Yoga which is the technique of developing humanity. Besides, from his own experiences and intuition he asserted that Integral Yoga is

the way to usher in the new humanity. Since the evolutionary development in nature is always there, says Sri Aurobindo, man can consciously make various possible efforts to expedite the evolution. He can do so not only by trying to reach up to, but by trying to bring down the higher powers to help the process. Such scientific message of his has invested Sri Aurobindo's teaching with a reality and concreteness, with an urgency and an intensity. The main plank on which it stands is his idea that Spirit and Matter are two extreme modes of one existence. Consciousness is the most important characteristic of the Spirit. Because, existence and joy are already included in it. Spirit is pure consciousness and all-consciousness. In contrast, Matter is unconscious and a bundle of nescience. Yet both are reconciled and synthesised in the Divine, the *Purushottama*, the *Paramatman*, the Supreme Reality. According to the spiritual philosophy of Sri Aurobindo therefore, there is an Absolute Transcendent described as that which is beyond and above everything conceivable. It is the synthesis of being and becoming, spirit and matter. But the form in which human consciousness can cognise this Reality is as Sachchidananda. It is self-determinate. It is characterised by sheer sportiveness and delight. Out of them and through its *Chit-Shakti* it limits itself by a stress which becomes the starting point of creation. All creation is thus, involution of the Absolute Transcendent. Matter is the lowest and the last point of involution with its inconscience. The descending order would thus begin

from Sachchidananda. Though it includes the three aspects it is a Unitarian concept. Below the Sachchidananda there is the Supermind which is the instrumentality through which the involution starts. The main characteristic of the Supermind is Truth-Consciousness and the power of truth itself. The Overmind, the Intuitive Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Higher Mind and the ordinary mind take their places below the Supermind in that order. Lastly, life and matter appear in the descending order of involution. As against this, evolution is a rediscovery of Consciousness in its ascending order (Matter, Life, Mind, Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind and Supermind) till it finally becomes pure Consciousness and reaches again the stage of Sachchidananda. In other words, Reality is in the nature of Pure Consciousness, one, infinite and beyond all duality and relationship. It limits itself out of its own will and sheerly out of the manifestation of its joy-aspect. Every such limiting is a diminution of itself, it is an involution and therefore an occasion for creation. But no amount of such diminution of reality, or involution of creation brings about any change or deterioration in it. As against this, the descending movement of Reality has a limit since Consciousness cannot eliminate itself or annihilate itself. That is why, its ascending movement has to start. This ascent of Spirit or Reality is evolution which carries the limited consciousness back to pure Consciousness from where the descent started.

In his spiritual philosophy, Sri Aurobindo makes the Supermind the link between the Sachchidananda on

the one hand and mind on the other. The Supermind, according to him, is the *Shakti* of Sachchidananda. It is the dynamic power of knowledge and will of Sachchidananda. Both involution of the Spirit and evolution take place through the instrumentality of the Supermind. Further, the Supermind, says Sri Aurobindo, develops the three aspects of Sachchidananda without either separating or dividing them. The discovery of the exact nature, function and details of Supermind is, in fact, Sri Aurobindo's very own. In his view, the full divinisation of matter, life and mind would not be a practical proposition without the Supermind and its help. The human soul can ascend to the Divine somehow. But if it is to descend in order to divinize and make a "Life Divine" possible here on earth, it is absolutely necessary for it to acquire and use the Supramental force. Since man has evolved up to the level of mind he alone has the chance of further evolution. He can play his part not merely for his individual evolution but can also help the evolution of a race of supermen. The coming of the new race of Supermen is as certain as the coming of the present race of men was after the emergence of *primates*,

In addition to providing the main metaphysics and philosophy of his teaching in this manner Sri Aurobindo gives, in the form of "Integral Yoga" the very means of helping the evolutionary process already in progress. His Integral Yoga is thus the practical side of his spiritual metaphysics and philosophy. It aims at being not only integral but also a synthesis of all Yogas. It stipulates that

man has to make a beginning with **what he is and what he has** in his efforts to solve the mystery of existence. He has to free himself and establish peace and harmony in himself in order to integrate his own personality. Next, he has to proceed to establish harmony in the outside world. Thus, he has to work for the emancipation of the human race including his own. But emancipation of the human race does not lie in the attainment of *Mukti* or in the absorption into the Absolute. It lies in the divinisation of mind, life and matter here and now in this terrestrial existence. According to Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, this can be done by realising the Supermind and acquiring its powers through Integral Yoga.

As Sri Aurobindo maintains, man is far below the status of a divinised being at present. The instruments he can use in his spiritual pursuits are as yet rather crude and insufficient. Moreover, man is still subject to the momentum by which the involution started. Because of this, he has to build a temple of God within himself, and invite Him to come and dwell there. The vital and mental urges prevent the human mind from concentrating on the inner *Ātman*. This weakness of human beings is combined with the weakness of their will. Both these weaknesses allow in the case of human beings, strong attachment to grow between the soul and outer objects. This attachment is the cause of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, love and hate and many other dualities. Human mind itself is a poor instrument on account of its limited powers. Of course, it

is a good servant of present life since it is designed more for analysis, for seeing differences, for distinguishing one thing from another. But it is not designed for apprehending the truth of existence. In spite of this, there occur from time to time a few instances where human beings transcend their difficulties. Such instances are a sufficient evidence of the potentialities and possibilities open to the human being. They prove that God is secretly in the heart of man. What is more, man is God's own manifestation. This being the case, Sri Aurobindo declares, God can be revealed and life can be lived according to dictates of the inner Spirit by systematically following the well-graded aspects of the Integral Yoga. Being tossed between dualities, man's mind has only partial knowledge. It remains absorbed in the conflict between good and evil, morality and immorality. But human consciousness can be trained to rise above these frailties. It can also be trained to acquire a poise beyond pleasure and pain, good and evil. Such a supra-ethical poise is destined to be one of the features of the perfect superman to come. Meanwhile the human being can persevere to attain to it by following the Integral Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga takes care to point out that divinisation does not merely mean that the Divine can use or act through mind, life and matter. It means that the stuff of which they are found to be made at present can be transformed into much more subtle, pure and high material, so that the whole standard of existence can be

raised. Such transformation brought about by means of the Integral Yoga can usher in the Life Divine here on earth.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga starts with a basic faith regarding the nature of Reality. The Sadhak cannot question it. Faith and ever-fresh and intense aspiration are fundamental in our attempt to achieve supermanhood and supernature. Likewise, self-surrender or *Atmasamarpana* is the decisive action in the Integral Yoga since the Sadhak has to surrender his whole being to the Lord in a supreme effort of will in order to attain the highest in spite of all difficulties. Self-surrender helps him not merely by rousing his powers to their climax but also invokes the Mother, the *Adishakti* herself, to take up the burden of the Yoga and to ensure success. Most importantly, surrender in Integral Yoga makes way for the Divine Grace to descend at the proper time to consummate the efforts of the *Sadhak*.

Another fundamental quality of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is that it is based on the personal effort of the Sadhak. The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender. The aspiration must be vigilant, constant and unceasing. The rejection must be the rejection of the mind's ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, conceptions so that the true knowledge may find free rule in a silent mind. Lastly, the surrender should be the surrender of oneself and all one is and has, and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the *Shakti*.

The *Sadhana* undertaken under the system of Integral Yoga enables the aspirant to battle against all obstructions along his difficult path. The crowning realisation of this Yoga is when the Sadhak becomes aware of the whole world as the expression, play, or *Lila* of an infinite Divine personality, when he sees in all, not the impersonal sad-atman but Shree Krishna who at once is the basis and transcends all manifest and unmanifest existence. On account of such extraordinary characteristics of Integral Yoga, Sri Aurobindo's followers come to recognise it as the very best since all mental, intellectual or emotional powers have to be transformed into soul-power by following this Yoga. In ordinary Yoga, only one main power of the being or one group of its powers is made the means. In contrast, in Integral Yoga all powers have to be combined and included in the transmuting instrumentation. That is why, Sri Aurobindo was not satisfied only with the gospel of Advaita Vedanta since it preaches absorption of the individual soul in the Universal Soul. He insisted on bringing the power of the Universal Soul down into the earth-consciousness in order to transform the mind, life and matter and make them capable of a Divine Life here on earth. He considered individual absorption in the Universal Soul as an escape and not a solution. Similarly, he was not satisfied merely with the gospel of social service. After all, it is based on humanitarian considerations as also on the theory that a person is an integrated individual of humanity. In Sri

Aurobindo's opinion, even the gospel of *Nishkama Karma* does not visualise a change for the better in human nature itself. Thus, he proves that all the earlier Yogas cannot prevent the limitations, the evil, the misery, and the helplessness of the present day humanity. Only the descent of a higher power on these levels can raise the potential of man to transform himself and transcend himself. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga seeks to arm man with the equipments necessary for this great task by achieving the ultimate purpose of divinising the whole of humanity by transforming mind, life and matter. The divinisation which Integral Yoga aims at is divinisation and simultaneous transmutation, not only of the human beings **as they are, but also of the very material of which they are made, namely, the mental, the vital, the physical.** Integral Yoga seeks to transform them into a subtler, finer and nobler substance capable of taking man's whole being to a far higher level of existence where pure knowledge, great harmony and divine bliss shall reign supreme. In this way, the aim of Integral Yoga is the conquest and the spiritual transformation of the whole terrestrial existence. Its fundamental emphasis is on the Supermind which, according to Sri Aurobindo, presides over the spiritual destiny of mankind, Its descent into the world is necessary since the descent of the Supermind holds the secret of the ascent of man to the Life Divine. The Supermind descends fully on earth in response to the conscious as well as unconscious aspiration and will and effort of man. It

enables him to see and know and act Truth. It teaches him to live instinctively in harmony and unmixed joy with the whole universe by transforming all the instruments of feeling, thinking and willing into instruments for realising the Life Divine. Moreover, the supramental consciousness will enable, the evolved man to live simultaneously in the transcendental and immanent dimensions of existence. Because, that consciousness is the door to the perfect Divinity which is beyond all dualities, including the duality of transcendent and immanent.

This analysis of the first strand of the basis of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy, viz., the Vedantic, occasionally shows the traces of the dynamic spirituality of the Tantras which Sri Aurobindo has included in his philosophy, and which constitutes the second important aspect of his spiritual philosophy. This, however, is as it should be, for, the Tantras stand 'Next to the Vedas in their hoariness, spiritual and cultural importance.'⁵ They represent the finest spiritual discipline. They form a vast literature touching upon philosophy, metaphysics, psychology, biology, psycho-physics, self-hypnotism, medicine, clairvoyance, symbology-in fact, everything that has some importance to life. In this way, they form an encyclopaedia of knowledge.

At the same time, the Tantras give us conclusions which can be formulated into fine metaphysics. The metaphysics which they value most is the one which naturally manifests in the process of self-opening. They do

not value the metaphysics which can be built up by logicism. What is more, the fundamental tendency of Hinduism that Truth is more to be realised in life finds clear expression in the Tantras. They give the complete *art* of life. The unfolding of life requires adaptation, biological, psychological, ethical and metaphysical. Therefore, the study of all the sciences enters into the Tantras from their pragmatic *usefulness*, as it happens in Sri Aurobindo. The reason is that the complete Truth of life in its finest flowering cannot be enjoyed unless all the forces, natural and spiritual, can be controlled and applied to the unfolding of life in its increasing fineness. The Tantras in this sense, represent the full code of life, as does the spiritual philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

The dynamic spiritualism of the Tantras is the most potent of their teachings. The philosophical conclusions of the Tantras have not been much different from the fundamental *Upanishadic* Truth—*Tattvamasi*, the realisation of the oneness of being (As already seen, this Vedantic aspect is included in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.) Since the Tantras are - more concerned with the methods of unfolding, they emphasize the dynamic discipline which can manifest the fine receptivities and spiritual susceptibilities and possibilities. They are very practical and therefore can be characterized as the spiritual science which finds out the path of realisation, just as Sri Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy does. The Tantras accept from the *Upanishads* the doctrine of correspondence

between the psychic and the cosmic forces and make practical application of it in life. But the ideal seeking does not much differ from the *Upanishads*, viz., to attain the transcendence of self and to escape from the state of bondage. The Tantras apparently lay emphasis upon the dynamic principle, *Shakti*, just as Sri Aurobindo does. *Shakti* is the force of projection in creation and the force of withdrawal in liberation. It is an equilibrium in one stage, but active on the point of creative manifestation in the other. *Shiva* is actively associated with *Shakti*, and the reality is conceived as *Shiva-Shakti*. This conception makes prominent the personal natures both of *Shiva* and *Shakti* and corresponds to the conception of Ishwara and Maya in the *Upanishads*. *Shiva-Shakti* corresponds to the Western conception of Being-becoming. The Tantras emphasize the principle of becoming, but unlike such Western philosophers of the modern times as Bergson they insist upon the locus of becoming to a centre and a point. Becoming is an ideal unfolding of the divine, but behind this ideal unfolding stands *Shiva*, as the supreme consciousness which energizes this ideal unfolding.

Such tenets of the Tantras bring out the great difference between the Tantras and the Vedanta. In the Vedanta, Ishwara is represented as the super-subject which reflects the whole existence, which is not very important in the life of spiritual illumination. The Vedanta lays great emphasis on discrimination and philosophic reflection which ultimately presents the truth of Identity. In contrast, the Tantras insist on the psychological opening of our

whole nature and being. (This is done in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy as well.) Its method is essentially psychological and not logical or metaphysical. It is more practical and experimental like the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. It leaves aside all intellectual subtleties and insists on the release of the forces of life. In this lies its appeal, as does the appeal of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. The Tantras open all the psychic and the spiritual forces and find their economies in the setting of life as well as transcending them in the final and complete illumination. They present the full dynamism of human nature to transcend it finally. Their path is the path of unfolding all the forces involved in life and of realising the finest spiritual dynamism playing through life, (we find this point too in Sri Aurobindo.) *Shakti* is the source of all possibilities, spiritual, psychic, vital, both cosmic and individual. Before one can realise the Divine, one has to pass through the finer stages of revelation that take place when the cosmic dynamism becomes active in us. In fact, with the infusion of the *Shakti* into our being, the supramental realisations take place and the finer stretches of life begin to open before our spiritual horizon. We pass from the mental to the supramental, from the individual to the cosmic life; and it has its use, for it really gives us wider life, subtler delight and more elastic being. Such experience and unfolding give us distant glimpses of the life that is still to be unfolded through evolution.(All this is again found in Sri Aurobindo.)

Evolution begins with the dynamic instability of the cosmic energy, when all the forces are ripe for a new history and a new orientation of life. Generally, there are three ways in which the *Shakti* manifests herself: (1) as creative force; (2) as preservative force; and (3) as withdrawing force. In these three forms of manifestations *Shakti* is called *Brahmi* or *Saraswati*, *Lakshmi* and *Sivani*. (Compare here Sri Aurobindo's concept of the four emanations or personalities of the Divine Mother, viz., *Maheshwari*, *Mahakali*, *Mahalakshmi*, *Mahasaraswati*.⁶) The creative oscillation from the finer into the gross stage is indicated in the former, for really creation is a descent from the subtle character and form of *Shakti* to its gross nature. It is the process of distribution, condensation and concentration. The Tantras differ from the Emergent Evolutionists in proceeding from the finer to the gross. The finer cannot emerge from the gross, rather the gross is the finer restrained in its complete expression.

Life and mind are, according to the Tantras, the finer manifestations of the creative energy, but not of crude matter for matter indeed is the arrest of energy and suspension of its creative force, because of the dominance of inertia. But life and mind are not to be conceived as the higher stages in the evolutionary chain. Mind, life and matter are all expressions of the same creative energy; their difference is due to the setting and proportional dominance of the original elements of that energy.

The Tantras, further, lay great emphasis upon discovering the helpful light that is being always thrown on the path of the seekers after spiritual unfolding and realisation. This is generally called grace. (Significantly, according to Sri Aurobindo, Grace is one of the four essential conditions of spiritual realisation viz., aspiration, rejection, surrender and grace.⁷) This is the law of gravitation in spiritual life.

According to the Tantras, the main functions of this uplifting and elevating force are to manifest its pure psychic nature and to reveal all the psychic forces which create the constitution of man. These forces are in direct touch with the dynamic divine. Unless they are in harmony with the dynamic aspiration, numerous difficulties are experienced by the seeker in the way of attaining the final identification with the dynamic divine. But if the aspiration of the seeker is keen, no obstruction from his Psychic being can arise. Because, the joy of the psychic being lies also in spirit. Therefore, if the aspiration arises from the centric being of the seeker, the fruition of his realisation becomes immediate. (All these points are common both to the Tantras and to Sri Aurobindo. Cf. , his *The Mother* as a whole.) As such, whenever the psychic nature of the seeker creates obstruction, the realisation does not become so easy. Because of such obstructions, the Tantras recognise three paths for the seeker prescribing different forms of discipline in reference to the nature and the constitution of our psychic being. (Just as Sri Aurobindo emphasises Aspiration, Rejection, Surrender and Grace.)

Like Sri Aurobindo, the Tantras accept the spiritual ideal as final release and liberation. This liberation is the gift of the dynamic divine. Because the Tantras also believe, like Sri Aurobindo, that the divine can bestow all gifts, earthly and heavenly, and-can even help the soul to end the Life's journey by offering Transcendental wisdom. The divine does this, say the Tantras, by helping psychic opening in its finer form, where nothing is left besides the supreme Puissance of an unfettered and free existence beyond the bounds of space and the stream of time.

Just as Sri Aurobindo does, the Tantras believe that dynamic spirituality presupposes close touch with the informant silence. It also saturates our being with the movements of the dynamic divine in its cosmic and supra-cosmic expression and even in its activity in our psychic life and opening. In this way, dynamic spirituality reveals to us the secrets of the dynamic divine, in its irresistible power, in its absorbing beauties, in its joyful movements and in its ever fresh and ever creative life.

Like Sri Aurobindo, the Tantras do not regard *Prakriti* as a constant barrier to the expression of the supramental life. *Prakriti*, in fact, can be a fine instrument of the divine expression, even according to the Tantras. For this, nature needs to be transformed under the pressure of supramental will, according to the Tantras as well as Sri Aurobindo. The Transcendental will must find the plastic *Prakriti* its proper instrument. Then only it can express itself better. Also, it can reject all grossness which stands as a barrier to the expression of fine and blessed life. As a

result, vast wisdom can proceed from it. Human life therefore, assumes a nobler aspect. With the emergence of such a life, the constant conflict between nature and spirit vanishes. Nature, then, can realise luminosity and mobility. It can also reflect the transcendent wisdom and will. Evolution, however, has not reached its height yet, according to the Tantras also. The finest phase of evolution call reveal when nature completely surrenders herself to spirit, when nature removes its obstructions and assertions, when nature finds constant joy in being completely passive, receptive and instrumental to the ingress of spirit.

The Tantras maintain that various forms of discipline called *Acharas* are closely associated with their methodology. These are stages of the spiritual evolution. The last of them is the final stage of complete spiritual illumination. The first stage of the spiritual evolution gives us vital and mental purity. The second stage gives devotion and spiritual fineness. The third brings knowledge. The fourth gives us consolidation. The fifth brings spontaneous renunciation. The sixth stage supplies to us the supreme conviction of the superiority of the renunciation to enjoyment. The last stage culminates into final conscious illumination. In Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy also we find a similar set of stages of spiritual evolution, with some fundamental variations.

Like Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, the Tantras offer a unique discipline to wake up the finer dynamic of spirit. This spirit moves the vital and the spiritual energy and transforms the vital nature by spiritual infusion. But

this transformation is gradual. The blind seeking of the vital nature, including vital obscurities, is slowly eliminated. The elimination, however, is not by suppression but by exposing the nature and the constitution of our vital being. Like Sri Aurobindo, the Tantras localise our vital, mental and psychic functions to the different centres of our organism. They offer a clear psychic analysis of the forces working in man. The secret of its discipline is to keep the vital being in equilibrium. Because, the greatest disturbance in spiritual life comes from the direction of the vital being. As such, without vital equilibrium, spirit cannot have its free play, according to the Tantras.

Like Sri Aurobindo, the Tantras freely allow satisfaction to all the parts of our being in order that all the movements of life are able to manifest the true nature of our being. By experience life's movement should gradually seek genial currents and lights of the soul .

In this way, the speciality of the Tantras lies in putting into vigorous activity all the forces of nature and in insisting at the same time, upon discrimination, discernment and detachment. Most of these ideas, ideals and disciplines of the Tantras have somehow found their way into the spiritual philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. The one single work of his in which we find numerous passages closely echoing the ideas and ideals of the Tantras discussed above is his smallest book, *The Mother*⁸. The most relevant parts of the booklet are found on pp. 1-10, 15-26 and 35-41.

The third and final strand in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy, viz., evolutionary theories emerging since the Nineteenth century, has already been occasionally mentioned in our analysis of the dynamic spiritualism of the Tantras. It is very likely that Sri Aurobindo's familiarity with the main tenets of the Tantras eventually led to his predominant interest in the various evolutionary theories of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

As is rightly observed,⁹ evolutionary theory has had a long history in the West. On the one hand, some classical Greek philosophers have been reported to have held views foreshadowing the concept of evolution. On the other hand, such ancient Eastern spiritual writings as the Tantras also mention evolution, as we have seen above. But scientific interest in evolution came to be taken in a pronounced manner from the time of 'Charles Darwin in the mid-nineteenth century and onwards. Charles Darwin established evolution as an inescapable fact and showed how it was brought about'.¹⁰ Until the end of nineteenth century, it was mostly scientists like biologists who were interested in the scientific theories of evolution. The philosophical or spiritual interest in evolutionary theory is stated to have started with George Henry Lewes, a mid-19th century philosopher of science¹¹ who originated the theory of emergent evolution. According to the theory of emergence in evolution, the evolutionary account of life is a continuous history marked by stages at which fundamentally new forms have appeared: (1) the

origin of life; (2) the origin of nucleus-bearing protozoa; (3) the origin of sexually reproducing forms, with an individual destiny lacking in cells that reproduce by fission; (4) the rise of sentient animals, with nervous systems and protobrains; and (5) the appearance of an animal knowing all of this and more, namely man. Each of these new modes of life, though grounded in the physiochemical and biochemical conditions of the previous and simpler stage, is intelligible only in terms of its own ordering principle. These are thus, cases of emergence.¹²

Early in the twentieth century, Henri Bergson, a French intuitionist, propounded the theory of creative evolution. His theory was, however, condemned as speculative by his contemporaries such as C. Lloyd Morgan, a psychologist. Nevertheless, the concept of emergence still figures in some evolutionary thinking. In the 1920s and '30s, Samuel Alexander, a British Realist metaphysician and Jan (Christian) Smuts, the South African statesman and thinker, espoused emergence theories; and later, others, such as the Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and the French zoologist Albert Vandel, emphasised the series of levels of organisation, moving toward higher forms of consciousness. The philosophy of organism of Alfred North Whitehead, the leading process metaphysician, with its doctrine of creative advance, is a philosophy of emergence; so also is the theory of personal knowledge of Michael Polanyi, a Hungarian scientist and philosopher, with its levels of

being and of knowing, none of which are intelligible wholly in terms of those below it.¹³

Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution, however, is very much different from all these Western theories. He has given metaphysical expression to his own original ideas of evolution in such prose works as *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle* and *The Supramental Manifestation*. A poetic rendering of the same metaphysical theory of evolution is found in his *Savitri*. In view of this, it is imperative on our part fully to understand Sri Aurobindo's theory and ideas of evolution which are in turn connected with his concepts of Involution and Descent.

According to Sri Aurobindo, evolution is "The progressive self-manifestation of Nature in man".¹⁴ It 'is nothing but the progressive unfolding of the Spirit out of the density of material consciousness and the gradual self-revelation of God out of this apparent animal being'.¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo further elaborates the idea in the following various ways:

- 1) All evolution is in essence a heightening of the force of consciousness in the manifest being so that it may be raised into the greater intensity of what is still unmanifest, from matter into life, from life into mind, from the Mind into the Spirit.¹⁶
- 2) All evolution is the progressive self-revelation of the One to himself in the terms of the Many out of the Inconscience

through the Ignorance towards self-conscious perfection.¹⁷

- 3) ... this One Being and Consciousness is involved in Matter. Evolution is the method by which it liberates itself, consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient, and once having appeared is self-impelled to grow higher and higher and at the same time to enlarge and develop towards a greater and greater perfection. Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it become possible for life to manifest perfection.¹⁸
- 4) This terrestrial evolutionary working of Nature from Matter to Mind and beyond it has a double process; there is an outward visible process of physical evolution with birth as its machinery, for each evolved form of body housing its own evolved power of consciousness is maintained and kept in continuity by heredity; there is, at

the same time, an invisible process of soul evolution with rebirth into ascending grades of form and consciousness as its machinery.¹⁹

- 5) In my explanation of the universe I have put forward this cardinal fact of a spiritual evolution as the meaning of our existence here. It is a series of ascents from the physical being and consciousness to the vital, the being dominated by the life-self, thence to the mental being realised in the fully developed man and thence into the perfect consciousness which is beyond the mental, into the supramental Consciousness and the supramental being, the Truth-Consciousness..which is the integral consciousness of the spiritual being. Mind cannot be our last conscious expression because mind is fundamentally an ignorance seeking for knowledge; it is only the supramental Truth-Consciousness that can bring us the true and whole Self-Knowledge and World- Knowledge; it is through that only that we can get to our true being and the fulfilment of our spiritual evolution.²⁰

In addition to these and other observations exclusively on evolution, Sri Aurobindo has pointed out certain more important things elsewhere. For example,

after having stated that 'all evolution is the progressive self-revelation of the One to himself in the terms of the Many', he emphasizes the fact that evolution is the process which follows involution.

According to him,

*Before there could be any evolution, there must needs be an involution of the Divine. Otherwise there would be not an evolution but a successive creation of things new, not contained in their antecedents not their inevitable consequences or processes in a sequence, but arbitrarily willed or miraculously conceived by an inexplicable Chance, a stumbling fortunate Forces as an external Creator.*²¹

He further adds:

*The word evolution carries with it in its intrinsic sense, in the idea at its root the necessity of a previous involution. We must, if a hidden spiritual being is the secret of all the action of Nature, give its full power to that latent value of the idea. We are bound then to suppose that all that evolves already existed involved, passive or otherwise active, but in either case concealed from us in the shell of material Nature. The Spirit which manifests itself here in a body, must be involved from the beginning in the whole of matter and in every knot, formation and particle of matter; life mind and whatever is above mind must be latent, inactive or concealed active powers in all the operations of material energy.*²²

He underscores the importance of involution to evolution by observing, in the midst of his discussion on Supermind, that Supermind

*... possesses the power of development, of evolution, of making explicit, and that power carries with it the other power of involution, of envelopment, of making implicit. In a sense, the whole of creation may be said to be a movement between two involutions, Spirit in which all is involved and out of which all evolves downward to the other pole of Matter; Matter in which also all is involved and out of which all evolves upwards to the other pole of Spirit.*²³

This last observation inevitably brings into focus the relevance of Sri Aurobindo's idea of Descent (which in turn includes his idea of Ascent of Ascension), to his own original concept of evolution which is, as the various passages quoted above prove, intensely spiritual, In answer to various queries made about the nature of his Integral Yoga, he explains:

- (1) ...The practice of this Yoga is double—one side is of an ascent of the consciousness to the higher planes, the other is that of a descent of the power of the higher planes into the earth-consciousness so as to drive out the Power of darkness and ignorance and transform the nature.²⁴
- (2) ... In this Yoga the consciousness (after the lower field has been prepared by a certain amount of psycho-spiritual-occult

experience) is drawn upwards above the Brahmrandhra to ranges above belonging to the spiritual consciousness proper and instead of merely receiving from there has to live there and from there change the lower consciousness altogether. For there is a dynamism proper to the spiritual consciousness whose nature is Light, Power, Ananda, Peace, Knowledge, infinite Wideness and that must be possessed and descend into the whole being.²⁵

- (3) ... There is a feeling of waves surging up, mounting to the head, which brings an outer consciousness and an inner waking. It is the ascending of the lower consciousness in the *Ādhara* to meet the greater consciousness above. It is a movement analogous to that on which so much stress is laid in the Tantric process, the awakening of the Kundalini, the Energy coiled up and latent in the body and its mounting through the spinal cord and the centres (cakras) and the Brahmrandhra to meet the Divine above. In our Yoga it is not a specialised process, but a spontaneous uprush of the whole lower consciousness sometimes in currents or waves, sometimes in a less concrete motion, and on the other

side a descent of the Divine Consciousness and its Force into the body. This descent is felt as a pouring in of calm and peace, of force and power, of light, of joy and ecstasy, of wideness and freedom and knowledge, of a Divine Being or a Presence sometimes one of these, sometimes several of them or all together.²⁶

The ideas contained in these utterances are rendered somewhat easier to understand by a few other explanations given by Sri Aurobindo regarding a few other important aspects of Yoga. A few such explanatory passages are as follows:

- (1) God descending into the world in- various forms has consummated on this earth the mental and bodily form which we call humanity.

He has manifested in the world through the play of all-governing Soul with its own formative Will or *Shakti*, a rhythm of existence of which Matter is the lowest term and pure being the highest. Mind and Life stand upon Matter (*manas* and *prāna* on *annam*) and make the lower half of world-existence (*aparārdha*); pure Consciousness and pure Bliss proceed out of pure Being (*cit* and *ānanda* out of *sat*) and - make the upper half of world-

existence (*parārdha*). Pure Idea (*vijnana*) stands as the link between the two.²⁷

- (2) ... A separation, acute in practice though unreal in essence, divides the total being of man, the microcosm, as it divides also the world-being, the macrocosm. Both have a higher and a lower hemisphere, the *parardha* and *aparardha* of the ancient wisdom. The higher hemisphere is the perfect and eternal reign of the Spirit; for there it manifests without cessation or diminution its infinities, deploys the unconcealed glories of its illimitable existence, its illimitable consciousness and knowledge, its illimitable force and power, its illimitable beatitude. The lower hemisphere belongs equally to the Spirit, but here it is veiled, closely, thickly, by its inferior self-expression of limiting mind, confining life and dividing body.²⁸
- (3) . . . There are above us, . . . successive states, levels or graded powers of being over-topping our normal mind, hidden in our own superconscient parts, higher ranges of Mind, degrees of spiritual consciousness and experience; without them there would be no links, no helpful intervening spaces to make the immense

ascension possible. It is indeed from these higher sources that the secret spiritual Power acts upon the being and by its pressure brings about the psychic transformation or the spiritual change;²⁹

- (4) ... from the point of view of the ascent of consciousness from our mind upwards through a rising series of dynamic powers by which it can sublimate itself, the gradation can be resolved into a stairway of four main ascents, each with its high level of fulfilment, These gradations may be summarily described as a series of sublimations of the consciousness through Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuition into Overmind and beyond it; there is a succession of self-transmutations at the summit of which lies the Supermind or Divine. *Gnôsis*. All these degrees are gnostic in their principle and power; for even at the first we begin to pass from a consciousness based on an original Inconscience and acting in a general Ignorance or in a mixed Knowledge-Ignorance to a consciousness based on a secret self-existent Knowledge... In themselves these grades are grades of energy-substance of the Spirit:... they are

domains of being, grades of the substance and energy of the spiritual being, fields of existence which are each a level of the universal Consciousness-Force constituting and organising itself into a higher status. When the powers of any grade descend completely into us, it is not only our thought and knowledge that are affected,—the substance and very grain of our being and consciousness, all its states and activities are touched and penetrated and can be remoulded and wholly transmuted. Each stage of this ascent is therefore a general, if not a total, conversion of the being into a new light and power of a greater existence.³⁰

These passages are quoted in order to show that Sri Aurobindo either had entirely original ideas about the theory of evolution or appropriated all the Western scientific and philosophical theories of evolution to his own Vedantic-Tantric interpretation of the origin and evolution of the universe as a whole in terms of Involution and Evolution. In this way, the third strand of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy is as much based on his own personal and original experiences and intuition as the first two strands.

Underlying all these aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy is yet another important original belief

which is again based on his experiences and intuition. It is his own theory of the occult and occultism. His belief in occultism is all-pervasive both in his prose masterpieces such as *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Letters on Yoga* and *The Human Cycle* and in his poetic masterpiece, *Savitri*. Like all apocalyptic literature, both types of his works therefore, heavily depend on occultism. In any meaningful discussion of his apocalypticism, a clear conceptual understanding of what Sri Aurobindo actually means by occultism and the occult is, therefore, absolutely essential.

The various dictionary meanings of the term "occult" are : '1. beyond the range of ordinary knowledge; mysterious. 2. secret; disclosed or communicated only to the initiated. 3. of or pertaining to magic, astrology, and other alleged sciences claiming use or knowledge of secret, mysterious, or supernatural agencies. 4. hidden from view. 5. occult studies or science. . . 6. the supernatural or supernatural agencies and affairs considered as a whole . . . ¹³¹ The term "occultism" is explained in the dictionary as 'belief in the existence of certain secret, mysterious, or supernatural agencies with which human beings can communicate.¹³²

According to encyclopaedias published in the West, '... the term occultism has acquired intellectually and morally pejorative overtones that do not obtain in other societies where the practices and beliefs concerned do not run counter to the prevailing worldview³³ The Western scholars also maintain that 'Those aspects of occultism

that appear to be common to all human societies' are "divination, magic, witchcraft and alchemy."³⁴ They say that 'the term occultism,' refers 'to a large number of practices, ranging from astrology and alchemy to occult medicine and magic.'³⁵ In so far as the term "occult" is concerned, leading Western scholars understand by it 'intentional practices, techniques, or procedures which (a) draw upon hidden and concealed forces in nature or the cosmos that cannot be measured or recognized by the instruments of modern science and (b) which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results, such as obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without this intervention.'³⁶

As against these sample instances of what Western scholars mean by the occult and occultism, Sri Aurobindo clearly states what he means by them in his utterances such as the following:

- (1) **Occultism is the knowledge and right use of the hidden forces of Nature.**
Occult forces are the forces that can only be known by going behind the veil of apparent phenomena-especially the forces of the subtle physical and supraphysical planes.³⁷
- (2) **... Occultism means rightly the use of the higher powers of our nature, soul, mind, life-force and the faculties of the subtle physical consciousness to bring about results on their own or on the material plane by some pressure of their own secret law and its potentialities, for manifestation and result in human or earthly mind and life and**

body or in objects and events in the world of Matter. A discovery or an extension of these little known or yet undeveloped powers is now envisaged by some well-known thinkers as a next step to be taken by mankind in its immediate evolution;...³⁸

- (3) Occultism is in its essence man's effort to arrive at a knowledge of secret truths and potentialities of Nature which will lift him out of slavery to his physical limits of being, an attempt in particular to possess and organise the mysterious, occult, outwardly still undeveloped direct power of Mind upon Life and of both Mind and Life over Matter. There is at the same time an endeavour to establish communication with worlds and entities belonging to the supraphysical heights, depths and intermediate levels of cosmic Being and to utilise this communion for the mastery of a higher Truth and for a help to man in his will to make himself sovereign over Nature's powers and forces. This human aspiration takes its stand on the belief, intuition or intimation that we are not mere creatures of the mud, but souls, minds, wills that can know all the mysteries of this and every world and become not only Nature's pupils but her adepts and masters ... occultism might be described as the science of the supernatural; but it is in fact only the discovery of the supraphysical, the surpassing of the material limit the heart of occultism is not the impossible chimera which hopes to go beyond or outside all forces of Nature and make pure phantasy and arbitrary miracle omnipotently effective.³⁹

- (4) ... occultism has been banned as a superstition and a fantastic error. But the occult is a part of existence; a true occultism means no more than a research into supraphysical realities and an unveiling of the hidden laws of being and Nature, of all that is not obvious on the surface. It attempts the discovery of the secret laws of mind and mental energy, the secret laws of life and life-energy, the secret laws of the subtle-physical and its energies,-all that Nature has not put into visible operation on the surface; it pursues also the application of these hidden truths and powers of Nature so as to extend the mastery of the human spirit beyond the ordinary operations of mind, the ordinary operations of life, the ordinary operations of our physical existence. In the spiritual domain which is occult to the surface mind in so far as it passes beyond normal and enters into supernormal experience, there is possible not only the discovery of the self and spirit, but the discovery of the uplifting, informing and guiding light of spiritual consciousness and the power of the spirit, the spiritual way of knowledge, the spiritual way of action. To know these things and to bring their truths and forces into the life of humanity is a necessary part of its evolution. Science itself is in its own way an occultism; for it brings to light the formulas which Nature has hidden and it uses its knowledge to set free operations of her energies which she has not included in her ordinary operations and to organise and place at the service of man her occult powers and processes, a vast system of physical magic, for

there is and can be no other magic than the utilisation of secret truths of being, secret powers and processes of Nature.⁴⁰

These various quotations bringing out Sri Aurobindo's views on the Vedanta, the Tantras, Involution-Evolution and occultism and the occult, obviously drive home one significant point, viz., that Sri Aurobindo in his views on all important things of the world was not only original and intuitive but also revelatory. In this sense, the whole basis of his spiritual philosophy is itself apocalyptic. The concept of each one of the numerous terms he has used in his writings is, in being revelatory (apocalyptic), symptomatic of his explication of such terms as "life", "universe", "creation", "the physical", "the vital", "the mental", etc. Each one of such terms explained by him is as apocalyptic as its elaborate explication given by him in numerous parts of his enormous poem *Savitri*. In the whole poem, therefore, it is the revelatory aspect of apocalyptic literature which is more dominant than various other characteristics of apocalyptic literature already analysed and discussed.

In view of this, it is desirable to dwell more or less exclusively on the metaphysical, spiritual, occult an Involution-Evolution oriented revelations made in *Savitri* regarding the various planes and parts of the human being on the one hand and, on the other, the various levels of consciousness both in its descent from Sachchidananda and in its ascent back to it from the Inconscient. Revelations in these areas are made particularly (1)

throughout the description of Aswapathy's Yoga ("The Yoga of the King") as "The Traveller of the Worlds", (2) in his ascent to the presence of the Divine Mother, his adoration of Her and the boon She grants him. (3) in the detailed description of Savitri's Yoga in Book Seven of *Savitri*, (4) in the whole set of dialogues between Savitri and Death, and, above all, (5) in the long and elaborate speeches of the Supreme in Book Eleven. But it needs to be noted that the whole revelatory aspect of *Savitri* is entirely as an Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature. The term "Indian" is emphasised here because of the fundamental difference between the Indian (or Hindu) concept of the Divine and of the concept of God in other religions, especially in those which are familiar to the West.

In this context, it is necessary therefore, to bear in mind a few more of Sri Aurobindo's pronouncements regarding his concept of the Divine. He says, for example, '... the conception of the Divine as an external omnipotent Power who has "created" the world and governs it like an absolute and arbitrary monarch the Christian or Semitic conception has never been mine; it contradicts too much my seeing and experience. . . .'⁴¹ In another context he says, '... The Divine Being is eternal and universal and infinite and cannot be the sole property of ... those that happen to be in a line from the Bible ...'⁴² Since the concept of "The Kingdom of Heaven" introduced in the apocalyptic literatures of Judaism and Christianity has

to be, in our thesis regarding Savitri as an Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature, replaced by the "Supramental Descent" as propounded by Sri Aurobindo, it is necessary to note the following views of his on the subject:

There is no connection between the Christian conception (of the Kingdom of Heaven) and the idea of the supramental descent. The Christian conception supposes a state of things brought about by religious emotion and moral purification; but these things are no more capable of changing the world, whatever value they may have for the individual, than mental idealism or any other power yet called upon for the purpose ... It has no higher spiritual or psychological knowledge behind it and ignores the foundation of human character and the source of the difficulty the duality of mind, life and body. Unless there is a descent of a new Power of Consciousness, not subject to the dualities but still dynamic which will provide a new foundation and a lifting of the centre of consciousness above the mind, the Kingdom of God on earth can only be an ideal, not a fact realised in the general earth-consciousness and earth-life.⁴³

This is natural because:

Hinduism, in following the fine metaphysical vision of the one being as the background and support of life conceives Man as the Cosmic Man. Divinity is one. Humanity is one. Man is the reflection of God. He is a spirit in flesh, struggling to give concrete expression to Divinity in its unfolding through individual, family and society.

Man is the representative of God on earth, man not as an individual, but as a cosmic man... the Divinity immanent in humanity. Man is not merely human. He is potentially divine. Hinduism refuses to accept natural origin of man. Humanity is a descent of the Divinity on earth, it is not an emergence out of nature, it is not nature's product.

The Divine is all; but its immanence in spirit is evident in man. Man is not a sinner by birth, he has indeed suffered no fall ; for creation is a necessity to manifest the beauty, the holiness and majesty of the Divine: Man, so far from being a sinner is a prince in spirit. He is the son of God in the true sense of the term. His limitation is his handicap: this limitation comes from the eccentric urge of the divine nature; creation implies self-imposed limitation and projection. To be self-conscious is to be limited. To be a person is to invite an orientation in space and time. Indeed there is more a restriction of consciousness than a spiritual or moral fall. Spirit is our essence. The restriction confines our vision. If there is restriction, there is the constant urge in man to break it to realize his cosmic nature. If this is not possible in flesh, it is possible in spirit.⁴⁴

These quotations should serve as no more than a sample set of ideas bringing out the fundamental difference between the apocalypticism of the Western specimens of apocalyptic literature and the Indian (or Eastern) examples of the same such as Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. Therefore, in our explication of the apocalypticism of *Savitri*, in the area of the "revelation", "disclosure", "unveiling" or "unfolding" the mystical, occult and

spiritual nature of each one of the planes of Consciousness selected for study, this fundamental and underlying difference between the two types of apocalyptic literature shall be taken for granted.

Chapter Notes :

1. R. R. Diwakar, *Mahayogi : Life, Sadhana and Teachings of Sri Aurobindo*, p.183

2. Ibid. p.185

3. Ibid. p.186

4. Ibid. p.186

What follows is a summary of the Diwakar's analysis of the Vedantic aspect of the spiritual basis of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, unless otherwise indicated.

5. Mahendranath Sircar, *Eastern Lights : A Brief Account of Some Phases of Life, Thought, and Mysticism in India* (Calcutta : Arya Publishing House, 1935), p.67

What follows is a summary of Sircar's views on the Tantras, unless otherwise indicated.

6. Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), pp.19-36

7. Ibid. pp.1-5

8. Ibid.

9. Roliert Me Henry, ed. . *The New Eneyelopaedia Britannica*, Maeropaedia. Vol.7, pp. 7-23

10. Ibid. p. 7

11. Robert McHenry . e d . , *The New Eneyelopaedia Britannica*, Micropaedia, Vol. 7. pp. 7-23

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part One and Part Two (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust , 1971) , p.5
15. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God and Other Writings* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), p . 41
16. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book Two Part Two (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970), p.726
17. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God*, p.148
18. Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), p.148
19. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book Two Part Two. pp.. 825-6
20. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* Part One (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970), p. 47
21. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God*, p. 18
22. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1971), p.235
23. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*. Book One Part One and Book Two Part One (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970), p.129

24. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters On Yoga*. Part Four. p. 1126
25. Sri Aurobindo. *Letters On Yoga*. Part One. p. 109.
26. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters On Yoga*. Part Two and Three, p. 991-2
27. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God*, p. 62
28. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 446
29. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book Two Part Two, pp.932-3
30. Ibid. p.938
31. Laurence Urdang and Stuart Berg Flexner, eds., *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language: College Edition*, p.919
32. Ibid.
33. Robert McHenry, ed., *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Macropaedia, Vol.25, p.76
34. Ibid.
35. Mircea Eliade. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Volume 11, p.36
36. Ibid.
37. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters On Yoga*, Part One. p.75
38. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, p.31
39. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* Book Two Part Two, p.874
40. Ibid. pp.651-2
41. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters On Yoga*, Part One, p.174

42. Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself*, p.483
43. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters On Yoga, Part One*, p.133
44. Mahendranath Sircar, *Eastern Lights : A Brief Account of Some Phases of Life, Thought and Mysticism in India*, pp.167-8



*THE REVELATORY
NATURE OF HUMAN
LIFE RECORDED IN
SAVITRI*



IV
CHAPTER

**THE REVELATORY
NATURE OF HUMAN
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Of the thirty-one meanings of "life"¹ listed in the dictionary, those which are relevant to the purpose on hand in this Chapter are: "... 2. the sum of the distinguishing phenomena of plants and animals, esp. metabolism, growth, reproduction, and adaptation to environment. 3. the animate existence or term of animate existence of an individual:... 4. a corresponding state, existence, or principle of existence conceived of as belonging to the soul. 5. the general or universal condition of human existence: ...8. a living being:... 9. living things collectively, whether animals or plants. 10. a particular aspect of existence. 11. the course of existence, or sum of experiences and actions that constitute a person's existence... 16. a mode or manner of existence, as in the world of affairs, society, etc.' 'As it is. even these meanings of "life" relate it to "existence". Therefore, we have to seek the meaning of the term "existence" also for our purpose. Apart from this, in everyday life we apply the

term "life" to the world in general also. On a third level, "life" can be taken to represent "creation" as a whole. Further, philosophically speaking, life, creation, or the world is nothing but "manifestation". This circumstance requires us to acquaint ourselves on the one hand with the dictionary meanings of these terms and, on the other, with their conceptual qualities as described or prescribed by Sri Aurobindo. This is necessary for two reasons. In the first place, the type of westernised education that we have received tends to compel us to the dictionary meanings most of which are entirely Western. Secondly, Sri Aurobindo, in spite of his completely Western education, had re-Indianised himself to the extent of being entirely Indian or Eastern in conceptualising any important term in any branch of knowledge. Without bothering about the dictionary meanings of the terms mentioned above "life", "existence", "manifestation", "creation", "world" and "universe" let us limit ourselves to a brief understanding of what Sri Aurobindo means by each one of them in essence.

He admits that 'The English word life does duty 'for many very different shades of meaning'.² Even so, he evolves his own meaning based on his spiritual, mystic, occult and metaphysical knowledge. Therefore, he says, in one context, 'Life itself here [on earth] is Being at labour in Matter to express itself in terms of conscious force'.³ As such, 'human life is the human being at labour to impress himself on the material world with the greatest possible force and intensity and extension'.⁴ According to his

Vedanta-oriented view, 'Life is ... a subordinate power of the energy aspect of Sachchidananda.⁵ Besides, 'it is Force working out form and the play of conscious energy from the standpoint of division created by Mind.⁶ It is the dynamic expression of Consciousness-Force when thrown outward to realise itself in concrete harmonies of formation'.⁷ In another context Sri Aurobindo describes life as 'an energy of spirit subordinated to action of mind and body, which fulfils itself through mentality and physicality and acts as a link between them.'⁸ Life is also 'only a lavish and manifold opportunity given us to discover, realise, express the Divine.'⁹ it is 'not only a play of forces or a mental experience, but a field for the evolution of the concealed spirit.'¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo's clarification of the meaning of the term "existence" is also equally apocalyptic in the sense that it uncovers the hidden spiritual and occult meaning of existence. Note that, according to him, 'Existence is', in the first place, 'an infinite and therefore undefinable and illimitable Reality which figures itself out in multiple values of life.'¹¹ It 'is not merely a glorious or a vain, a wonderful or a dismal panorama of a constant mutation of becoming.'¹² It 'is a representation of ineffable Being.'¹³

Sri Aurobindo introduces the concept of life and existence as manifestation' by declaring, 'All world-existence is manifestation'.¹⁴ He also says that creation is only manifestation.¹⁵ Thereby he equates manifestation (and therefore existence and life) with creation. As such, all created things are 'a manifestation of the infinite spirit

out of its own being, out of its own consciousness'.¹⁶ Speaking about creation and manifestation, he maintains that 'All creation' 'proceeds from the conscious substance of the Eternal and therefore, 'is a manifestation of him'.¹⁷ Clarifying his stand on his concept of "creation", Sri Aurobindo says that 'the Indian word for creation, *srsti* means a release or bringing forth of what is held in, latent'.¹⁸ 'Creation is not a making of something out of nothing or of one thing out of another,'¹⁹ according to him. On the contrary, it is 'a self-projection of Brahman into the conditions of Space and Time. Creation is not a making, but a becoming in terms and forms of conscious existence.'²⁰ In his opinion, 'we can speak of creation only in the sense of the Being becoming in form and movement what it already is in substance and status.'²¹

Sri Aurobindo's conceptual parameters of the term "world" are similarly spiritual and apocalyptic. 'All world', he says, 'is a movement of the Spirit in itself and is mutable and transient in all its formations and appearances'.²² It is a becoming which seeks always to express in motion of Time and Space, by progression in mind, life and body what is beyond all becoming, ... beyond mind, life and body.²³

Regarding the term "universe" Sri Aurobindo says that 'what we call the Universe' is nothing but the Divine's 'totality of finite and changeable circumstances dependent on an equal, immutable and eternal Infinity'.²⁴ It 'is a self-creative process of a supreme Reality whose presence makes spirit the substance of things'.²⁵ It is the delight of a

Self-lover, the play of a Child, the endless self-multiplication of a Poet intoxicated with the rapture of His own power of endless creation.²⁶ In this way, 'Universe is a diffusion of the divine All in infinite Space and Time'.²⁷

The foregoing summary of Sri Aurobindo's conceptual frameworks of the various terms associated with his idea of life clearly points out the Vedantic, Tantric and Involution-Evolution oriented background of his spiritual thinking. What he explains in prose in other philosophical works of his, he describes in *Savitri* in a supremely poetic manner. He expresses himself on "life" in various ways at various stages of the development of the theme of his epic poem. But each one of his comments or statements on "life" (or on any other aspect selected for our study) may be either merely intellectual or intensely "apocalyptic" In view of this, emphasis and importance will have to be given to those passages alone in which Sri Aurobindo's treatment of the aspect concerned is comprehensively revelatory. The first ever passage unveiling the apocalyptic significance of life in the sense of creation or manifestation or universe or world occurs in Book One, Canto IV : "The Secret Knowledge". It is not an ordinary "statement" or philosophical "comment" on life / world / creation / manifestation / universe, but entirely apocalyptic. In contrast, other passages are not adequately apocalyptic since they are in the nature of Sri Aurobindo's intellectual statement or philosophical comments in the ordinary sense. The difference between

the truly apocalyptic passages and others is illustrated by passages such as the following:

*A gaol is this immense material world.
Across each road stands armed a stone-eyed law,
At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.
A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgment sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God :
Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel's circling immobility,
A bond is put on the high climbing mind,
A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life.
Thus is the throne of the Inconscient safe
While the tardy ceilings of the aeons pass
And the Animal browses in the sacred fence
And the gold Hawk can cross the skies no more.²⁸*

Not that passages such as this are not at all apocalyptic with reference to the terms they deal with. Note for example, the mention of 'the Ignorance', 'the priests of Night', 'the Karmic norm', 'The Titan in us and the God', 'the high climbing mind', 'the journeying discoverer, Life', 'the throne of the inconscient and the gold Hawk'. All these are allusions to the various aspects of the spiritual-occult-metaphysical background of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy based on the three strands, Vendanta, the Tantras and the theories of

Involution-Evolution.²⁸ To the extent that these allusions are from the spiritual basis of the poem, the passage in which they appear is legitimately apocalyptic in terms of the various characteristics of apocalyptic literature and apocalypticism already defined by us. Such passages need not, however, be selected for analysis. Since the apocalyptic references in them are not as pronounced as in many other passages such as the one mentioned above, viz., the passage from Book One, Canto IV- "The Secret Knowledge".²⁹

The Canto, "The Secret Knowledge" is a part of the description of "The Yoga of the King", --the Yoga undertaken by King Aswapathy, the human father of Savitri. It follows the Canto, "The Yoga of the Soul's Release". After achieving his soul's release, Aswapathy set out to possess the "secret knowledge" as the second step in the Yoga of the King. This secret knowledge first he had of time-born men.³⁰ The long passage on life under reference forms the last part of the canto describing Aswapathy's acquisition of the "secret knowledge". It comprises six verse-paragraphs and gives a revelatory account of life in all its senses beginning with the meaning of life as "creation" of the universe or manifestation. Sri Aurobindo begins to 'reveal', 'unveil' or 'disclose' the spiritual and occult nature and significance of manifestation with his theory of Involution and Evolution of Consciousness. The first verse-paragraph³¹ begins with a statement: 'A

consciousness that knows not its own truth' 'Moves here in a half-light that seems the whole'. This is clearly a reference to the Consciousness aspect of the Supreme Trinity, Existence-Consciousness- Bliss (Sachchidananda), which descended from its transcendental heights to effect its involution. According to Sri Aurobindo's revelation here, the whole creation or manifestation started with of the Consciousness aspect of Sachchidananda. Only because of its involution, evolution started. But after its involution, the Sachchidananda as Consciousness forgot 'its own truth' as an inseparable part of the three-fold nature of the Supreme, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Its evolution has now reached upto the emergence of man, the mental creature. Involved Consciousness as the evolved mental being, however, does not know the full light. That is why, the poet says, it 'Moves here in a half-light that seems the whole'. In this way, Sri Aurobindo begins to unravel the mystery of manifestation by explaining it in terms of his own theory of Involution-Evolution. Consciousness moving at present 'in a half-light' which to man seems the whole is, Sri Aurobindo further reveals, an interregnum in Reality and it cuts off the Integral Thought, the total Power. As the middle term of the integral Sachchidananda, Consciousness is an interregnum whereas Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is Reality, the integral thought, the total Power. Because of involution, Consciousness has come away from its transcendental summit. Therefore, it is far from the original Dusk. It is likewise for from the

final Flame also because it is in the process of evolution after it undertook 'the adventure of consciousness and joy' (mentioned in the very first conto of *Savitri*.³²) by joining the process of Evolution from Inconscience to arrive back at the Superconscient, 'the final Flame'. In this way, the involved and evolving Consciousness lends a purport to the random world. But it is, after all, only the middle part of the whole integral Thought, the total Power, since it is only one of the three aspects of the Supreme Sachchidananda which initiated the whole process of creation or manifestation by means of its involution and evolution. As such, involved and evolving Consciousness is only a conjecture leaning upon doubtful proofs, a message misunderstood, a thought confused. It is a fragment of the universal word. It leaves two giant letters void of sense, indicating Existence and Bliss which alone complete the integral Thought, the total Power of Sachchidananda. Being merely 'the middle sign' of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, it is carrying an enigmatic universe without sanction. That is why, man, the mental being, does not understand the hidden meaning of life as manifestation of Sachchidananda through the process of Involution-Evolution. That is why, Sri Aurobindo says, 'Thus is the meaning of creation veiled'. Pointing out the real way of understanding the veiled meaning of creation, he says that our deepest need is to join once more what now is parted, opposite and twain, remote in sovereign spheres that never meet. We must fill the immense lacuna we have made, a hyphen must connect Matter and Mind.

Sri Aurobindo also seeks to reveal the real nature of the universe in terms of the Spirit and Nature which he mentions in his statement, 'Two are the ends of the mysterious plan' out of which the universe has been created. Based on his own experiences first and his deep study of the Vedic literature afterwards he arrives at the realisation that 'The Spirit's free and absolute potencies/Burn in the solitude of the thoughts of God.' They hold no traffic with error and its reign. They are guardians of the silence of the Truth. They are keepers of the immutable decree. Their importance to the universe is immense because their station of inviolable might moveless upholds the world's enormous task. Its ignorance is by their knowledge lit. Significantly, however, they are far away from man's reach as of now, significantly because their aloofness drives man to surpass himself. Our passion heaves to wed the eternal calm and our dwarf-search mind to meet the Omniscient's force. Enigmatically, however, they seem careless of the grief that stings the world's heart, and the pain that rends its body and life. What is worse, they have no portion in the good that dies. Mute, pure, they do not share in the evil done. To the human consciousness that does not know its own truth, all this strikes as extremely cruel, undivine and far from godly. The revelatory explanation, as given by Sri Aurobindo, is that the immortal does not see as we vainly see. He looks on hidden aspects and screened powers. He knows the law

and the natural line of things. Therefore, in Time he waits for the Eternal's hour for the purpose of providing permanent and final solution to all 'the evil done' in the universe. Because of the process of Involution-Evolution, however, a spiritual secret aid is there to sustain humankind. For, while a tardy Evolution's coils wind on and Nature hews her way through adamant a divine intervention thrones above. Continuing this comforting revelation, Sri Aurobindo declares, 'We whirl not here upon a casual globe'. Even through the tangled anarchy called Fate and through the bitterness of death and fall an 'outstretched Hand' is felt upon our lives. So benevolent is the 'Hand' that in its unshaken grasp it keeps for us safe what the godhead promised to our struggling souls when first man's heart dared death and suffered life. Continuing his "disclosure" of the mystery of life, the poet says, 'One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:/ Our errors are his steps upon the way;/ He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,' "through the hard breath of battle and toil.' His knowledge overrules our nescience because He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears. Because of this, when we can see nothing but drift and bale, a mighty Guidance leads us still through all thereby proving that God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right. All this is sure to happen, according to Sri Aurobindo, because 'The ever-wise compassionate Brilliances' ('The

Spirit's free and absolute potencies'), these calm and distant Might shall act at last.

After this kind of revelation regarding the occult nature of the Spirit (the Divine, Brahman or God), Sri Aurobindo now undertakes the disclosure of the occult and spiritual qualities and significance of Nature, the second of the two ends of the mysterious plan of the universe. Nature, according to him, is at the Spirit's opposite pole. She is the other end of the mysterious plan of the universe, the manifestation of the Spirit. Introducing the idea of *Shakti* (or "Yogamaya" mentioned in *The Mother*) which he seems to have adopted from the Tantras, Sri Aurobindo says, that the conscious Force that acts in Nature's breast, absolves from hour to hour her secret charge. Nature, after all, is the universe or creation or manifestation as a whole. In his disclosure of the meaning of Nature also, therefore, the poet continues his additional disclosure of the occult nature of the universe. Accordingly, it is the mystery of the deeps that God has built for his abode below the Thinker's sight. It is the 'compromise of a stark absolute Truth/ With the light that dwells near the dark end of things'. What is more significant, it is a 'tragi-comedy of divine disguise, a 'long far seeking for joy ever near, ' and a 'gold dome on a black dragon base'. The conscious Force that acts in Nature's breast introduced here by Sri Aurobindo is an Executrix of the inevitable Idea hampered, enveloped by the hoofs of Fate, a patient trustee of slow eternal Time, So

extraordinary is the divine power of the Force in our daily life that all she foresees in masked imperative depths; the dumb intention of the unconscious gulfs answers to her will that sees upon the heights. Moreover, the conscious Force acting in Nature is privy to a summit victory's vast descent and the portent of the soul 's immense uprise. Such description of phenomenal world is indeed the "unveiling" of the occult significance of Nature.

In the next two verse-paragraphs³³ Sri Aurobindo introduces his spiritual revelation of the universe in terms of a joint action by "the Spirit" and "the conscious Force" with an added variation regarding the nature of the two. "The Spirit" for example, is described and introduced as "the sole transcendent One", and "the conscious Force" as 'the mighty Mother'. According to his extended idea of the nature of the universe, all here are figures of the sole transcendent One. Only by him they are, his breath is their life. An unseen Presence moulds the oblivious clay of the earth. The whole creation (or universe) manifested because, Sri Aurobindo says, 'the sole transcendent One' came upon the dubious whirling globe as a playmate in the mighty Mother's game, to hide from her pursuit in force and form. He is a secret spirit in the Inconscient's sleep, a shapeless Energy, a voiceless Word. Even so, He is primordial. For He was here before the elements could emerge, before there was light of mind or life could breathe. His occult significance is that he is an 'accomplice of' the 'cosmic huge pretence' of the mighty Mother. All

phenomenal things are nothing but His semblances which he turns to real shapes. Each shape is merely a symbol. But he makes the symbol equal with the truth He gives to his timeless thoughts a form in Time. The mighty Mother, on her part has forged from him her works of skill and might in the form of all created things in the universe. Because, the Master of being has come close to her. All created things are the result of their coming close to each other. As such, the mighty Mother chases her idea of him in objects wrought by her and in the persons she conceives. Collaborating with her 'the sole transcendent One' ever repeats in them his ceaseless births. By making this statement Sri Aurobindo reveals his original idea that God (the Divine) is present in every created thing. Elaborating this revelation about the transcendent One he adds, 'He is the Maker and the world he made, He is the vision and he is the seer'. This elaboration leads to the further revelation that Nature created by the mighty Mother is nothing but the transcendent One himself, working in close collaboration the mighty Mother. Hence the poet's conclusion that, 'There are Two who are One and play in many worlds; In knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met/ And light and darkness are their eyes' interchange.' Naturally, therefore, the universe is an 'endless masquerade', 'a dream-fact vision of a truth', emerging from the 'play' of the 'Two who are One'. We, the human beings, are unable to recognise each phenomenon as nothing but the transcendent One, only because we

accept its face and pass by all it means; a part is seen, we take it for the whole.

At this point Sri Aurobindo uses another kind of terminology to describe the transcendent One and the mighty Mother. Deriving the idea from the Vedic scripture Sri Aurobindo says that the transcendent One moves there as the 'Soul' and the mighty Mother moves as 'Nature'. As players, both of them have made their play with us for roles here on the earth. As such, we must fill our parts while our uttered sentences in the drama created by the Two, veil in their thought. The 'mighty plan' of their drama is entirely hers which she holds back from our sight allowing us to feel only a darkened little of the lay. In her planned drama, He too wears a diminished Godhead here, forsaking his Omnipotence, -His calm and infinity. As a collaborator in her play, He knows her only, He has forgotten himself; He abandons all to make her great. The unrevealed reason of his participation in her play is that, by forgetting himself, by abandoning all to make her great, He hopes in her to find himself anew. This line in *Savitri*. reiterates the essence of Sri Aurobindo's theory of Involution-Evolution. The transcendent One Himself takes birth in her world, waits on her will, works out her meanings she seems not to know and serves her secret purpose in long Time. His bliss in her to him is his whole world. He grows through her in all his being's powers; He reads by her God's hidden aim in things. This is the secret occult meaning of our existence.

On the basis of this revelation about the 'Two who are One' Sri Aurobindo further elaborates it in the third verse-paragraph³⁴ by saying: 'The Two who are One are the secret of all power,/ The Two who are One are the might and right in. things.' His soul supports the world and her. As One who is happy, inert He lies beneath her feet. His breast he offers for her cosmic dance of which our lives are the quivering theatre. His works, his thoughts prevailing in the world have been devised by her. As every created phenomenon, inspired by her he speaks and moves in the execution of her drama's scheme. In the march of this ordinary world, She through his witness sight and .motion of might unrolls the material of her cosmic Act. Her happenings, Her force, Her Word, Her silence, Her heights and depths, Her events and all by which we find or lose ourselves, things sweet and bitter, magnificent and mean, terrible and beautiful and divine manifested in the universe are all part and parcel of the plan of the play of the Two.

In this part of the passage also Sri Aurobindo introduces his theory of Involution-Evolution. Note, for example, his statement about the transcendent One: 'His consciousness is a babe upon her knees,/ Her endless space is the playground of his thoughts./ His being a field of her vast experiment'. Evolution also figures in the lines: 'His soul is a subtle atom in a mass,/ His substance a material for her works' and 'He climbs to eternity through being's gaps,/ He is carried by her from Night to deathless

Light.' These lines obviously, refer to the evolution of the transcendent One up to the level of man the mental creature, 'an aimless traveller between birth and death'. Man claims to have mastered Nature. Referring to this fact, Sri Aurobindo reveals 'To reign she spurs him.' He takes up her powers; He has harnessed her to the yoke of her own law. Man also studies her ways. He makes of her his moment passion's serf. But, as Sri Aurobindo reveals, 'To obey she feigns,' and follows her creature's lead outwardly as if for him she was made and lives only for his use. The real fact, however, is that by conquering her he is most her slave; he is her dependent, all his means are hers; she rules him still.

But the hidden secret of human existence is that the Consciousness aspect of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, hovering at the level of man the mental being, has got to continue to evolve further into the Superconscious through the Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind and Supermind. Revelation about this aspect of the evolution of Consciousness is contained in the lines: 'The Godhead breaks out through the human mould:/ Her highest heights she unmask and is his mate./ Till then he is a plaything in her game'. Man, the *Homo sapiens*, stumbles on driven by her whip of Force throughout his evolution from the Inconscient to the Superconscious. All along, his will is shaped in her forge. In this way, the transcendent One as the human being in the world is obedient to World-Nature's dumb control, though he is

driven by his own formidable Power. In the universe thus, he has sold himself into her regal power as man for any blow or boon that she may choose. As a result, even when what is suffering to our sense in our existence, He feels the sweetness of her mastering touch. In the life of human beings (which is a play planned by the transcendent One and the mighty Mother), he as the Superconscient pretends to have forgotten himself. In life He revels in Nature. He rejoices in her every thought and act and gives consent to all that she can wish. As Sri Aurobindo seeks to reveal, the whole cosmic existence has come into being only because the Spirit, the innumerable One has left behind his lone eternity and has assumed an endless birth in endless Time. Because, he chose to be the finite's multitude of the mighty Mother in an infinite space of the cosmos.

In the fourth verse-paragraph which follows,³⁵ Sri Aurobindo's revelation of the occult nature of life continues on the same lines. He repeats that the Master of existence lurks in us and plays at hide-and-seek with his own Force. So, in Nature's instrument loiters secret God. The transcendent One is now described as 'The Immanent' who lives in man as in his house. He has made the universe his pastime's field. Having manifested himself as human being, however, the Immanent has abandoned his omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. This fact is revealed in the lines: 'All-knowing he accepts our darkened state' in our life. Though 'Divine' he wears shapes of animal or man; Eternal, he assents to Fate and

Time, Immortal, dallies with mortality. The cosmos as a whole has come into existence entirely because the All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance, the All-Blissful bore to be insensible. As a result, He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe in the life of human beings he has himself created. He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts, Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,/ A luminous individual Power'.

In his continued revelation of the nature of our existence, Sri Aurobindo describes the Immanent as 'The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone' who has called out the Silence his mute Force where she lay in the featureless and formless hush guarding the ineffable puissance of his solitude. The vast universe is in existence only because He has fashioned these countless persons of one self and lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone. Therefore, 'Space is himself and Time is only he.' He is in us as our secret self. He has assumed our mask of imperfection. He has made this tenement of flesh his own. He has cast His image in the human measure for the sole purpose that we might rise to His divine measure. According to Sri Aurobindo, it is for this reason that the earthly life is destined to be the life divine. He emphasises this in the lines: 'The Maker shall recast us and impose/ A plan of godhead on the mortal 's mould/ Lifting our finite minds to his infinite,/ Touching the moment with eternity.' His revelation of the spiritual purpose becomes all the more emphatic in the statement that :

*This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine.
Our life is a paradox with God for key.³⁶*

In the fifth verse-paragraph³⁷ of the passage, Sri Aurobindo comes back to the explication of the paradoxical nature of life as it is in the world by saying 'But meanwhile all is a shadow cast by a dream'. As a result, therefore, Life and Himself done the aspect of a myth to the musing and immobile Spirit. Life in the universe appears to be a long unmeaning tale because (as stated in the last line of the quotation given above) 'the key' which is God 'is hid and by the Inconscient kept'. Meanwhile, the secret God dwells beneath the threshold of the Inconscient which has evolved up to man, the mental being. Until he evolves up to the level of the Superconscient 'The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone the immortal Spirit, a nameless Resident'. 'An omnipotent indiscernible Influence sits, unfelt by the form in which he lives and veils his knowledge by the groping mind. In human life, thus, he has become a wanderer in a world his thoughts have made. Yet, by means of Involution-Evolution, 'As one forgetting he searches for himself'. 'His own self's truth he seeks who is the Truth. In the universe which is his own manifestation, He explores the ceaseless miracle of himself till the thousandfold enigma of existence has been solved in the single light of an all-

witnessing Soul. According to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, this is so because this was the transcendent One's 'compact' with his mighty mate, for love of her. As a result, when we look at life two seem his goals viz., Spirit and Matter which are ever one and constitute the end and source of the transcendent One and the mighty Mother. Spirit becoming Matter in the universe has thus become a seeker of the great Mother's wide uncharted will. The immanent has become the explorer and the mariner on a secret inner ocean of the Inconscient evolving into the Superconscient :

This metaphor of the Immanent as "the mariner" is taken up by Sri Aurobindo for further and greater amplification in the sixth (and the last)³⁸ verse- paragraph of the passage under examination. Hence the opening lines of the paragraph: 'This is the sailor on the flow of Time/ This is World-Matter's slow discoverer', launching himself into this small corporeal birth. Throughout the paragraph the metaphor of the sailor is maintained. The voyage mentioned here as undertaken by the 'World-Matter's slow discoverer' refers to the progress of the Consciousness from the Inconscient to the Superconscient through Matter, Life, Mind and the higher planes. Since the Consciousness, before its descent and involution, was part of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, it is described as 'an expert captain of a fragile craft,' 'a voyager upon eternity's seas.' Since the evolution of Consciousness begins at the lower levels, the poet says about the voyager Consciousness that at first he hugs the shore and shuns the

breadths, does not dare to affront the far-off perilous main. But when the sailor (Consciousness) reaches the stage of the mental being there is a change for the better. Because, now he hears the sound of larger seas. A widening world calls him to distant scenes to reach unknown harbour lights in distant climes. As a result, he travels close to unfamiliar coasts. He plunges through a bright haze that hides the stars, steering on the trade-routes of Ignorance. These words indicate that, in the course of its evolution, Consciousness starts rising through the higher planes. The reason is that, as a middle part of Sachchidananda on its way back to its destination on the summit, it is a seeker of the islands of the Blest. Therefore, he leaves the last lands, crosses the ultimate seas, turns to eternal things his symbol quest. Life changes for him its time-constructed scenes. The voyager Consciousness at last has crossed the limit of mortal thought and hope, he has reached the world's end and stares beyond. These lines indicate that the evolution of Consciousness has reached the realms of the Supermind. Sri Aurobindo makes this clear by adding that 'The eyes of mortal body plunge their gaze/ Into Eyes that look upon eternity. 'When Consciousness finally evolves into Superconscient, at last he hears a chanting on the heights and the far speaks and the unknown grows near. He crosses the boundaries of the unseen and passes to a new vision of himself and things. As Sri Aurobindo concludes in this way, the human being who represents the mental level of the evolution of Consciousness back to Sachchidananda is 'a spirit in an unfinished world 'That

knows him not and cannot know itself'; The spiritual nature of life is revealed by Sri Aurobindo when he says about the voyager Consciousness, 'His is a search of darkness for the light,/ Of mortal life for immortality. Importantly, he makes his search in the vessel of an earthly embodiment as a sailor on the Inconscient's fathomless sea voyaging through a starry world of thought on Matter's deck to a spiritual sun. These words clearly point out that, through the process of Involution-Evolution of Sachchidananda the human life of man shall be transformed into the life Divine. The life Divine is, after all, the goal of earthly life, though the goal is fixed outside on the present maps.

Throughout its evolutionary voyage, Consciousness, Sri Aurobindo repeats, is prompted by the mighty Mother who guides him secretly. Hence the statement: 'But none learns whither through the unknown he sails/ Or what secret mission the great Mother gave.' 'Driven by her breath across life's tossing deep,/ He carries her sealed orders in his breast.' He goes to discover a new mind and body in the city of God and enshrine the Immortal in his glory's house and make the finite one with Infinity. This evolution of earthly life into the life Divine, however, takes a very very long time. It does not matter, Sri Aurobindo says, because 'Across... the endless years/Her ocean winds impel his errant boat'. The mighty Mother, the Divine Force emanating from the transcendent One always conducts the transformation of earthly life.

Consciousness at the level of human life is aware of this. Therefore, always it follows in her force's wake. As a voyager, it sails through life and death and other life. It travels on through waking and sleep, After all, a power is on him from her occult force and never can the mighty traveller rest and never can the mystic voyage cease. Thus the transformation of involved Consciousness into the Superconscient Sachchidananda will continue till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul and the morns of God have overtaken his night. As far as the Immanent is concerned, Sri Aurobindo repeats his revelation that as long as Nature lasts, he too is there for he and she are one. Besides, there is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim, a purpose in her vast and random game. Sri Aurobindo unveils her purpose by saying:

*This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,
This constant will he covered with her sport,
To evoke a person in the impersonal Void,
With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of
trance,
Wake a dumb self in the inconscient depths
And raise a lost power from its python sleep
That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from
Time
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.
For this he left his white infinity
And laid on the Spirit the burden of the flesh,
That Godhead's seed might flower in mindless
Space.³⁹*

In this way Sri Aurobindo's "revelation", "disclosure", "unveiling", or "unravelling" of the occult and spiritual meaning of life comes to a close in the Canto, "The Secret Knowledge". Needless to repeat that this disclosure occurs in the context of the Yoga of the King.

In contrast, the next significant passage relevant to our purpose of locating Sri Aurobindo's revelation of spiritual significance of manifestation occurs in Book Four: "The Book of Birth and Quest", Canto I: "The Birth and Childhood of the Flame".⁴⁰ The context of this passage is the incarnation of the Divine Mother as Savitri with her divine capacity to 'break the iron Law./ Change Nature's doom by the lone Spirit's power' and as 'A limitless Mind that can contain the world'.⁴¹ The mighty Mother who (as already noticed in the detailed analysis of the first passage) 'Unrolls the material of her cosmic Act' after the transcendent One has completely yielded to her, according to the rules of the plan of their joint play. As the Executrix of the work assigned to her by the Master of existence, again and again she descends to earth and fronts Time with her fathomless heart.⁴² After she incarnated herself as Savitri, therefore, she took again her divine unfinished task which is as already seen, to effect the transformation of earthly life into life divine through the process of Involution-Evolution undertaken by Sachchidananda in his Consciousness aspect. The descent of the mighty Mother as Savitri therefore, 'renewed,

again revealed the ancient closeness by earth-vision veiled', 'A consanguinity of earth and heaven,/ Between the human portion toiling here/ And an as yet unborn and limitless Force.' By means of these words, Sri Aurobindo in this passage also repeats the disclosure of the occult secret of the origin of creation as nothing but the manifestation of the transcendent One in collaboration with the mighty Mother as his mate. He describes the commencement of creation as follows:

*For since upon this blind and whirling globe
Earth-plasm first quivered with the illumining
mind
And life invaded the material sheath
Afflicting Inconscience with the need to feel, Since
in Infinity's silence woke a word,
A Mother wisdom works in Nature's breast
To pour delight on the heart of toil and want
And press perfection on life's stumbling powers,
Impose heaven-sentience on the obscure abyss And
make dumb Matter conscious of its God.⁴³*

As in the earlier passage, here also Sri Aurobindo's unveiling or disclosure of the occult nature of existence is by combined reference to the Vedantic, the Tantric and the evolutionary ideas integrated by him in his spiritual philosophy forming the backdrop of *Savitri*. That is why he reiterates that although our fallen minds forget to climb, our human stuff resists or breaks, 'the Mother wisdom' who works in Nature's breast keeps her will that

hopes to divinise clay. Since she collaborates with the Immanent in their Divine Play, failure cannot repress her, defeat cannot overthrow; Time cannot weary her nor the Void subdue. The ages have not made her passion less; She admits no victory of Death or Fate. Sri Aurobindo's revelatory explanation based on his own idea of Involution-Evolution continues in the same way in the next lines also; 'Always she drives the souls to new attempt;/ Always her magical infinitude/ Forces to aspire the inert brute elements' in human beings as also in the whole world. The mighty Mother as Mother Nature scatters the seed of the Eternal's strength on a half-animate and crumbling mould, plants heaven's delight in the heart's passionate mire of the earth. In keeping with her evolutionary efforts, she pours godhead's seekings into a bare beast frame, hides immortality in a mask of death. Obviously, all this account is a condensed variant of the apocalyptic revelation, Sri Aurobindo makes throughout the first passage analysed by us regarding the unveiled secret of the origin of the universe.

The same trend is continued in the first half of Canto III of the same Book.⁴⁴ The Canto is called "The Call to the Quest" since Aswapathy asks Savitri in this Canto to undertake a quest to find a suitable soul mate for her. The contingency arises because, after her growth as a youthful princess, 'no equal heart came close to join her heart,'⁴⁵ 'None could stand up her equal and her mate.'⁴⁶ In these circumstances, one morning King Aswapathy listened to a word that leaped from some far sky of

thought. It was an apostrophe to 'Force-compelled, Fate-driven earth-born race' of human beings in the course of which Sri Aurobindo's revelation of the occult nature of human life is again expressed. It needs to be noted here that" the apostrophe Aswapathy listens to here emanates from 'some far sky of thought'. As such, the words it contains are not Aswapathy's. 'The voice' he heard was of unborn Powers murmuring behind luminous bars of Time. In this sense the whole apostrophe can be considered as a variant of 'vision' in which some secret is unveiled and revealed. In the words of the voice Aswapathy hears, human life is that of a changeful mould for growing gods since Almighty powers are shut in Nature's cells. The second aspect of the revelation made here is that the earth is a border screened from heaven and Immortal Powers sweep flaming past the doors of human beings to exceed themselves since earth's force and will exceed her form and fate. The occult truth about her is that she is a goddess caught in a net of in conscience but she knows that one high step might enfranchise all and suffering, looks for greatness in her sons. In response to her aspiration, Heaven's flaming lights descend, no doubt, and the luminous Eye approaches. But both of them return since none understands their word in human life. The reason for this 'epic of hope and failure' of earth and human life is that Fate is unwilling and the Abyss denies; the Inconscient's mindless waters block all done. As Aswapathy feels, something needed to be done to remedy this tragic situation in the march of earthly life towards

the life divine. Therefore, he gives a call to Savitri to undertake a quest for her mate with whom she should 'Ascend from Nature to divinity's height;/ Face the high gods, crowned with felicity,/ Then meet a greater God, thy self beyond Time.'

Yet another aspect of the occult significance of human life and the world at large is pointed out in passing in the next Canto also: Canto IV "The Quest".⁴⁷ The occult secret revealed here is that dim-masked hooded godheads move assigned to man immutably from his birth. These godheads are at once the agents of his spirit's will and witness and executors of his fate. They hold his nature's sequence in their guard carrying the unbroken thread old lives have spun. This revelation is significant because it introduces the idea that 'old lives' of man taken by him since primordial times play a significant role in his 'adventure of consciousness' enabling him to rise from the Inconscient to the Superconscient.

This point is more elaborately and forcefully revealed by Sri Aurobindo in Book Seven Canto II: "The Parable of the Search for the Soul" undertaken by Savitri. The background is prepared here by Sri Aurobindo according to whom the 'hooded godheads' guarding man from his birth 'intervene' even in his casual steps. Everything human beings think or do is an energy loosed and holds its course. Because, the godheads, 'The shadowy keepers of our deathless past have made our fate the child of our own acts. As a result, in our life on earth we reap the fruit of our forgotten deeds. Since we live in a

present born from an unknown past, our forgotten deeds seem but parts of a mechanic Force to a mechanic mind tied by earth's laws. Yet, Sri Aurobindo emphasises, they are 'instruments of a Will supreme' since 'A prescient architect of Fate and Chance' builds our lives on a foreseen design.

By far, the most clearly (and probably, most convincingly) articulated occult revelation about the nature and mystery of human life is the one provided by 'Narad the heavenly sage from Paradise' in Book Six, Canto II.⁴⁸ According to Narad, this great perplexed and discontented world of ours came into existence as a result of a huge descent or a giant fall of the Spirit, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. This descent was a blind tremendous choice of the soul which, before the origin of the universe, lived safely in the immortal boundlessness of Self in the midst of Truth, Consciousness and Light. From the heart of Self (Sachchidananda), the soul looked out from its transcendent happiness and interminable bliss of the Spirit. Of course, at that time it knew itself to be deathless, timeless, spaceless, one and indivisible. In spite of that, as Sri Aurobindo reveals through Narad's speech, it grew curious of a shadow which was thrown by Truth. The soul chose to know the shadow. Therefore, it strained towards the shadow though the shadow was the otherness of Self. It saw an unknown face peering through night in the shadow and sensed in it 'a negative infinity', 'imitating God and everlasting Time'. This negative infinity along

with Matter' offered to the soul 'a ground for Nature's adverse birth', along with Matter's unconsciousness. As a result, the immortal soul descended into the Inconscient in 'a giant fall' in order to be a transient soul involved in unconsciousness which 'lights up birth and death and ignorant life.' When the soul was involved in Matter, Mind arose ; to stare at Nothingness 'till figures formed of what could never be'. In the form of Mind the primordial soul 'housed the contrary of all that is'.⁴⁹ Next, a nothingness appeared as the cause of Being and became its support in a blank infinite created by Inconscience. The transcendent Spirit, thus, disappeared in the abyss of this blank infinite along with life and mind. A darkened Nature lived in the abyss holding the seed of the hidden Spirit. In this way, the original eternal Consciousness became Inconscient. The Spirit naturally lost its native air. Its primordial bliss became a stranger in the insentient universe. Because the primordial Consciousness came down drawn by the grandeur of the Void, it leaned to the Inconscient in order to fulfil its desire for 'the adventure of Ignorance and for the endless possibility of evolution lurking in the 'womb of Chaos and Nothing's gulf'. Narad also reveals that the soul descended from Sachchidananda because it was tired of its unchanging happiness and immortality. It felt a strong attraction towards hazard's call and danger's charm. In fact, it began to yearn for the pathos of grief, for the drama of pain, for perdition's peril, for ruin and its glamour, for the taste of pity and the gamble of love and for passion and Fate. Thus the soul

came down from safe Eternity to this world of hard endeavour and difficult toil. Of its own accord thus, the transcendent Consciousness chose to descend into the universe with its clash of forces in order to experience the joy of creation out of nothingness. Because of its descent into it the world has become a tent of desires and headquarters of grief. All this, no doubt, seems to have happened in random ways but the creation became a manifestation because of the will of the Timeless working out in Time. Of course, it appears to be a hard machine or a meaningless Fate. But the reason for this is that it was created by a Magician whose formulas have made Matter's laws governing the life on the earth. All things in life are bound by Matter's laws as long as they last. But these laws and everything else in life can easily change if the Magician so chooses. On the basis of this elaborate explanation Narad (and, through him, Sri Aurobindo) unveils the fact that this world of ours is not built with random bricks of chance. A blind god is not the creator of human destiny. Far from that, Sri Aurobindo concludes through Narad, 'there is a meaning in each curve and line.' As such, 'Time's accidents' taking place in our life 'are steps in its vast scheme.'

The significant passage in this Chapter is the one which describes the immense spiritual significance of the long past of the human race in Book Seven, Canto II,⁵⁰ The revelation made in this passage is in the form of a dream. Savitri 'looked into herself and sought for her soul'.⁵¹ A dream disclosed to her the cosmic past and the

world's significance. Accordingly, creation took its first mysterious steps in the formlessness of Self. It made the body's shape a house of soul. Matter learned to think. Person grew and Space was peopled with the seeds of life. In course of time, (as is proved by evolutionary sciences) first appeared a dim-half neutral tide of being emerging out of infinite Nought. Next, a consciousness looked at the Vast inconscient and pleasure and pain stirred the insensible Void. All this was the deed of a blind World-Energy. She shaped a universe out of the Inane. She grew aware in fragmentary beings. In all this account, Sri Aurobindo follows his theory of Involution-Evolution but based more on the scientific theories of creation. Carrying on his description of how evolution continued he reveals that a formless surface consciousness awoke on a dim ocean of subconscious life. Thoughts and feelings came into being and memories hardened and became a bright crust of habitual sense and thought. They became a seat of living personality. Next, mind appeared in its young form and laboured out a mutable form. All this labour resulted in a conscious being who looked around on the green and perilous earth. This conscious being relied on Matter's false eternity and hoped in a brief body to survive. In the midst of all this scientific-seeming revelation about the origin of the universe Sri Aurobindo once again introduces his intuitive idea based on Vedanta that the conscious being felt a godhead in its fragile house and dreamed immortality. On the basis of this he concludes: 'A conscious soul in the Inconscient's world' is 'hidden

behind our thoughts and hopes and dreams'. But, according to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, the conscious soul made mind its seeming king. In its turn, mind, as the soul's 'vicegerent' sits at work and never rests. This mind knows no silence nor dreamless sleep. It toils like a machine and cannot stop. It is served by the hurried servant senses. Mind mocks life's steps in strange subconscious dreams. Unfolding its thought in the inner air, it travels in imagination's car, crosses the globe, journeys beneath the stars, and takes his ethereal course to subtle worlds. Similarly, the vicegerent mind visits the gods on life's miraculous peaks, communicates with Heaven and tampers with Hell. As Savitri sees in her dream, this is the little surface of man's life. This explanation of the mystery of human life shows that Sri Aurobindo has his own theory of psychology in addition to his original theory of evolution. That is why, it assumes the nature of revelation.

In her dream Savitri next sees that Man's house of life holds not the gods alone but also 'occult shadows' and 'tenebrous Powers' who are 'Inhabitants of life's ominous nether rooms./ A shadowy world's stupendous denizens.' This revelation is in agreement with Sri Aurobindo's vivid disclosure of the inhabitants of "The World of Falsehood" whom Aswapathy the Traveller of the Worlds encounters in Book Two, Canto VIII during 'The Descent into Night' undertaken by him in Canto VII of the same Book. As in those Cantos of Book Two in this second Canto of Book Seven also Sri Aurobindo reveals that the Titan and the

Fury and the Djinn lie bound in the subconscious's cavern pit of the human being's consciousness and the Beast grovels in his antre den. From the subconscious' s pit dire mutterings rise and murmur in their drowse. Our subconscious contains in it a monstrous mystery lurking in life's deeps, the mystery of dark and fallen worlds and the dread visages of the adversary Kings. They are aroused from sleep from time to time and can be bound no more afterwards. They are so terrible that they afflict the daylight and alarm night. They invade the human being's outer tenement. These inhabitants of man's subconscious even mount into God's light and perturb all light. Lodging in Nature's basement, they disrupt thought's links and musing sequences, break through the soul's stillness or invite the instincts to forbidden joys and with nether riot and revel shake life's floor. Savitri's dream reveals the occult truth that man's lower nature hides these awful guests. Their vast contagion grips sometimes man's world and, as a result, an awful insurgence overpowers man's soul. The same evil powers break out from all doors into the earth-ways also and fill with horror and carnage God's fair world. Death and his hunters stalk a victim earth. In this way, all is the prey of the destroying force of these subconscious powers as a result of which creation rocks and tremble top and base. As Savitri realises in her dream, this evil Nature housed in human hearts is a dangerous guest. Therefore, the soul that harbours it, it can dislodge. After all, it is 'an opposite potency contradicting God,' and 'imitates the Godhead it denies. According to Sri

Aurobindo's occult disclosure, 'This can abolish man, annul his world' but for the fact that there is a guardian power, there are Hands that save and calm eyes divine regard the human scene. In this way, Savitri's dream reveals that a vast subliminal is man's measureless part./ The dim subconscious is his cavern base."

The occult explanation given to this predicament of human life is that our past lives still in our unconscious selves and by the weight of its hidden influence is shaped our future's self-discovery. (As we have already observed this idea is an extension of what is disclosed about the human past in Book Four, Canto IV.) As a result, in human life the unremembering hours repeat the old acts, our dead past clings round our future's ankles and drags back the new nature's glorious stride. Old thoughts, old longings, dead passions live again. They move the waking man to words that force the barriers of the lips to deeds that suddenly start and overleap his head of reason and his guardian will. Since the old rejected nature still survives in dim tunnels of the world's being and in ours its stifled impulses breathe and move and rise in our subconscious and all keeps a phantom immortality.

Savitri's dream also reveals that ' A portion of us lives in present Time as well. And we live in mind's uncertain light since this portion gropes in dim inconscience and we arise out of the inconscient and subliminal. In .this way, Savitri's dream also unveils the human paradox that 'Above us dwells a superconscient God/ Hidden in ... his own light1 but 'Around us is a vast

of ignorance / Lit by the uncertain ray of human mind.
/ Below us sleeps the Inconscient dark and mute.'

However, this is not all we are or all our world as revealed to Savitri in her dream. She sees the brighter side also since her dream discloses that our greater self of knowledge waits for us. A supreme light in the truth-conscious Vast shall descend and make earth's life divine. As Sri Aurobindo always reveals, 'Truth made the world, not a blind Nature-Force.' Our large diviner heights are not here on earth. 'Our summits' are 'in the supersconscient's blaze'. They are glorious with the the very face of God. There is our aspect of eternity, the figure of the god we are, 'His immortality and light and bliss.' In this way, as Aswapathy has realised in his Yoga, Savitri also realises in her dream that there are greatnesses hidden in our unseen parts waiting for their hour to step into life's front. Therefore, even in the midst of our difficulties, we feel an aid from deep indwelling Gods: 'One speaks within, Light comes to us from above.' All this is possible because our soul from its mysterious chamber acts and pushes our heart and mind to exceed their mortal selves. It seeks for Good and Beauty and for God.

Like Aswapathy in his yoga again, Savitri realises in her dream that a portion of the mighty Mother moulds humanity into God's own shape and leads this great blind struggling world to light, or to create or discover a new world. This is certain because, as Savitri's dream here discloses, 'Earth must transform herself and equal Heaven/ Or Heaven descend into earth's mortal state.'

On the basis of such revelations Savitri successfully effects "The Entry into the Inner Countries" of her being and finds her soul. Thereby she becomes capable of not only encountering Death but also totally annihilating and transforming him. In her conversation with Death in Book Ten, Canto III, we find her making complete and gainful use of all spiritual and occult secrets unveiled to her. In order to refute Death's lethal argument against divinity, she has therefore, to reveal to him the occult meaning of the created universe in "The Debate of Love and Death".⁵¹ She does it in the course of the first three verse-paragraphs of the Canto.⁵² She is the symbol of Divine Love. Hence the title of the Canto: "The Debate of Love and Death'. Savitri's debate with Death is over his materialistic, deterministic and cynical interpretation of the whole manifested creation. Because of his philosophy of determinism, Death is truly a 'dark-browed sophist of the universe'. He veils the Real with its own Idea. He also hides Nature's living face with brute objects thus masking eternity with his dance of death. In short, he speaks 'Truth but Truth that slays'. Therefore, Savitri is compelled to reveal to him the real spiritual and occult significance of the origin of the universe in the past, the nature of life on the earth at present and of the future destination of earthly life. In order to reveal this she answers to Death 'with the Truth that saves.'

Savitri's unveiling of the truth about the origin of the universe is a modified repetition of the revelation already noticed by us in our analysis of the first passage in

Savitri on life-creation-universe-cosmos-manifestation. In the rest of her revelations in her Debate with Death also there are repetitions of revelations already examined by us. This repeated occurrence of the same or similar revelations about life, however, is not without valid reason. The reason is that constant repetition of important revelations is a fundamental characteristic of all apocalyptic literature containing visions, dreams or revelations. This is especially true of the ancient instances of Indian apocalyptic literature, *The Vedas*, *The Upanishads*, *The Bhagvadgita* etc. It is in keeping with the nature and method of all apocalyptic literature in general and of Indian apocalyptic literature in particular, that Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* contains numerous repetitions of the same or similar disclosure about a given aspect. Apocalypticism, after all, needs repeated imparting of the hidden meaning of things to the 'faithful followers' of its basic tenets. The repetition is necessary because the essence of the revelation or revelations made has got to be firmly established in the mind and heart and soul of the 'faithful followers' by the method of 'drilling' the idea by repeating it in different words and various ways. This explains why in her Debate with Death Savitri goes on repeatedly summarising some disclosures already made in the earlier passages examined by us.

In the Canto, "The Debate of Love and Death", however, the 'unveiling' of the occult and spiritual significance of creation and life is not only with reference to its past origin and the present condition but also with

reference to its future. Both as an Avatar and as a fully realised Yogi, Savitri is naturally able to see and reveal the predestined culmination of the earthly life into the life divine. Her disclosure made in this canto, therefore, covers the future nature of life on earth. This is the main and added significance and importance of the passages selected from "The Debate of Love and Death".

In the beginning of her thirteen-page answer to Death, Savitri explains the origin of the universe as the manifestation of God. As Sachchidananda He was the 'transcendent One'. He came down from His heights and made of Matter's world his starting point, as a "traveller new-discovering himself. Before His arrival, there was nothing. Therefore Savitri says, 'He made of nothingness his living-room'. Since there was utter darkness at the time of His arrival He made Night a process of the eternal light. Though immortal Himself, He made death a spur towards immortality in the universe and its life in which He first got involved and from which next he started evolving. Because of His involution, at the time of the creation of the universe, His consciousness dived into inconscient depths; All-knowledge seemed a huge dark Nescience; Infinity wore a boundless zero's form. As the transcendent Sachchidananda He was All-Bliss before involution But after His manifestation in the universe, His abysses of bliss became insensible deeps. Similarly, all His Eternity became a blank spiritual Vast. As Savitri discloses to Death, it was in this way that the Timeless took its ground in emptiness and drew the figure of a

universe. His purpose in doing so was that the Spirit might adventure into Time, wrestle with adamant Necessity and the soul might pursue a cosmic pilgrimage. This was the apocalyptic beginning of the universe, according to Savitri's disclosure to Death. As the One started evolving after His involution of this kind, a spirit moved in black immensities and built a Thought in ancient Nothingness. A soul in God's tremendous Void was lit. To this disclosure of the secret of the origin of the universe made on the Vedantic basis, Savitri adds the Tantric explanation by adding that in Nihil's gulf his mighty Puissance wrought. (The mighty Puissance is none but the mighty Mother mentioned in Aswapathy's acquisition of "The Secret Knowledge".) As the collaborator of the One, his mighty Puissance made Matter the body of the Bodiless. In this inert Matter she breathed a stumbling Life which was in the beginning subconscious. As part of the work of the mighty Puissance, Mind lay asleep in the subconscious Life. Mind in waking Life stretched its giant limbs until the world's heart commenced to beat. Because of Mind, Thought fumbled as it came into existence and discovered speech and fed the new-born Word. Divine Speech then bridged with spans of light the world's ignorance. Because Mind and Thought were created by the mighty Puissance, a reasoning animal, man emerged and willed and planned and sought. He built life new, measured the universe, opposed his fate and wrestled with unseen Powers, conquered and used the laws that rule the world.

According to Savitri's revelation to Death, this is the primordial past of the manifested universe.

Explaining the equally significant occult nature of the present of existence, Savitri tells Death, 'Now through Mind's windows stares the demi-god/ Hidden behind the curtain of man's soul:/ He has seen the Unknown, looked on Truth's veilles face'. More importantly, at present he stands awake in Supernature's light, sees a glory of arisen wings and the vast descending might of God. (Obviously Savitri makes these revelations about the present achievements of man on the basis of the Yogic realisations achieved by Aswapathy and herself.)

This occult and spiritual truth lying unveiled behind human existence is not realised by persons like Death because as Savitri explains: ' O Death, thou lookst on an unfinished world/ Assailed by thee and of its road unsure,/ Peopled by imperfect minds and ignorant lives'. According to Savitri's revelation, if the full evolution of existence (or life, manifestation or creation) is seen in its totality it will be easy to know that soon mute material Nature wakes and sees beyond something towards which she strives. As Savitri maintains, Nature at present is struggling to uncover the spirit and to change back into God. To exceed herself is her transcendent task. Tardily, Nature travels towards manifest God since the world began to be in existence after it was concealed in God. In view of this, Savitri says that Matter in the form of body is an occult document of the All-Wonderful's art. This world is God fulfilled in outwardness. We fail to

understand this because His ways challenge our reason and sense. Because they are in the process of evolution, human mind is crippled, human life is untaught and crude and there are brutal masks and evil acts in the world as it is now. But Savitri discloses that they are incidents of God's vast and varied plot. They are all His 'drama's needed steps'. He makes with these outwardly unpleasant earthly things the deep scheme of a transcendent Wisdom finding ways to meet her Lord in the shadow and Night. (Wisdom is an epithet used here for the 'mighty Mother' or the 'mighty Puissance' mentioned in Aswapathy's acquisition of "The Secret Knowledge", already examined by us. As such, this disclosure of Savitri, as well as most of her explanation following this disclosure, is the same as the revelation made to Aswapathy.) This is how the mighty Mother worked out her creation and shut God into an enigmatic world. Collaborating with the mighty Mother as part of their play, "His knowledge he disguised as Ignorance, / His good he sowed in Evil's monstrous bed, / Made error a door by which Truth could enter in '. What is more enigmatic, He 'watered' 'His plant of bliss' 'with Sorrow's tears.' As a result, the world came to be a tangle-dance of passionate contraries', a wrestle and wrangle of the extremes of Power. All this is, however, spiritually interpreted by Savitri as 'Earth's million roads' struggling towards deity in various ways. Her every stumble is a needed pace since in our present life all blunders and straggles towards the one Divine. No doubt, the great truths about the divinity evolving in the universe

are realised by our small thoughts but our mortal vision has no gaze on the deep heart of things. 'Our Knowledge walks leaning on Error's staff' or becomes a sceptic facing Light with adamant No or a cynic stamping out the God in man. In spite of all this, Savitri's Debate with Death discloses, 'Light is there. it stands at Nature's doors'; it waits to be kindled in our secret cells because as knowledge grows Light flames up from within; and then 'Wisdom's pomps / Cross through the being's dim half-lighted fields; / Philosophy climbs up Thought's cloud-bank peaks / And Science tears out Nature's occult powers' in order to conquer her by her own captive force. Similarly, 'the soul draws back into its deathless Self;/ Man's knowledge becomes God's supernal Ray' 'on heights unreached by mind's most daring soar'. Savitri maintains all this because of her realisation that 'Above the planes that climb from nescient earth,/ A hand is lifted towards the Invisible's realm / Beyond the superconscient's blinding line' and this hand plucks away the screens of the Unknown so that a spirit within looks into Eternal's eyes. Thus, Savitri tells Death, 'all was plunged into the riddling Night, / Thus all is raised to meet a dazzling Sun.'

In her further explanation of the secret of life Savitri reveals the reason for the existence of evil, pain and suffering in the world. As she says an evil transmutation overtook our created life because the Bliss that made the world has fallen asleep. Besides, 'the primal innocence is lost / And Death and Ignorance govern the

mortal world'. 'The souls of men have wandered from Light/ And the great Mother turns away her face' only because 'the creatrix Bliss' cannot wake and build again her perfect shape, 'She weeps and makes her creatures' eyes to weep;' 'Tortured herself and torturing by her touch,/ She comes to our hearts and bodies and our lives/ Wearing a hard and cruel mask of pain.' Hence the prevalence of pain, suffering and evil in our present world, according to Savitri's revelation. But this is not expected to be as it is. Because, as Savitri says 'for joy and not for sorrow earth was made / And not as a dream in endless suffering Time.' After all, God made the world for His delight. For some time sorrow, grief and pain will continue because 'An ignorant Power took charge' of God's world and seemed his Will And Death's deep falsity has mastered Life.' According to Savitri's argument, this tragic state of affairs is going to reach its end since earthly life is destined to be the life divine. Savitri maintains that there are already indications of the destined transformation. As she explains in the third verse-paragraph, already 'our spirits breathe' 'A secret air of pure felicity' and our hearts and bodies feel its obscure call. A hidden Bliss is at the root of things. There is a joy in all experience of the soul, in evil and in good, in virtue and in sin. On earth it lingers through the symbol of her pleasure and her pain. Moreover, Savitri continues, 'Beyond the earth, but meant for delivered earth, / Wisdom and joy prepare their perfect crown: / Truth superhuman calls to thinking man.' It is Savitri's conviction that 'At last the

soul turns to eternal things' and 'cries for the clasp of god./ Then is there played the crowning Mystery,/ Then is achieved the longed-for miracle.' Repeating her earlier statement she pointedly adds for the benefit of Death, 'This was the aim, this the supernal Law/ Nature's allotted task when' 'Out of the Void this grand creation rose,-/ For this the Spirit came into Abyss/And charged with its power Matter's unknowing Force'. Of course, 'All our earth starts from mud' but it 'ends in sky' . Because, our lonely soul passions for the Alone and our heart that loved man thrills to the love of God since our body is his chamber and his shrine. We have to realise all this. Then is our being rescued from separateness from God. Then all is itself, all is new-felt in God Then the business of Night and Death shall fail. As Savitri asks Death 'When unity is won, . . . Who would turn back to Ignorance and pain?' With this rhetorical question the relevant passages from "The Debate of Love and Death" come to an end.

In the Canto following "The Debate of Love and Death", i.e. Book Ten, Canto IV: "The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real", there are two short passages containing yet other repeated variants of Sri Aurobindo's apocalyptic explanation of the origin and nature of creation. Again they are contained in Savitri's answers to Death. The first of the two is given in the course of the second verse-paragraph of Canto IV⁵³ and the second in the course of the fourth verse-paragraph of the Canto.⁵⁴

The first of her two answers Savitri gives to Death after he has again called 'Light to blind Truth's eyes,/Make

knowledge a catch of the snare of Ignorance/ And the Word a dart to slay my living Soul'. Refuting the false arguments of the sophist God, Savitri once again explains to him the secret nature of the world and the life in it. She makes the repeated revelation that the world is a spiritual paradox invented by the need in the Unseen. It is a paradox because creation arose in the meaningless Void and Matter was born from a bodiless Force. Life could climb in the unconscious tree, sense could wake in tissue, nerve and cell, thought could seize the grey matter of the brain, soul could peep from its secrecy through the flesh, the nameless light could leap on men and unknown powers emerge from Nature's sleep. Continuing her revelation Savitri says that the world is a poor translation of That which forever exceeds idea and speech, a symbol of what can never be symbolised. She unveils the secret that the world's powers have come from the eternal heights and plunged into the inconscient dim Abyss and risen from it to do their marvellous work. She unravels the occult significance of the soul by describing it as a figure of the unmanifest. In the world, further, "the mind labours to think the Unknowable,/ The life to call the Immortal into birth, The body to enshrine the Illimitable. ' On the basis of such occult evidence Savitri arrives at the spiritual conclusion that the world is not cut off from Truth and God. Man's soul crosses through Death ' 'to Paradise/ Heaven's sun forces its way through death and night'. In view of this, Savitri repeats, already God is near, the Truth is close though the dark atheist body knows him not.

Savitri's second answer to Death in "The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real" begins after her elaborate and convincing account of the nature of God, the transcendent One. Immediately before the commencement of this second answer, Savitri points out the fact that human beings fail to realise the existence, manifestation, nature and function of the transcendent One and his collaborator, the mighty Mother, only because The surface men scan, the depths refuse their search:/ A hybrid mystery challenges the view,/ Or a discouraging sordid miracle. 'This happens to eyes that see a part and miss the whole. But Savitri proclaims the occult secret of the nature of the world by saying,' Yet in the exact Inconscient's stark conceit,/ In the casual error of the world's ignorance/ A plan, a hidden intelligence is glimpsed.' She repeats her earlier apocalyptic statement: 'There is a purpose in each stumble and fall;/ Nature's most careless lolling is a pose/ Preparing some forward step, some deep result.' She admits that there are, no doubt, million discords in the harmonious theme of the evolution. But she explains their presence in the world by revealing the secret that a Truth supreme has wrapped itself in Matter as in a shroud of Death and Ignorance. Secondly, the same Truth supreme made of Knowledge a veiled and struggling light; it made of Being a substance nescient; and of Bliss the beauty of an insentient world. All this, however, means according to Savitri's revelation that ' In finite things the conscious Infinite dwells: / Involved it sleeps in Matter's helpless trance, / It rules the

world from its sleeping senseless Void'. The Infinite 'throws out mind and heart and soul / To labour... on the hard earth'. In this way, it works through scattered points a broken whole; its shards are Wisdom's thoughts and its reflex is our ignorance. It starts from the mute mass. It fashions a being out of brain -and nerve and then crushed or its force spent, leaves the universe in which it lived. But the soul grows concealed within its house;/ It gives to the body its strength and magnificence' and it lends significance to earth's meaningless life.

The last passages relevant to our analysis of the revelatory nature of Sri Aurobindo's ideas of creation - manifestation-universe-cosmos-world-Life occur in Book Eleven containing the sole Canto I : "The Eternal Day: The Soul's Choice and the Supreme Consummation". In this Canto also there are two relevant passages. Both of them are from the long speech the transcendent One, the Supreme, makes in the Canto addressing first Savitri alone and then both Satyavan and Savitri. Unlike the passages examined by us so far, these two almost exclusively deal with life or world or creation or manifestation as it is going to be in the future after Savitri successfully undertakes and accomplishes the task of effecting spiritual transformation of humankind. The first of the two passages⁵⁵ is rather short in contrast to the second, abundantly elaborate and expansive.

The first passage opens with the transcendent One's injunction to Savitri: 'O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light/ And bring down God into the lives

of men'. Then the Supreme reveals to Savitri the future of the earth by saying 'Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house,/ My garden of life to plant a seed divine.' 'The mind of earth shall be home of light,/ The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,/ The body of earth a tabernacle of God.' As a result of this, 'Men shall be lit with the Eternal's ray/ And the glory of my sun-lift in their thoughts'. They will 'feel in their hearts the sweetness of my love/And in their acts my Power's miraculous drive.' This will be possible because 'My will shall be the meaning of their days' and 'Living for me, by me, in me they shall live.'

In His joint address to Satyavan and 'luminous Savitri' the Supreme first points out the nature of His creation as it is, 'ignorant world,-/ In a hedged creation shut from limitless self'. He also adds that in the world of His knowledge and His ignorance God is unseen and only is heard a Name; knowledge is trapped in the boundaries of mind; life is hauled in the drag-net of desire; Matter hides the soul from its own sight; and 'My self... moves up the immense incline / Between the extremes of the spirit's night and day.' After this, the transcendent One continues to make His prophetic revelations of the future of the earth to Satyavan and Savitri by saying that in the form of Satyavan His own soul climbs from nescient Night through life and mind and supernature's Vast to the supernal light of Timelessness. It climbs to the greatness it has left behind and to the beauty and joy from which it fell, to the closeness and sweetness of all things divine.

According to Him, Satyavan is His soul that gropes out of the beast to reach humanity's heights of lucent thought and the vicinity of Truth's sublime. This implies the Supreme's prophesy that the godhead grows in human lives and in the body of earth-being's forms climbing to God in Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance. Describing Savitri as 'my spirit's Power, / The revealing voice of my immortal Word, / The face of Truth upon the roads of Time'. He says that she will point to the souls of men the routes to God though at present the dim light from the veiled Spirit's peak falls upon Matter's stark unconscious sleep; though mind in a half-light moves amid half-truths, the human heart knows only human love, life is a stumbling and imperfect force, the body counts out its precarious days and 'forms... hide the soul's divinity'. As a result, men shall 'look up as to peaks of God/ And feel God like a circumambient air / And rest on God'. There shall glow on mind the spirit's splendour and light man's life upon his Godward road. As a result, God's Beyond shall one day reveal its hidden face to humankind. Besides, the spirit's mightiness shall cast off its mask; its greatness shall be felt; it shall be seen in its own veilless beams, rising from the Inconscient's night, climbing to Supernature's peak. According to the Supreme's revelatory assurance regarding the ability of human beings to understand the occult nature of His manifestation, a few shall glimpse the miraculous Origin; some shall feel the secret Force and turn to meet a nameless tread; they shall discover the world's huge design and step into the Truth,

the Right, the Vast. He further promises that when the hour of the Divine draws near, the Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time and God be born into the human clay. As a result, then shall the Truth, supreme be given to men. He tells Satyavan and Savitri that there is a being beyond the being of mind, an Inmeasurable cast into many forms and there is a consciousness that mind cannot touch. At present this supramental consciousness has no home on earth, no centre in man. It is the source of all things thought and done, the fount of the creation and its works. It is the originator of all truth here. It is the Immense that calls to man to expand the Spirit. It is also a channel for the little he tastes of bliss. When the adventure of consciousness is carried to its destined goal by Satyavan and Savitri, some human beings shall be made the glory's receptacles and vehicles of the Eternal's luminous power. According to the Divine revelation made here, such human beings will be the high transfigurers of human clay, the first-born of a new supernal race. Through them 'the incarnate dual Power shall open God's door, / Eternal supermind touch earthly Time. 'In this way, as the Supreme assures, the superman shall wake in mortal man and manifest the hidden demi-god or grow into the God-Light and God-Force. Naturally, therefore, the earth shall be touched by the Supreme. His bright unveiled Transcendence shall illumine the mind and heart. It will also force the life and act of human being to interpret the Supreme's mystery now bidden in Divinity's signs. His living cosmic spirit shall annul the decree of death and

pain. It will erase the formulas of the Ignorance. By doing so it will make some human beings ready for immortality. In addition, the Supreme's regard shall bring back to Nature her early joy, the first world-creating Bliss.

At this point of Supreme's revelatory address to Satyavan and Savitri, Sri Aurobindo significantly introduces a characteristic feature of apocalyptic literature, viz., the description of God seated on his throne in his throne room. Hence the Supreme's words:

*The Immanent shall be the witness God
Watching on his many-petal led lotus-throne,
His action less being and his silent might
Ruling earth-nature by Eternity's law,
A thinker waking the Inconscient's world,
An immobile centre of many infinitudes
In his thousand-pillared temple by Time's sea.*⁵⁶

Continuing His revelation the Supreme at this very point gives His divine assurance regarding the supramental transformation of the universe and of the emergence of the superman, Note the words:

*Then shall the embodied being live as one
Who is a thought, a will of the Divine,
A mask or robe of his divinity,
An instrument and partner of his Force,
A point of line drawn in the infinite,
A manifest of the Imperishable.
The supermind shall be his nature's fount,*

*The Eternal's truth shall mould his thoughts and
acts,
The Eternal's truth shall be his light and guide.
And then shall change, a magic order come
Overtopping this mechanical universe.
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's
world.
On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's
ground,
The superman shall reign as king of life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven
And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant
heart
And lift towards godhead and his mortality.*

.....
*Life's tops shall flame with the Immortal's
thoughts,
Light shall invade the darkness of its base.
Then in the process of evolving Time
All shall be drawn into a single plan,
A divine harmony shall be earth's law,
Beauty and Joy remould her way to live:
Even the body shall remember God,
Nature shall draw back from mortality
And Spirit's fires shall guide the earth's blind
force;
Knowledge shall bring into the aspirant Thought
A high proximity to Truth and God.*

*The supermind shall claim the world of Light
And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
And place Light's crown on Nature's lifted head
And found Light's reign on her unshaking base.
A greater truth than earth's shall roof-in earth
And shed its sunlight on the roads of mind;
A power infallible shall lead the thought,
A seeing Puissance govern life and act,
In earthly hearts kindle the immortal's fire.
A soul shall wake in the Inconscient's house;
The mind shall be God-vision's tabernacle,
The body intuition's instrument,
And life a channel for God's visible power.
All earth shall be the Spirit's manifest home,*

.....
*The Spirit's eyes shall look through Nature's eyes ,
The Spirit's force shall occupy Nature's force.
This world shall be God's visible garden-house,
The earth shall be a field and camp of God,
This universe shall unseal its occult sense,
Creation's process change its antique front,
An ignorant evolution's hierarchy
Release the Wisdom chained below its base.
The Spirit shall be the master of his world⁵⁷*

It is obvious that this assurance of the Supreme is the twentieth century Indian equivalent of the apocalyptic assurance given by God in Judaism and Christianity

regarding the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The Supreme's assurance of the Indian equivalent, however, is made complete and integral later on in the same address where He extends His assurance at various places such as the Following:

- (1) *All things shall manifest the covert God,
All shall reveal the Spirit's light and might
And move to its destiny of felicity.⁵⁸*
- (2) *Even there shall come as a high crown of all
The end of Death, the death of Ignorance.⁵⁹*
- (3) *...a new life shall come, A body of the
Superconscient's truth,
A native field of Supernature's might:
It shall make earth's nescient ground Truth's
colony,
Make even the Ignorance a transparent robe
Through which shall shine the brilliant limbs of
Truth
And Truth shall be a sun on Nature's head
And Truth shall be the guide of Nature's steps
And Truth shall gaze out of her nether deeps.
When superman is born as Nature's king
His presence shall transfigure Matter's world:
He shall light up Truth's fire in Nature's night,
He shall lay upon the earth Truth's greater law;
Man too shall turn towards the Spirit's call.⁶⁰*
- (4) *The Truth above shall wake a nether truth;
Even the dumb earth become a sentient force.*

*The Spirit's tops and Nature's base shall draw
Near to the secret of their separate truth
And know each other as one deity.
The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze
And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face.
Then man and superman shall be at one
And all the earth become a single life.⁶¹*

- (5) *This earth shall stir with impulse sublime,
Humanity awake to deepest self,
Nature the hidden godhead recognise.*
- (6) *The frontiers of the Ignorance shall recede,
More and more souls shall enter into light,
Minds lit, inspired, the occult summoner hear
And lives blaze with a sudden inner flame
And hearts grow enamoured of divine delight
And human wills tune to the divine will,
These separate selves the Spirit's oneness feel,
These senses of heavenly sense grow capable,
The flesh and nerves of a strange ethereal joy
And mortal bodies of immortality.
A divine force shall flow through tissue and cell
And take the charge of breath and speech and act.
And all the thoughts shall be a glow of suns
And every feeling a celestial thrill.
Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come
Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind;
A sudden bliss shall run through every limb
And Nature with a mightier Presence fill.
Thus shall the earth open to divinity*

*And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
And meet the deity in common things.
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.⁶³*

Chapter Notes :

1. Laurence Urdang and Stuart Berg Flexner, eds., *The Random House Dictionary Of English Language : College Edition*, pp.773-4
2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), p.200
3. Sri Aurobindo, *Social and Political Thought* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1971), p. 147
4. Ibid.
5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book One Part One and Book Two Part One, p.263
6. Ibid.
7. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga Part Four*, p.1292
8. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga Part Three and Part Four*, p.599
9. Sri Aurobindo, *Social and Political Thought*, p. 138
10. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga Part Two and Three*, p.505
11. Sri Aurobindo, *Social and Political Thought*, p. 56
12. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970), p.289
13. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God and Other Writings*, p. 150

14. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book One Part One and Book Two Part One, p.479
15. Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 68
16. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part Three and Part Four, p.756
17. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p.467
18. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, p.354
19. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, p.80 Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book One Part One and Book Two Part One, p.332
22. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, p.73
23. Ibid. pp.111-2
24. Ibid. p.98
25. Sri Aurobindo *The Life Divine*, Book Two Part Two, p.755
26. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, p.380
27. Sri Aurobindo *The Life Divine*, Book One Part One, Book Two Part One, p.45
28. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p.18
Now onwards references to quotations from Savitri will be indicated only by page numbers. The title of the book will not be mentioned.
29. pp.55-73

30. p.74
31. pp.55-60
32. p. 2
33. pp.60-6
34. pp.63-6
35. pp.66-7
36. pp.67
37. pp.67-9
38. pp.69-73
39. pp.72-3
40. pp.353-4
41. p.346
42. p.353
43. p.353-4
44. pp.369-71
45. p.367
46. p.365
47. pp.377-8
48. pp.454-60
49. pp.454-5
50. pp.474-87
51. Cf., pp.621-40
52. pp.621-33
53. pp.648-9
54. pp.658-9
55. p.699

- 56. p.706
- 57. pp.706-8
- 58. p.708
- 59. Ibid
- 60. pp. 708-9
- 61. p. 709
- 62. Ibid
- 63, pp. 710-11



*THE MYSTERY OF MAN
AND THE APOCALYPTIC
NATURE OF HIS BEING*



V CHAPTER

THE MYSTERY OF MAN AND THE APOCALYPTIC NATURE OF HIS BEING

Dictionary meanings of the term "man" relevant to our purpose are: '2. the creature, *Homo sapiens*, at the highest level of animal development, characterised esp, by a highly developed brain. 3. the human race; mankind. 4. a person (usually used in contexts in which sexual distinctions are not relevant):'¹

Sri Aurobindo, however, describes, "man" as a 'pre-eminently the mental being'.² His more elaborate and more useful description of "man" is found in the following passages:

- (1) **...Man is in his characteristic power of nature a mental being, but in the first steps of his emergence he is more of the mentalised animal, preoccupied like the animal with his bodily existence; he employs his mind for the uses, interests, desires of the life and body, as their servant and minister, not yet as their sovereign and master. It is as he grows in mind and in proportion as his mind asserts his selfhood and independence against the tyranny of life and matter that he grows in stature.**³

- (2) . . .man is precisely that term and symbol of a higher Existence descended into the material world in which it is possible for the lower to transfigure itself and put on he nature of the higher and the higher to reveal itself in the form of the lower.⁴

Besides these passages, there are other passages in a few other works of Sri Aurobindo which bring out the spiritual, philosophical and occult (and therefore 'revelatory') connotations and denotations of the term "man" used by him in all his "works including *Savitri*. Note the following as an example of the revelatory meaning he gives to the term "man":

Man is God hiding himself from Nature so that he may possess her by struggle, insistence, violence and surprise. God is universal and transcendent Man hiding himself from his own individuality in the human being.

The animal is Man disguised in a hairy skin and upon four legs; the worm is Man Writhing and crawling towards the evolution of his Manhood. Even crude forms of Matter are Man in his inchoate body. All things are Man, the Purusha.

For what do we mean by Man? An uncreated and indestructible soul that has housed itself in a mind and body made of its own elements.⁵

It is in view of such extraordinarily significant conceptualisation of the term "man" that Sri Aurobindo also says that "... man is a developing spirit trying here to find and fulfil itself in the forms of mind, life and body'.⁶ In our examination and analysis of representative passages bringing out the apocalyptic nature of man continually occurring in *Savitri* we have to bear in mind both the dictionary meanings and the revelatory meaning Sri

Aurobindo gives to the term "man", sometimes using even the term "men" to indicate the human race as a whole.

The very first reference Sri Aurobindo rather casually makes to "man" is in Book One itself. The description of man here is as 'leader here with his uncertain mind,/ Alone who stares at the future's covered face'.⁷ Obviously, this description (like numerous other similar casual references) is rather intellectual. In our examination of the apocalyptic mystery of man revealed in certain relevant passages from *Savitri*, again we shall have to omit such intellectual or merely philosophical description of man.

The right kind of passage revealing the occult mystery of man occurs in the last lines of Canto II of Book One.⁸ In this passage, Sri Aurobindo begins by describing man rather mechanically (therefore shall we say, scientifically) as 'a machine amid machines'. He accounts for this mechanical description by adding that "a piston brain' which man possesses, 'pumps out the shapes of thought,/ A beating heart cuts out emotion's modes'. But immediately he transforms the scientific account of man into a spiritual one by stating that an insentient energy fabricates a soul in man. Man is further defined by reference to his function in life found in the words : 'Or the empiric Life's instinctive search,/ Or a vast ignorant mind's colossal work.' In terms of Involution-Evolution, he is described as Nature's instrument who crowns himself her king. Immediately thereafter Sri Aurobindo reveals man's spiritual mystery by pointing out that he feels his

witnessing self and conscious power. His soul steps back and sees the supreme Light. A Godhead stands behind the brute machine. The apocalyptic nature of such descriptions should be easy for us to understand, now that the "revelatory" style of Sri Aurobindo is familiar to us because of our elaborate analysis of the various revelations' made by him about life (examined in the last Chapter). Besides, we have to be aware of the fact that man also is a part of creation or divine manifestation and, as such, most of the apocalyptic revelations made about manifestation by Sri Aurobindo also apply to man as one of the manifestations of the transcendent One through His play with the mighty Mother.

The next relevant passage explicating the revelatory significance of man is in Book One, Canto IV.⁹ Aswathathy begins his acquisition of "The Secret Knowledge" by understanding the nature of our early approaches to the Infinite. The first of these approaches is a spiritual realisation that 'A death bound littleness is not all we are'. (Needless to say, "we" used here stands for human beings as a whole and therefore for 'man'.) Because, there are in us Immortal vastnesses awaiting discovery by us in our summit selves. Sri Aurobindo maintains that a forgotten kinship deep in us points to these high-peaked dominions and calls to those lost immensities. No doubt, we often fail to look into our souls to understand them. Still we have certain parts in us which tend to grow towards the Sachchidananda. When our sight is turned within like this, Earth's ignorant veil is lifted

from our eyes. At such moments, according to Sri Aurobindo's revelation here, our souls can visit the calm immensities of spirit Space. This happens because a breath comes down to us from a- supernal air. As a result, a guiding Light awakens in us. Even our body becomes a pedestal supporting a figure of eternal Peace. Knowledge breaks through our minds. What is more significant, a greater Personality sometimes possesses us. We begin to adore the Master of our souls. Then the small bodily ego of ours thins and falls. We grow one with Nature and God. On such occasions, our spirit speaks to its gulfs in the form of the various levels of Consciousness engaged in the process of Involution-Evolution. The signals of eternity begin to appear to us. A Voice calls to us from the chambers of the soul. All these extraordinary experiences are native to a larger self living within us which acts in us unseen. This living image seated in our heart is the Real towards which our strivings move. It is the secret meaning of our lives. It is our Glory of the flame of God. It is a burning witness in the sanctuary of our being who sees the secret things no words can speak and knows the goal of the unconscious world.

Following a similar line of revelation, Sri Aurobindo points out a little later that if man takes his spirit's stand within, a foreseeing Knowledge becomes his. But unfortunately, the mighty cosmic Will seldom communicates its image to our sight. As a result, only the outward and the immediate remain as man's limited field. His mind keeps the soul prisoner. He becomes a

slave to his acts. Consequently, he grows unable to reach wisdom's sun. After all, man is an inheritor of the brief animal mind. He is still a child in Nature's mighty hands. As such, he is ignorant of his high and splendid fate. But when the Immortals guide the unheedful moving world, the masked Transcendent dwelling in man will mount his throne. This will compel the heart of man to bliss and will grow unexpectedly divine.

But, Sri Aurobindo warns in the next relevant passage¹⁰ that as long as a dense nether nature screens the soul of man, an incurable littleness pursues his days. For even in man the plot of the Divine plan is mean and poor. Though he dreams sometimes of the revels of the gods man's little hour is spent in little things. Because of this, the Spirit's breath moves him but it soon retires. To prevent this, he should turn his eyes within and look for his lost self and his dead soul. Since he fails to do so, hardly a few human beings can climb to greater life. But, according to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, all this is a stage through which we pass on our road from Matter to eternal Self.

Significant revelations about the mystery of man are also made by the Mother of the universe in Book Three, Canto IV.¹¹ Addressing Aswapathy, She reveals that man is a lightning from the heights that think and plan though he is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight. He is sole awake in an unconscious world. But he has arrived from some half-luminous Beyond. Therefore, he is a stranger in the mindless vasts though he is a little spark of

God. As such, all is in dire league against his spirit. A Titan influence stops his Godward gaze. The eternal Darkness seeks him. Inscrutable Energies drive and deceive him. After all, he has descended here as a link between the demi-god and the beast. As such, he knows neither his own greatness nor his aim. His spirit and his flesh are at war. What is worse, he has need of darkness to perceive some light. He has need of grief to feel a little bliss and need of death to find a greater life. As the world Mother reveals, 'He would guide the world, himself he cannot guide; / He would save his soul, his life he cannot save.' Though Wisdom attracts him with her luminous masks, he has never seen her face behind the masks. Because, a giant Ignorance surrounds him. He obeys the Inconscience which he has come to rule. Because the human instrument has failed thus, the 'Godhead' in him 'frustrate sleeps within'. But according to the world Mother, there is no rest for the embodied soul in man. Till he has found himself he cannot pause. He should realise that he forms the All-conscient in his depths. He is a borrower of Supernature's gold. By growing aware of this he will pave his road to Immortality. The Mother discloses that all his barriers will cede beneath the Infinite's tread since the Immortals have their entries in his life. That is why, Love passes through his heart. Beauty surrounds him for a magic hour. He has visits of a large revealing joy. Hopes of a deathless sweetness lure him. Rare intimations lift him to a moment's kinship with the eternal Word. He lays his hands sometimes on the Unknown. Similarly,

immortality and spirit-room, pure perfection and bliss are his mighty fate. A still more significant revelation the Divine Mother makes here is that 'in him the Earth-Mother sees draw near the change' 'a godhead drawn from her transmuted limbs, / A alchemy of Heaven on Nature's base.'

In response to the Divine Mother's revelations, Aswapathy too agrees that man is a compromise between the beast and God. Therefore, he is not the crown of the Divine Mother's miraculous world. Having conceded so much, Aswapathy, nevertheless, reveals to the World Mother a vision that he saw when a power arose out of his slumber's cell. In this vision, Aswapathy says, he saw the supermen, the human race of the future. As he reveals, he saw these Omnipotent's flaming pioneers come crowding down the amber stairs of birth. Significantly, he says that they were forerunners of a divine multitude coming into mortal life. These supermen of the future are described by Aswapathy as the sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn, great creators, the massive barrier-breakers of the world, the labourers in the quarries of the gods and the architects of immortality with approaching eyes of a diviner man. He reveals that they are 'High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss, / Discoverers of beauty's sun-lit ways'. According to him, they will come and their tread one day shall change the suffering earth and justify the light on Nature's face. Thus prophesying the advent of the transformed man as the superman, Aswapathy adds that 'This high divine successor surely shall come / Behind

Man's inefficient mortal pace,/ Behind his vain labour,
sweat, blood and tears'. He shall take on him the burden of
the gods, according to Aswapathy's revelation. He also
reveals that as a result, all heavenly light shall visit the
earth's thoughts, the might of heaven shall fortify earthly
hearts; Earth's deeds shall touch the superman's height. It
is in view of this vision of the advent of the superman that
Aswapathy seeks from the Mother of the Universe the
boon that she should 'Mission to earth some living form
of Hers 'and with one gesture change all future time."

As against this optimistic and prophetic revelation
he makes about the superman, Aswapathy learns about the
sad plight of man in the present world from the Voice 'of
unborn Powers' which he hears in Book Four, Canto III¹²

According to the Voice, man's is a 'force-
compelled, fate driven ••• race'. At present men are petty
adventurers In an infinite world. They tread the circling
tracks of mind around their little self and petty things. But
the Voice also points out to human beings that not for a
changeless littleness were they meant nor for vain
repetition. Because, the Voice adds that out of the
Immortal's substance man was made; his actions can be
swift revealing steps; his life can be a changeful mould for
growing gods. A Seer, a strong Creator, is within man. The
immaculate Grandeur broods upon his days. Almighty
powers are shut in Nature's cells which man possesses. As
such, a greater destiny waits in his front and if he wills he
can fit his acts to a transcendent scheme. If man does this
the godhead shall grow within his heart and he shall

awake into the spirit's air and feel the breaking walls of the mortal mind. He can 'cross the dangerous spaces of the soul / And touch the mighty Mother stark awake / And meet the Omnipotent in this house of flesh'. But now man sees the Highest in a limiting form. Still worse, he turns for little gains to ignorant Powers since he loves the Ignorance fathering his pain. In addition, the great Illusion wraps him in its veils. The soul's deep intimations come in vain. As a result, the gods are still too few in mortal forms.

As in the case of the revelation of the apocalypticism of the origin of 'this troubled world', 'the divine Sage Narad's unveiling of the occult nature of man and his nature in Book Six, Canto II¹³ is also one of the most significant revelations in *Savitri*. (However, a clear distinction needs to be made here throughout the long and comprehensive revelations made by Narad about man, between (1) ordinary man representing the common human race and (2) man 'The great' 'who would save the race' as 'the Son of God born as the Son of man', or as 'God's messenger', or as 'the World-redeemer' such as *Savitri* herself. Since this chapter deals with man representing common human race, we have naturally to restrict ourselves to Narad's revelation regarding man in general.¹⁴) His revelation here is in the context of a bitter complaint' Savitri's mother voices against the cruelty of the Creator of this world who has made human life painfully tragic filled with pain, misery, suffering and death, death even of such a noble creature as Satyavan. In answer to the Queen's lament, Narad first puts the

question, 'Was then sun a dream, because there is night?' and then unveils the mystery of man's life. Hidden in the mortal's heart the Eternal lives, Narad says, secret in the chamber of his soul. A light shines there in the soul's chamber which nor pain nor grief can cross. Man, as of now, is unable to feel the marvellous Guest within himself only because a darkness stands between him and the Eternal hidden in him. Man's thought is a light of the Ignorance and therefore unable to help him to see God dwelling in himself. Its brilliant curtain hides God's face from him. It only illumines a world born from the Inconscience whereas it hides from man the Immortal's meaning in the world. Similarly, human mind's light hides the Eternal's thought and human heart's hopes hide the Eternal's will. Even earth's joys shut from us the Immortal's bliss. From these circumstances rose the need of the world's dread teacher, the creator, pain. Narad further explains the meaning of human life by saying that 'Where Ignorance is, there suffering too must come'. Hence the presence of pain, grief, sorrow and tragedy in human life. In the context of this brief unveiling of the mystery of man's life provided by Narad, however, it should be remembered that he dwells at great length on the spiritual and ethical significance of 'pain' in the life of man. Pointing out repeatedly that 'Pain is the hammer of the gods to break / A dead resistance in the mortal's heart,' Narad reveals to the Queen that even 'the great who came to save this suffering world', have to face the Problem of Pain and use suffering as an occult means to lead

humankind in its adventure of consciousness from the Inconscient to the Superconscient.

In his answer also to Aswapathy's question as to what fate is, Narad briefly mentions the apocalyptic significance of fate and its function in human life.

Accordingly, fate is a transaction done at every hour between Nature and the soul of the human being. God is the foreseeing arbiter of this transaction, in which 'Fate is a balance drawn in Destiny's book.' Man's doom is not an end of his existence. He is destined to arise from the tragic crash of life as well as from the body's torture and death. The nature of the Spirit in him is, after all, so omnipotent as to be able to rise up mightier after every defeat in human body. In view of this, all worldly events which cause joy and grief to man's soul are not his fate. Fate is nothing but the goal man chooses along with the road to reach it. As such, man should make his fate a long sacrifice to the gods so that they open to him his secret self and make him one with God in the end.

In the opening lines of Book Seven, Canto I¹⁵ also there is a brief unravelling of the mystery of man with reference to fate. As revealed here, man's hopes and longings form his destiny. They lead his blind will towards the goal unknown to him. During this process man's fate shapes his acts and rules from within since it is born in his secret soul. This being the real apocalyptic meaning of man's fate, in his life in the outer world, however, Matter seems to mould his body's life. In the result, his soul follows where his body's nature drives him. In this way,

his fate on the one hand and Nature on the other compel his free-will's choice. This is, however, the predicament of ordinary human beings. But the mystic truth about man hidden from his own ignorance is that greater spirits among human beings can make the soul the artist of its own fate. Thus as in the case of greater spirits among men, death of man is merely a passage for his inborn force. Likewise, all his ordeals are the choice of the spirit hidden in him.

The dream which discloses to Savitri the cosmic past in Book Seven, Canto II reveals further aspects of the apocalyptic mystery of man. After the nature of human life is disclosed to Savitri in her dream, the nature of man also is revealed.¹⁶ The revelation here begins with the significant statement 'A whole mysterious world is locked within' man. A hidden king, a nameless god lives in his inmost soul. It is this god in man who guards the covered mysteries shut in the unconscious sleep of man's consciousness. Another mysterious fact about man is that the All -Wonderful Divine casts His splendour, His greatness and His light into man's soul. Because of this, man in his worldly life works out the dreams of God. Yet this is not all about man, as seen by Savitri in her dream. Her dream also discloses that, in addition to the gods, 'Man's house of life' holds within it occult Shadows and dark Powers such as the Titan, the Fury and the Djinn. Such dangerous Powers lie hidden in the pit of the subconscious in man. These dreadful Powers unfortunately become the masters or ministers of man and invade his

bodily house. They even infest his thought and life. As a result, therefore, the very 'Inferno surges into the human air'. The grey forces hidden in man's subconscious create in him 'a stench of sin and death' . There rise in him not only perverse thoughts and formidable influences but also awful presences and shapes to claim his heart.

Savitri's dream proves in this way that 'All the world's possibilities in man / Are waiting as the tree waits in its seed'. As already seen (in the context of man's life), his past lives in him and drives his future's pace. His present's acts also fashion his future fate. Everything that has been in the past renews its birth in him. Similarly, all that can take place in the future is figured in his soul.

All this is due to the fact that man not only started his existence from obscure beginnings of the race but also because, in course of his evolution, his soul's thoughts looked out from his earth-born eyes at heaven and started having occult experiences. For example, as Savitri sees in her dream, a vision of beauty and greater birth came to him and he saw the unrealised vastnesses of his being. The occult seeker in him thus came out of the dim recesses of his self to be able to use the powers earth-instruments cannot use. He caught up fragments of the Omniscient's thought. He scattered formulas of omnipotence. Thus man grew towards an unseen heaven of thought and dream. As Savitri's dream reveals, at last man saw the light of a spiritual sun. As a result, he cultivated spiritual aspirations and transcended his earthly self. Now he stands new-born in the largeness of his soul redeemed from all mortal

things. Now he moves in a pure free spiritual realm. Therefore, as Savitri foresees, man 'mounts by a frail thread to his high source;/ He reaches his fount of immortality,/ He calls the Godhead into his mortal life.'

Just as a dream discloses these apocalyptic aspects of man to Savitri here, later on in Canto VI of the same Book Seven,¹⁷ what can be considered a vision discloses to her yet another variant of the spiritual mystery of man. This vision follows the long speech of 'The Voice of Light' which Savitri hears and obeys. Stepping 'back from and name' of hers in accordance with the Voice's instructions, she plunges her regard into herself in her soul's privacy as a witness of the drama of herself. This 'drama' discloses to her the occult nature of various aspects of human existence including that of human beings as a race. The first thing disclosed to her in this condition is that human beings are merely instruments of a higher Force. Nothing they create in their lives is their own. The Divine Power acts in human beings. As such, man receives everything that gives him an immortal name from the high fount of divinity. In his life as it is now, of course, his ego claims the whole world for its use. But, as Savitri observes, in his present condition, 'Man is a dynamo for the cosmic work;/Nature does most in him, God the high rest:/Only his soul's acceptance is his own.' This soul of his is the greater truth of his being. It remains behind every act of his. That is why, his consciousness becomes cosmic and immense if he breaks through Matter's wall and stands in the spiritual vastness of his soul and lives as the master of

this world. This truth of man's spirit lives in 'the naked self' of every human being. Savitri sees that it surveys the world from that height.

In her last speech to Death (which is delivered in Book Ten, Canto IV), Savitri gives her final account of the occult significance of the v-'hole manifested cosmos, including Death (about whom she says, 'thou too art God and yet not He). Therefore, her speech here contains significant observations about man relevant to our study.¹⁸ She begins by admitting that, among worldly creatures, thinking man is merely a demi-god animal wallowing in mud. Yet, she adds, on account of Involution-Evolution, man in his thought soars heavenward. No doubt, he satisfies all his longings just like the beast. But, at the same time, he is able to make use of his intellect, his sense and his thought in order to wake at last into spiritual mind. When he attains to this status, a high liberty begins in him. He glimpses eternity and touches the infinite. In that high liberty he even meets the gods and feels the whole universe as nothing but his own larger self. He becomes able to make Space and Time his opportunity to join the heights and depths of his being in light. What is apocalyptically more significant, he even speaks secretly with God in the cave of his heart. In this way attaining to such spiritual perfection, a few human beings grow capable of daring the last supreme ascent to the mightier

ain of the higher levels of Consciousness. They also receive in that status a vaster being's messages.

In Book Eleven, Canto I we have the next relevant account of man's apocalyptic nature given by no less an authority than the Supreme Himself in His conversation with Savitri.¹⁹ Putting her to severe tests and temptations, the Divine tries to dissuade Savitri from her determination to divinise man, He first asks the question: "How shall earth-nature and man's nature rise/ To the celestial levels, yet earth abide?" Then He explains that only a few among human beings can climb to an unperishing sun in the form of divinity. Therefore, these few can channel to earth-mind the wizard ray of divinity. Whereas, according to the Supreme, this is the apocalyptic importance of man, the difficulty with mankind is that the minds of common human beings are sealed to the light of divinity because their earthly needs pin down the human mass to earth, not allowing them to evolve towards divinity. Even when they are raised by some strong hand to breathe heaven air, they slide back to the mud. Because they know the law of the mud alone. No doubt, something in human beings weeps for the lost glory of the divinity and for the murder of their greatness, they accept their fall from the divinity willingly. In this way, to be common is the best for them. To live as others live is their delight though most of them owe their debt to a superior plane. In all such remarks

about the negative apocalypticism of man, the Divine is obviously testing Savitri's determination. Since she is none other than the human incarnation of the world Mother herself, Savitri finds herself unable to be dissuaded. Therefore, she supplicates to the Divine²⁰ that a greater being from man should arise if man lives bound by his humanity now. In other words, Savitri demands that the Divine should replace *Homo sapiens* by the superman. Because, she argues, otherwise creation itself and this whole world would be vain. She is quite confident of the apocalyptic significance of man in ages to come. As such, she declares that she has seen through the insentient's mask of the world as it is and seen that a secret spirit in things is carrying in them the growing God. This secret spirit in man, adds Savitri, looks at veil less truth, pushes back the curtain of the gods and climbs towards its own eternity.

After Savitri, by means of such insistent and persistent supplications to the Divine, succeeds in resisting the various temptations offered by Him and pleases Him so as to be reassured by Him that everything will be transformed in accordance with her aspiration on behalf of humankind, the Supreme Himself grants Savitri's request for the complete divinisation of man. Therefore, towards the end of His long promise to Savitri²¹ He tells her that first, high Truth shall set her feet on earth so that human beings shall aspire to the Eternal's light. All the mortal

limbs of man shall feel the Spirit's touch after the promised transformation of the earthly life. Continuing the revelation of the apocalyptic nature of man to come replacing the *Homo sapiens*, the Divine says that the whole life of man shall obey an inner Force. This Force shall divinise the human race so that a new life shall come, together with 'a body of the Superconscient's truth,/ a native field of Supernature's mights. As a result, the whole nescient ground of earth shall be transformed into Truth's colony. Even the Ignorance shall become a transparent robe through which the brilliant limbs of Truth shall shine. In fact, Truth shall be the guide of Nature's steps and gaze out of Nature's lower depths through superman who shall replace the present man. As the Supreme prophesies, 'When superman is born as Nature's king' thus, 'His presence shall transfigure Matter's world: / He shall light up Truth's fire in Nature's night,/ He shall lay upon the earth Truth's greater law'. In this way, the present *Homo sapiens* too shall turn towards Spirit's call. He will be awake to his hidden possibility, to all that slept within his heart and to all that Nature meant when earth was formed. Bringing out the apocalyptic nature of even superman, the Divine adds that man shall entirely aspire to Truth and God and Bliss. This higher kind of man will be an interpreter of a diviner law and an instrument of a supreme design. He, the superman shall lean down to lift up the ordinary man. Similarly, ordinary man shall desire to climb to his own heights. Even many ordinary human

beings will awake to deepest self. They shall make some answer and bear the splendour of the Divine's rush. In this way, the apocalyptic superman, according to the Supreme, shall create such an extraordinary situation that:

*A heavenlier passion shall upheave men's lives,
Their mind shall share in the ineffable gleam,
Their heart shall feel the ecstasy and the fire,
Earth's bodies shall be conscious of a soul;
Mortality's bond-slaves shall unloose their bonds,
Mere men into spiritual beings grow
And see awake the dumb divinity.*

.....
*The Truth shall be the leader of their lives,
Truth shall dictate their thought and speech and
act,
They shall feel themselves lifted nearer to the sky,
As if a little lower than the gods.²²*

The Divine also assures Savitri that, in ages to come, 'More and more souls shall enter into life' and hear the occult summoner. Their lives shall blaze with an inner flame. Their hearts shall grow enamoured of divine delight. In this way, human beings shall tune their wills to the Divine will. Their separate selves shall feel the Spirit's oneness. Their senses shall grow capable of heavenly sense. Their flesh and nerves shall be capable of a strange ethereal joy. Through the tissues and cells of their bodies a divine force shall flow 'And take the charge of breath and speech and act'. All their thoughts shall be a glow of suns. Every feeling of theirs shall be a celestial thrill.

In this way, Sri Aurobindo has brought out in *Savitri* the various aspects of the mystery of the apocalypticism not only of the primeval man, nor merely of the present *Homo sapiens* but also of the man of the future, Superman.

Chapter Notes :

1. Laurence Urdang and Stuart Berg Flexner, eds., *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language : College edition*, p.811
2. Sri Aurobindo, *Social and Political Thought*, p.75
3. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book Two Part Two, p.730
4. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part One and Part Two, p. 4
5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, pp.382-3
6. Sri Aurobindo, *Social and Political Thought*. p.116
7. p.6
8. pp.20-1
9. pp.46-55
10. pp.163-6
11. pp.335-45
12. pp.370-2
13. pp. 442-62
14. pp. 442-3
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16. pp. 479-86
17. pp.542-3
18. p.659
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20. p.693
21. pp.708-11
22. pp.710



*THE APOCALYPTIC
ASPECTS OF
CONSCIOUSNESS ON
THE PHYSICAL PLANE
OF EXISTENCE*



VI CHAPTER

THE APOCALYPTIC ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE PHYSICAL PLANE OF EXISTENCE

Obviously, at the very outset here, we need to be clearly aware of the conceptual frameworks of such terms as "Planes" and "Worlds" employed by Sri Aurobindo in describing the revelatory nature of the various levels of Consciousness (needless to say, the *Chit* aspect of Sachchidananda.) exhaustively explicated all through *Savitri* for the benefit of humankind as a whole, for the first time in the twentieth century. As he says, by planes of consciousness and planes of existence 'We mean a general settled poise or world of revelations between *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, between the Soul and Nature.'¹ He believes in the existence of such worlds and planes of Consciousness because, according to him, all our spiritual and psychic experience brings us an invariable evidence of the existence of higher worlds or freer planes of existence. When maintaining this, he asserts that we are not bound ourselves down to the dogma that only sense is true and that anything beyond this is an error, self-delusion and

hallucination. He adds that therefore we are free to accept this evidence and to admit the reality of these planes of Consciousness or planes of existence.

According to him, further, they are, practically, different harmonies from the harmony of the physical universe, they occupy, as the word "plane" suggests, a different level in the scale of being and adopt a different system and ordering of its principles.² According to leading Aurobindo commentators³ also, the "Worlds" or "Planes" Sri Aurobindo mentions in his philosophy and Yoga are a great connected complex movement. The higher of these worlds, Sri Aurobindo maintains, precipitate their influences on the lower worlds. Similarly, the lower ones react to the higher worlds and develop or manifest in themselves something that corresponds to the superior power and its action. For example, our material world has evolved life in obedience to a pressure from the vital plane. The vital has, in its turn, evolved mind in obedience to a pressure from the mental plane. According to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, mind is now trying to evolve supermind in obedience to a pressure from the supramental plane. Particular forces, movements, powers and beings of a higher world can throw themselves on the lower worlds to establish in them appropriate and corresponding forms which will connect them with the material domain and reproduce or project their action here. And each thing created here has subtler envelopes or forces of itself which support it and make it subsist and connect it with forces acting from above. In Sri

Aurobindo's philosophy' man, for instance, has, besides his gross physical body, various subtler bodies by which he lives behind the veil in direct connection with supraphysical planes of consciousness. Therefore, he can be influenced by their powers and movements as well as by beings inhabiting them. The experience of the existence of these worlds becomes more and more evident, more and more insistent and more and more important, Sri Aurobindo says, as we progress more and more in a dynamic Yoga such as his Integral Yoga. Aurobindonian commentators warn, at the same time, that all this is an immense plastic movement full of the play of possibilities. Therefore, their advice is that these "worlds" or "planes" described by Sri Aurobindo must be seized by a flexible and subtle tact or sense in the seeing consciousness. They cannot be reduced to a logical or mathematical formula. Such Aurobindo scholars recommend a few things to ensure that this plasticity of the "worlds" or "planes" may not be lost to our view. First, each plane of consciousness is yet a world in itself, with its own movements, forces, beings, types and forms existing as if for its and their own sake, under its own laws, for its own manifestation without apparent regard for the other members of the graded series. If, for example, we regard the vital or the subtle physical plane, we see great ranges of it, (most of it), existing in themselves, without any relation with the material world and with no movement to affect or influence it. As such, the existence of anything in the vital, subtle physical or any other plane creates a possibility for

a corresponding movement of manifestation in the physical world. Secondly, only a limited part of the action of the vital or other higher plane is concerned with the earth-existence. But even this creates a mass of possibilities which is far greater than the earth can at one time manifest or contain in its own less plastic formulas. All these possibilities do not realise themselves; some fail altogether. Others effectuate a half manifestation. Sri Aurobindo states that there is a vital plane (self-existent) above the material universe which we see; there is a mental plane (self-existent) above the vital and material. 'These three together,— mental, vital, physical—are called the triple universe of the lower hemisphere. They have been established in the earth-consciousness by evolution—but they exist in themselves before the evolution, above the earth-consciousness and the material plane to which the earth belongs.'⁴

The belief in the actual existence of these worlds is based on the fact that the physical is not the only world; there are other worlds. We become aware of them through the subtle senses, through imagination, intuition and vision. These worlds are of a larger and subtler life than ours. There are vital worlds, for example, there are worlds in which Mind builds its own forms and figures. They are mental worlds. Similarly, there are psychic worlds which are the souls's home. Other worlds are above with which we have little contact. In each of us there are various planes of consciousness, such as a psychic plane, a vital plane, a subtle physical plane, as well as the gross physical

plane and material plane. These very planes are repeated in the consciousness of general Nature. It is when we enter or contact these other planes of consciousness that we come into connection with these worlds above the physical. With the help of occultism, we can leave the physical body and enter all these other planes of consciousness and all sorts of worlds. In each of them we see scenes, meet beings, share in happenings', come across formations, influences, suggestions which belong to these respective planes of consciousness. Even when we are awake, part of us moves in these planes, but their activity goes on behind the veil; our waking minds are not aware of it. When we do spiritual sadhana, we come in possession of occult powers which enable us to travel through these worlds.⁵

All these ideas have got to be borne in mind by us in our examination of the apocalypticism of each one of the "planes" or "worlds" of Consciousness which we are going to unravel now onwards, beginning with the Physical Plane or the Physical World and its apocalyptic nature. In this endeavour, we have to, in the present chapter as well as in each of the following chapters, clearly define to ourselves the typically Aurobindonian concept of such terms as the physical, the vital, the mental and so on. The term physical for example, is explained as both "gross physical" and as "subtle physical".⁶ Of these two types, the gross physical is the earthly and bodily physical which is experienced by our outward senses and by our sense-mind. Significantly, it is part of Matter,

though not the whole of Matter. The subtle physical is Matter with a subtler consciousness in it which can go to a distance from the body and yet feel and be aware of things in not merely a mental or vital way.⁷ Nevertheless, both types of the physical are Matter. And this fact refers us to the Aurobindonian concept of Matter.

According to Sri Aurobindo, 'Matter is the form of substance of being which the existence of Sachchidananda assumes when it subjects itself to this phenomenal action of its own consciousness and force.'⁸ Continuing the same apocalyptic trend of defining Matter, Sri Aurobindo further says, '... Matter means the involution of the conscious delight of existence in self-oblivious force and in self-dividing, infinitesimally disaggregated form of substance.'⁹ Also, it 'is Sachchidananda represented to His own mental experience as a formal basis of objective knowledge, action and delight of existence.'¹⁰ The 'truth of Matter' is 'that there is a conceptive self-extension of being which works itself out in the universe as substance or object of consciousness'.¹¹ It is represented by 'cosmic Mind and Life in their creative action' 'through atomic division and aggregation as the thing we call Matter.'¹² Significantly, however, '...Matter is by no means fundamentally real; it is a structure of Energy'.¹³ Equally significantly, 'Matter... is not material, it is not substance but form of consciousness'.¹⁴ It is, moreover, 'The first emergence from the Inconscient'.¹⁵ As such, 'Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it 'is not unconscious or without dynamism-only it is an

involved force and consciousness that work in it. It is what the psychologists call the unconscious from which all comes — but it is not really unconscious'.¹⁷

We find scattered over various parts of *Savitri* quite a large number of Sri Aurobindo's apocalyptic revelations of the nature and significance of these "worlds" or "planes" of Consciousness. In view of the fact that all his observations on these planes are too many and too voluminous for the limited purpose of producing an academically viable doctoral thesis, it is incumbent on us to restrict ourselves to a selected few of the poet's revelations regarding the apocalyptic nature of these worlds. Fortunately for us, Sri Aurobindo's most comprehensive and representative revelations of this kind are made in the fifteen cantos of Book Two of *Savitri*. "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds". As the title itself suggests, the various "worlds" (or "planes" of Consciousness) are exhaustively explored by Aswapathy as King by undertaking "The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness."¹⁸ Incidentally, "The Yoga of the King" is nothing but the Integral Yoga evolved by Sri Aurobindo (in collaboration with the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry). Any human being can undertake such Yoga since, in Sri Aurobindo's view, Yoga is essentially 'a generic name for the processes and the result of processes by which we transcend or shed off our present modes of being and rise to a new, a higher, a wider mode of consciousness which is not that of the ordinary animal or intellectual man'.¹⁹ Secondly, 'Yoga is the

exchange of an egoistic' consciousness 'for a universal or cosmic consciousness'. This cosmic consciousness is 'lifted towards or informed by the supra-cosmic, transcendent Unnameable who is the source and support of all things.'²⁰ Thirdly, 'Yoga is the passage of the human thinking animal towards the God-consciousness from which he has descended.'²¹ The Yoga of King Aswapathy, undertaken in *Savitri*, amply illustrates all these views. Observe, for example, that before undertaking Yoga Aswapathy achieves "the Soul's Release" first and acquires next "The Secret Knowledge". It is only then that, as Sri Aurobindo writes, he was 'Admitted through a curtain... /That hangs between our thought and absolute sight' and that 'He found the occult cave. the mystic door' which was 'Near to the well of vision in the soul'. In order to gain his Spirit's Freedom and Greatness by means of Yoga, he enters into 'the occult cave' and arrives 'in the sunlit space where all is forever known.' As part of the process of his Yoga, the King then cuts off 'the cord of mind', casts away 'Matter's law' and 'The body's rules'. Thus he assumes 'the spirit's powers'. With the help of such powers he enters into 'that magic place' where 'All that the Gods have learned is ... self-known.' There, interpreting the universe by the soul signs, Aswapathy raises his eyes to unseen spiritual heights to discern the superhuman's form. Immediately, his soul stands retired from all that he had done. The Silence becomes his sole companion. In this condition, there is a call on him from intangible heights. As a result, his being now exceeds

Space. His thought becomes boundless and neighbour to cosmic sight. Besides, a force comes down into his mortal limbs. He grows aware of his occult omnipotent Source. Therefore, he now turns to his immense spiritual fate. He abandons the earth-nature and climbs to meet the infinite more above. Thus he comes to be in a divine retreat from a mortal thought. At this moment, his being towers into pathless heights in a gesture of soul-sight. By now he is so advanced in his Yoga that as he goes on rising up thus, a strond Descent leaps down to meet him. 'A Might, a Flame', envelops him and penetrates his nerve, heart and brain. This Flame of Descent draws him into God's embrace. A fire which seems to be the body of a god consumes all his limiting past and makes room in him for a new self to live. All his limbs are held by a greater force. All the undiscovered sheaths of his being are laid bare by huge workings. His spirit begins to breathe a superhuman air. As a result of this advanced stage of his Yoga, everything in the universe stands uncovered to his eye. A secret Nature lays bare all his will. Everything that used to be considered as impossible is now able to become natural as a consequence of the might of that secret Nature. After all, Nature brings the light of her mysterious realms to the Yogic initiate who observes her secret laws. That is why, all her secret kingdom now passes into Aswapathy's charge with all her great possessions, powers and law. She surrenders all her moods and force to the service of Aswapathy's soul and to the control of his spiritual will. Consequently, all that is unknown in the universe looks

out to Aswapathy from its boundlessness. For example, Life in him comes to learn and realise the extent and nature of its huge subconscious rear portion. All the secret gulfs of life open themselves to him.

It is when Aswapathy is in this occult Yogic condition that 'A giant order' is 'discovered' by him in his upward journey towards the unknown worlds (or planes of Consciousness). It was the order of the worlds denied to the sight of the outward universe of ours. The giant order is open only to 'The secrets merged in superconscious light'. This occult order of the universe revealed to Aswapathy that the mystic kingdoms of the graded Law plunge from the Everlasting into Time, ascending and descending between life's poles. It is also revealed to Aswapathy that these kingdoms, glad of mind, rich with life's delight and packed with the beauty of Matter's forms and colours climb up back from Time into undying Self, 'Up a golden ladder carrying the Soul'. Astonishingly, these occult worlds ascending and descending are found by Aswapathy to be capable of interpreting existence to itself, of uniting opposites and of linking creation to the Ineffable. Aswapathy next sees a last high world where all worlds meet. In this high world he finds that all is discovered what it seeks for here. Secondly, in this last high world a reconciling Wisdom looks on life. It has no room for any more quarrel of truth with truths. Therefore, within Aswapathy's being, in his Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness, a hierarchy of climbing harmonies aspires from Matter's abysses to the Spirit's

peaks. He is able to arrive and enter there as also to abide awhile but he cannot wait there. Therefore, he breaks; into another Space and Time 'Adventuring across enormous realms'.

In the new Space and Time, 'In a profound existence beyond earth's' 'The universe of the Unknown arose.' A self-creation revealed to Aswapathy the grandeur of the Infinite. In this universe of the Unknown, all experience was a single plan so much so that even pain was the soul's pleasure there. All that came into Aswapathy's single view since his Yogic power now had endowed him a vast intuitive sight.

With this intuitive vision Aswapathy now saw a lone immense high-curved world-pile erect like a mountain chariot of God which was walled apart by its own innerness. (Needless to say that this 'high-curved world-pile' is nothing but a huge congregation of the apocalyptic "worlds" or "planes" of Consciousness, to be explored in minutest detail by Aswapathy the Traveller of the Worlds.) It stood as ascending towards immeasurable breadths to the Supreme from Matter's plinth and base to a top as viewless. So tremendous was the apocalyptic world-pile that 'A hundred levels raised it to the Unknown' until it disappeared in the hushed conscious Vast above. By thus mounting into great stillnesses, as Aswapathy observes, this world-pile 'marries the earth to screened eternities.' Moreover, it points us to our journey back to the Divine out of our long self-loss in Nature's deeps. Its significance is that, though it is planted on earth it holds in

it all realms. As such, it is a brief compendium of the Vast. As Aswapathy observes, this world-pile was a single stair to being's goal. What is important, the high-curved world-pile is, apocalyptically speaking, "A summary of the stages of the spirit". Its copy of the cosmic hierarchies' refashions 'A subtle pattern of the universe' 'in our secret air of self'. What is more, it is within us, below us, outside us and above us. It acts upon the visible Nature's scheme. It awakens our earth-matter to think, feel and react to joy. Likewise, it models our divine parts in us and lifts our mortal mind into a great air. So immense is its apocalyptic significance that it links our body's death to immortality. Besides, it labours towards a superconscient Light out of the Inconscience. Because of it, as Aswapathy realises, earth bore thinking man and shall bear more than man. According to Sri Aurobindo's apocalyptic suggestion here, 'This higher scheme of being is our cause / And holds the key to our ascending fate'. Because it calls the conscious spirit nursed in Matter's house out of our dense mortality. Moreover, the living symbol of these conscious planes and its influences and godheads have fixed our inner life's slow-scaled degrees. The steps of this world-pile are 'paces of the soul's return/ From the deep adventure of material birth'. Therefore, they are a ladder of delivering ascent and rungs that Nature climbs to deity. In the primordial past, these grades of occult worlds had marked Nature's giant downward plunge which also means the prone leap of a godhead's fall. (CF., Involution-Evolution.)

According to Sri Aurobindo, Integral Yoga enables us to undergo the experience of the existence of the immense high-curved world-pile entirely because there is, within us, a Seer who knows the ordered plan. It is this Seer in us who inspires our ascent to viewless heights through this world-pile. The call of this Seer in him had reached Aswapathy, 'The Traveller in Time.' Therefore, he went on travelling in his mute and single strength through the world-pile, bearing the burden of the world's desire for the incarnation of *Savitri*. As he travelled, world after world disclosed its guarded powers to him and heaven after heaven its deep beatitudes. When thus he mounted on the bare summit of created things in his inward Travel of the Worlds, the occult mystery of each plane of Consciousness started revealing itself to him in an apocalyptic manner. Each "World" or "Kingdom" through which Aswapathy travels is a plane of Consciousness.

The first of these planes which Aswapathy encounters is that of material consciousness. It is, therefore, called the Kingdom of Subtle Matter.²² As we have already seen at the outset of this Chapter, according to Sri Aurobindo, Matter means the physical. A still more important thing to note here is that Matter or the physical plane of Consciousness is apocalyptically analysed not directly as 'gross physical' but by reference to (in fact, in contrast to) the subtle physical. Hence the term Subtle Matter.

The first apocalyptic characteristic of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter is that it exists in the impalpable field of secret self. That is why Aswapathy discovered it in the field of his secret self as he came into a magic crystal air. He found on this plane a life that lived not by the flesh and a light that made immaterial things visible. This was so because the Kingdom of Subtle Matter was a fine degree in wonder's hierarchy governed by a faery craft. Unveiling the mystery of this plane, Sri Aurobindo explains that this Kingdom of Subtle Matter, which is a world of lovelier forms, lives near to our physical world. Because it is lovelier than our world, everything there is undisguised by earth's deforming sight. His reason is that in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter all shapes are beautiful and all things are true. Likewise, there is in that kingdom a mystically clear lucent ambience. The eyes of beings there are doors to a celestial sense. Hearing is music. The touch is a charm and the heart draws a deeper breath of power. All the shining origins of earth-nature dwell in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. Aswapathy realises all these revelatory characteristics of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter in the course of his inward journey undertaken in a kind of trance induced by meditation. As such, the whole description of this world of Subtle Matter can be aptly described as a product of Sri Aurobindo's apocalyptic vision. Exploring the world further for its remaining revelatory characteristics, Aswapathy realises and reveals to us that the time and the figure of the future sovereignties of earth-nature are already mapped and

scheduled there. Therefore, the golden issue of mind's plots and the riches unfound or uncaught by our lives in the gross physical world freely live in the pellucid atmosphere of the world of Subtle Matter. In this way, all the vague beginnings of the gross world are already overtaken in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter.

The next revelation Aswapathy (in fact, Sri Aurobindo, as is obvious) makes about this plane of Subtle Matter is that it is a brilliant roof of our descending plane of gross physical. Secondly, being the roof of our world, the Kingdom of Subtle Matter intercepts the free boon of heaven's air, admitting only small inrushes of a mighty breath from those higher planes which exist above the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. On account of this apocalyptic nature of the world of Subtle Matter, the significant meanings of Heaven steal through it as through a veil, By this means the inner sight of heaven sustains the outer scene of the world of gross Matter in which we live.

As Aswapathy realises, the world of Subtle Matter has, further, a finer Consciousness with happier lines. Therefore, everything there is full of perfect perfection. For example, the Kingdom of Subtle Matter has, according to Aswapathy's revelation, 'a tact our touch cannot attain,/ A purity of sense we never feel'. Similarly, this world maintains its own intercession with the Divine and thereby inspires all brief-lived attempts of earth, made in order to achieve beauty and the perfect shape of things. The embodiments of the outgoing thoughts of the young divinity of power take rest in this kingdom before they

dive down to the earth. This is the reason why everything which appears on earth has its lovelier semblance in the world of Subtle Matter. Indeed, 'All that is beautiful here is there divine.' This revelation came to Aswapathy as he went on exploring the Kingdom of Subtle Matter.

It is also revealed to Aswapathy that all the marvels of the future exist and wander in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. All things old and new are moulded there. Secondly, as Aswapathy observes, the world of Subtle Matter has different parts such as heights and depths. The heights of the kingdom are crowded with beauty thereby proving that the plane is a 'magic kingdom of ideal sight.' As such, Matter and soul meet there in conscious union. They join their strength, sweetness and delight and make the high and low worlds one.

Equally significantly, in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter 'The Spirit's leap towards body touches ground.' Such leap of the spirit enable the kingdom to bear the soul of man from world to higher world till the spirit's simplicity alone is left as the robe of the eternal being. Being a wonder-world, it cares only for expression and perfect form.

Since, as already noted, the heights of the world of Subtle Matter are fair but not its depths, Aswapathy discovers that it has dangerous nether planes against its fair peaks. Because of its dangerous lower planes its light draws towards the verge of Nature's lapse. Its guj,fs are full of terror but the kingdom lends beauty to them in the same way as it gives fascinating eyes to perilous gods

inhabiting the kingdom. Likewise, the world of Subtle Matter fills the demon and the snake with grace. It is in a state of trance. In its turn, this trance of the kingdom imposes inconscience on the earth and prepares for us death's sombre robe, thereby authorising our mortality.

On account of its fairer heights, the Kingdom of Subtle Matter also serves a greater Consciousness by being the subtle ground of Matter's worlds. Whereas Matter's worlds are transitory the Kingdom of Subtle Matter remains immutable. It holds in itself and guards the deathless type of perishing things. In its nether depths, however, its lowered potencies serve as a foundation for our fallen strengths. Its thought invents ignorance for us. Its sense creates the reflexes of our human body. It is in view of this contradiction between its heights and depths that Aswapathy reveals that:

*A heaven of creative truths above,
A cosmos of harmonious dreams between,
A chaos of dissolving forms below,
It plunges lost in our inconscient base.
Out of its fall our denser Matter came.
Thus taken was God's plunge into the Night.
This fallen world became a nurse of souls
Inhabited by concealed divinity.²³*

Needless to say, 'God's plunge into the Night' mentioned here reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Divine Descent in the form of Involution-Evolution. It is on account of the fact that the Sachchidananda descended from its highest heights down to the deepest

depths creating on its way the various higher worlds brought into being by the pressures exerted by each of them, that Sri Aurobindo from this verse-paragraph onwards until the last verse paragraph²⁴ of the canto on the Kingdom of Subtle Matter, goes on repeatedly reminding the reader of the revelatory nature of earth / world / life / existence, man, mind and the various unnamed higher worlds of Consciousness yet to be explored by Aswapathy.

Still more revelatory aspects of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter are found in the last verse paragraph of the Canto.²⁵ Aswapathy reveals that the fair subtle realm is behind our own world. Then he reveals that in the realm of Subtle Matter form is everything and physical gods rule there as kings. Liberty acts there as the guarantee of perfection. All things possess a miracle of symmetric charm and a fantasy of perfect line and rule. All the inhabitants of the kingdom feel satisfied in themselves and whole. As Aswapathy reveals, an intricate rapture riots in a small space there. Everything is enamoured of its own delight. It lives in a heaven-pleased self-glad immunity. It feels need of nothing more.

Yet another revelatory aspect of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter is that 'It was a world that could not fear nor grieve./ It had no grace of error or defeat,/ It had no room for fault, no power to fail.' The reason for its being so is that it draws its form-discoveries and the miracle of its rhythmic thoughts and acts from some packed self-bliss. Aswapathy feels amazed to see such extraordinary

apocalyptic qualities of the plane of Subtle Matter that. His senses are ravished with delight. He moves there in a divine, yet kindred world admiring all the marvellous forms existing there. They are in a world so near to our own world. Yet, they are as perfect as the playthings of a god. They are as deathless in the aspect of mortality. Aswapathy accounts for these revelatory qualities of the realm by observing that it is one of the graded worlds ('ranked supremacies') created by the Supreme Consciousness in its descent to undertake Involution-Evolution. On the strength of it, he reveals that in the world of Subtle Matter the spirit of the divine Might stands back behind its frame. A blue horizon limits the soul there. Similarly, thought moves in luminous facilities and life lingers satisfied in its boundaries with the small happiness of the body's acts. Its walk is fixed within a radiant groove because it is there forgetful of her violent desires in the same way as it is forgetful of the heights to which it rose. In the world of Subtle Matter, life has no wings for wide and dangerous flight. Nor does it have any yearning for its lost infinitudes.

In this way, Aswapathy reveals the various apocalyptic aspect of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter which is 'A perfect picture in a perfect frame'. Even so, as Sri Aurobindo points out, 'This faery artistry could not keep' Aswapathy's will. It gave him only a moment's fine release. The reason he gives for this is that our spirit gets tired of our being's surfaces and the splendour of the form of things is transcended. As a result, our spirit turns to

hidden powers and deeper states than the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. That is why Sri Aurobindo states that from this kingdom Aswapathy looked beyond for greater light. His soul abandoned 'This brilliant courtyard of the House of' Days, ' this 'find- material Paradise.' For, 'His destiny lay beyond in larger Space.'

Chapter Notes :

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga Part : One and Part Two*, p.429
2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine : Book Two Part Two*, pp.787-8
3. Such as M.P. Pandit, *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga* (Pondicherry : Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1966), pp.186-8
4. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part One*, p.252
5. M.P. Pandit, *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, p. 308
6. Ibid. p.184
7. Ibid.
8. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine Book One Part One & Book Two Part One* p.263
9. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga : Part One And Part Two*, p.430
10. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine Book One Part One & Book Two Part One*, p.239
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine : Book Two Part Two*, p.652
14. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, pp.416-7
15. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine : Book One Part One & Book Two Part One*, - p.606
16. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, p. 10

17. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part One*, p.223
18. pp.74-91
19. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, p.291
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. pp.103-15
23. p.107
24. pp.107-13
25. p.113-5



*UNVEILING OF THE
MYSTERY OF
CONSCIOUSNESS
ON THE VITAL PLANE*



VII CHAPTER

UNVEILING OF THE MYSTERY OF CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE VITAL PLANE

As noted in the previous chapter, Sri Aurobindo maintains that 'There is a vital plane (self-existent) above the material universe which we see'.¹ He also says that the whole of vital plane is connected with the life-world or desire-world and that the entire vital plane is hidden within us.² It is a 'secret consciousness' in us in which life and desire find their untrammelled play and their easy self-expression and from there throw their influences and formations on our outer life.³ Further, in this vital world Matter is not supreme but rather Life-Force takes its place as the first determinant. There, forms do not determine the conditions of the life. On the contrary, life determines the form. Consequently, forms are there 'much more free, fluid, largely to our conceptions strangely variable than in the material world.'⁴ Like the physical, this life-force also, says Sri Aurobindo, is not inconscient material force. It is not even an elemental subconscious energy, except in

its lowest movements. Instead it is a conscious force of being which makes for formation, but much more essentially for enjoyment, possession, satisfaction of its own dynamic impulse. In this way, 'Desire and the satisfaction of impulse are the first law of this world of sheer vital existence, this poise of relations between the soul and its nature in which life-power plays with so much a greater freedom and capacity than in our physical living'.⁵ In Sri Aurobindo's opinion, the vital world therefore, 'may be called the desire-world, for desire its principal characteristic.

Speaking about the nature of the vital world, and the effect it produces Sri Aurobindo says, 'The vital world is on one side the world of beautiful. That is why, he adds 'the poet, artist, musician are in close contact with it; it is also a world of powers and passions, lusts and desires'.⁶ In view of this, 'our own lusts' desires, and passions and ambitions can put us into connection with the vital worlds and their forces and beings.'⁷ This, however, is not all, according to Sri Aurobindo. For, the vital world 'is again a world of things dark, dangerous and horrible.' As such, 'Its influences are also the source of much in men that is demoniac, dirty, cruel and base.'⁸ It is significant to note here that "life-plane" and "life-world" are the synonyms of "vital plane".

The apocalyptic significance of the vital plane, according to Aurobindonian scholars, consists in the fact that 'The vital is indispensable for the divine or spiritual

action' since 'without it there can be no complete expression, no realisation in life'.⁹ Similarly, 'there is no life-force or creation or manifestation' without the vital; 'it is a necessary instrument of the spirit of life.'¹⁰ Further, 'The vital is a good instrument but a bad master. 'If it is allowed to follow its own likes and dislikes, fancies and desires, as well as its bad habits, it becomes our master and, as a result, peace and happiness are no longer possible for us. In such conditions, it does not remain our instrument or the instrument of the Divine *Shakti* but of any force of the Ignorance or even of any hostile force able to seize and use it. As such, the vital is good when it is properly used and therefore becomes a necessary instrument for action.'¹¹

According to Sri Aurobindo's idea, there are three types of the vital, higher vital, middle vital and lower vital. Higher vital usually refers to the vital mind and emotive being. It is opposed to the middle vital which is dynamic, sensational and passionate. Besides, higher vital is different from the lower vital also since the lower vital is made up of the smaller movements of human life-desire and life-reaction. The effect of the lower vital is that anger, fear and jealousy touch the heart just as they touch the mind. But they rise both from the lower and the middle vital. Secondly, the lower vital refuses to listen to reason. It acts in its own particular way since it is accustomed to act in that way. It goes on behaving unreasonably in spite of any painful reaction it brings about.¹²

Besides these three types, there are also (1) material vital and (2) physical-vital. The material vital is found so much involved in Matter as to be bound by its movement and gross physical character. Its action is to support and energize the body and keep in it the capacity of life, growth, movement etc, as also of sensitiveness to outside impacts. On its part, the physical-vital is the being of small desires and greeds etc. It is full of nervousness. Besides, it is closely connected with the material vital.¹³

Probably the most helpful ideas about the vital world are contained in the following words of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram:

- (1) *The vital world is quite different from the physical subconscious which is closely connected with human beings. The vital world is inhabited by vital beings who are not human, some are very beautiful and resemble gods, some are hideously ugly, but all or almost all are anti-divine and try always to turn human beings from their Divine Goal. The vital world itself in its higher regions is very beautiful, dangerously beautiful and attractive in its lower parts it is dark and frightful. One must not go into the vital world without a special purpose or command and a special protection.*
- (2) *The vital is most important for the transformation of the physical but its importance is rather little for those who want to escape life rather than transform it.*¹⁵

As in the case of the conceptual frames of terms such as the "physical plane", all these conceptual ideas about the "vital plane" (or the "vital world") are themselves immensely revelatory to us and therefore quite apocalyptic in themselves. We do not have, and probably cannot expect to have, such revelatory concepts of these psychological terms from any Western thinker, philosopher or psychologist. This is so because, Sri Aurobindo was not only entirely original (in being strictly oriental in his thinking) but also a "decolonised" Indian who lived long before the idea of "decolonising" the Indian mind came into existence.

In "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds" from *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo devotes as many as five cantos to the exhaustive examination of the revelatory nature of various aspects of the vital plane of Consciousness, as against the single Canto II devoted to "The Kingdom of Subtle Matter". The five cantos are : Canto III "The Glory and Fall of Life";¹⁶ Canto IV "The Kingdoms of the Little Life";¹⁷ Canto V "The Godheads of the Little Life";¹⁸ Canto VI "The Kingdoms and Godheads of Greater Life";¹⁹ and Canto IX "The Paradise of the Life-Gods".²⁰ Of these, Canto III: "The Glory and Fall of Life" may be said to deal with the general characteristics of the Vital world as a whole. As their names suggest, Canto IV and Canto V are devoted to the unravelling of the secret nature of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother conceptualise as the Lower Vital world. Canto VI may

be considered as dealing with the Middle Vital world. Similarly, Canto IX seems to have been devoted to the description of the revelatory nature of the Higher Vital world as defined by Sri Aurobindo.

As we have already seen, in his revelations regarding the physical, the vital and the mental manifestations of the Divine Consciousness, Sri Aurobindo integrates into his spiritual and apocalyptic accounts what the twentieth century sciences of evolution broadly say about the emergence of Matter (in all its three forms,— gas, liquid and solid), Life and Mind in the origin and evolution of the universe. According to modern science, the first of the three to manifest was Matter. That is why Aswapathy as the Traveller of the Worlds unravels in Canto II the mystery of the Physical with reference to its subtle manifestation. Since, scientifically speaking, Life evolved out of solid matter on earth, the second set of revelations to be realised and made by Aswapathy (really speaking, Sri Aurobindo himself) have got to be about the apocalyptic nature of Life as a manifestation of Consciousness following its manifestation as Matter. The revelations made about the manifestation of Life are nothing but revelations made about the Vital world. They are also based on twentieth century sciences dealing with evolution. In this sense all the apocalypticism in *Savitri* is an example of revelations made in the twentieth century. But since Sri Aurobindo envisions and reveals the apocalyptic mystery of the Physical, the Vital and the

Mental worlds against the background of his Integral Philosophy based on the Indian Vedantic and Tantric spirituality as well as on his own, and therefore Indian version of Involution-Evolution, *Savitri* also becomes an example of twentieth century apocalyptic literature.

According to evolutionary sciences, emergence of life in the evolution of the universe began on a low level first. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, apocalyptically conceptualises the mystery of what he calls the Lower Vital, after he gives a general description of the Glory and Fall of Life at the outset of Aswapathy's spiritual journey into the various parts of the world of the Vital manifestation of Consciousness. Significantly, he calls the first emergence of Life as "The Glory and Fall of Life". As in the case "The Kingdom of Subtle Matter", he explores the Vital Plane as a traveller who has undertaken an inward vision-like journey by descending into his own inner being.

Therefore, as in the case of the canto on the Kingdom of Subtle Matter, again, Aswapathy first gives in Canto III what can be, vaguely at least, taken as a topographical description of the Vital World. Witness the beginning of the Canto, on the Glory and Fall of Life for example. It says, 'An uneven broad ascent now lured his (Aswapathy's, or more appropriately, Sri Aurobindo's) feet.' On the basis of such topographical hints given by Sri Aurobindo in the case of all manner of journeys undertaken by different characters (of course, mainly by

Aswapathy and Savitri) we can conclude that the location of each one of the worlds travelled through by Aswapathy is itself apocalyptic in the same tradition as the various visions, dreams and journeys mentioned in various apocalyptic writings of Judaism, Christianity and other religions or religious sects of the West. Similarly, Aswapathy's description of the details of the nature of the regions covered and beings inhabiting the worlds can be taken as the revelation of the apocalypticism of the world concerned. Accordingly, in the Canto dealing with the Glory and Fall of Life, after 'an uneven broad ascent' lures his feet, Aswapathy crosses limits of Mind and enters 'wide obscure disputed fields' which constitute the region of the Vital world. This is Aswapathy's revelation of the location and general nature of the early manifestation of the Vital world. In scientific terms, it means that at the beginning of the appearance of various primeval creatures on the earth, the nature of the animal kingdom was obscure and open to dispute. Secondly, the Vital world is full of doubt and change. It is a world of search and toil without rest. Aswapathy travels through this land. Everything there is like a mirage. There is an endless vagrancy without any destination. There is nothing in the Vital world to satisfy the heart of an Integral Yogi such as Aswapathy because life there is the manifest incalculable. It is a. long/ And venturesome leap of spirit into Space,/ A vexed disturbance in the eternal Calm,/ An impulse

and passion of the Infinite.' Here Sri Aurobindo simultaneously refers to the "Descent" of Sachchidananda and the Involution and Evolution of Consciousness. Therefore, the characteristics of the Vital world given by Aswapathy here are apocalyptic revelations. As already seen in the Canto dealing with "The Secret Knowledge", Sri Aurobindo firmly establishes the concept of the Transcendent One as the original entity and the Mighty Mother as His Force assuming the form of Nature or Life. From that Canto onwards, all through *Savitri*, he refers to, and depicts Life as a feminine entity. Therefore, in his description of the Vital he says that Life has left the safety of the tried and known and assumed whatever her fancy wills. Also, she has escaped from the restraint of settled forms. More significantly, she accepts disaster as a common risk at this level. At the same time aspires for heaven and turns her steps towards hell, choosing Chance and danger as her play-fellows and Fate's dreadful swing as her cradle and seat. Obviously, this is what Sri Aurobindo apocalyptically reveals to us as the Fall of Life in the beginning of the evolution of life on earth. Because of her primeval nature of this kind, Life in the Vital world (Scientifically, in the beginning of the appearance of life on earth) wrestles with danger and discovery in the unexplored regions there which are nothing but expanses of the Soul when it descended from the heights of Sachchidananda. At that primeval time, she passed from

thought to thought, from phase to phase since she was tortured by her own powers. Apocalyptically, so astonishing is the Fall of Life that she sweeps through the race-fields of Circumstances in a gallop of thunder-hooved vicissitudes. She is tossed between her heights and deeps. In the form of members of the insect kingdom, she becomes a worm amid worms in Nature's mud. At the same time she becomes Titan-statured (cf., the dinosaurs and other gigantic species) and takes the whole earth for food. Thus, the original Divine Consciousness, now in the form of Life, plunges into the anguish of the depths, wallows in them and clings to her own misery. Yet, Aswapathy significantly points out, 'pure and bright from the Timeless was her birth,/ A lost world-rapture lingers in her eyes./ Her moods are the faces of the Infinite'. Obviously, this is an apocalyptic revelation of the true original heavenly glory of fallen Life. In order to understand the revelatory nature of such statements in this canto, we have constantly to bear in mind what Sri Aurobindo copiously describes (and we have analysed in our chapter on Human existence as the play of the Transcendent One [He] and the Mighty Mother [She]) in the canto dealing with "The Secret Knowledge". Because of her origin in the transcendent One and the Mighty Mother, Life in the Vital world enjoys beauty and happiness as her native right and makes endless bliss her eternal home.

As Aswapathy reveals, this heavenly aspect of Life now reveals its antique face of joy. It makes a sudden disclosure to the heart of grief. As a result, now Aswapathy sees the image of a happier state of Life. The reason for Life's happier state is that from 'As far as heaven' yet 'as near as thought and hope' , in the heart there 'Glimmered the kingdom of a griefless life' from its high summit of the world-pile. In a heavenly vault far above him the stars of the higher planes of Consciousness appear to Aswapathy as if they were swimming in a rippled sea of sky. Towered spirals, magic rings of clear colours and shining spheres of strange happiness also appear to him floating through distance like a symbol world. Since they are far away from the trouble and the toil, the unhappiness and suffering, struggle and grief and anger, gloom and hate of the Vital world these glimmering kingdoms of a griefless life do not share the unpleasantness of the early Vital world. They remain absorbed in their own beauty and content, being sure of their immortal gladness far above the Vital world. Even so, from them trickles down some divine influence since they are calm heavens of imperishable Light, shining continents of great peace, oceans and rivers of the mirth of God and griefless countries under purple suns. The Vital world catches some heavenly influence of those higher realms. The influence now takes a close shape of reality. As a result, 'The gulf between dream-truth, earth-fact was

crossed, / The wonder-worlds of life were dreams no more'. They reveal to Aswapathy their wonderful glory. His vision makes all they unveil its own. From among those Vital worlds, a breathless summit region draws his gaze. Here Life's supreme delight glows in its quintessence. Pointing out the reason for this, Aswapathy reveals that 'Only a miracle's high transfiguring line / Divided life from the formless Infinite' on the spiritual and mysterious peak of the summit region. Out of the formless stuff of the summit region, Time mints his shapes as an aspect of the eternal play of transcendent One and the Mighty Mother (beautifully described by Sri Aurobindo on pp.121-2). That is why, as Aswapathy discovers, here are worlds lifted half-way to heaven. No doubt, the Veil of our Ignorance of the Play. He and She indulge in, but the Shadowy wall is not there. As a result, some passion of inviolate purity, a ray of the original Bliss breaks through and touches the worlds of the Vital. Therefore, these worlds can feel God's breath visiting their tops. In these worlds live a purer and fierier sense, a burning urge unearthly in its nature. As part of the Glory of Life displayed here, the voice of time sings of the Immortal's joy. The moments come with ecstasy on their wings; Beauty unimaginable moves. Creation leaps straight from the hands of God. As such, Life is a happy laughter of the soul. Joy is king with Love for minister. In this way, divine spiritual Love manifests in the Vital world to take charge of its management.

Consequently, none remains weak in that world. So falsehood cannot live there. In the Glory of the Vital world, assemblies, crowded senates of the gods,/ Life's puissances, high dominations and autocracies manifest there. All things become great and beautiful there. All beings inhabiting the Vital world wear a royal stamp of power. As a result, all the soul's postures don divinity. In the Glory of the Vital world, Aswapathy reveals that 'A captive Life wedded her all his own. That is why Aswapathy reveals that 'A captive Life wedded her Conqueror.' there. She builds all her world newly in the wide sky of her Lover. She gives to mind the motor's speed. She gives to thinking a need to live what the soul sees. Besides, she gives to living an impetus to know and see. On account of this, the splendour of Life's Lord grasps her. All her puissance clings to him. She makes Thought a monarch with her magic serpent scepter. The victor Light of Thought rides on Life's deathless Force. She sits on the throne with mind and they become a double majesty. Life thus, Aswapathy reveals, is an eternity of rapture's moods. In the Vital world the God-children run in their play-fields carrying the pride and mastery of their charm. 'There was no falsehood of soul's severance,/ There came no crookedness of thought or word / To rock creation of its native truth'. The Glory of Life in the Vital world is such that all is sincerity and natural force there and freedom is sole rule and highest law.

As Aswapathy discloses, these worlds climb or plunge in a happy series. No limit is set there to Life's greatness and grace, to her glory and heavenly variety. In all this, no guide she needs except her luminous heart. No fall debases the godhead of her steps. No alien Night has come to blind her eyes there.

Continuing his disclosure of the general nature of the Vital world, Sri Aurobindo says that Aswapathy saw this world of bliss and felt its call. But he finds no way to enter into the joy of the Vital world. His soul is still encircled by a darker air because it is tied to an image of unquiet life. He is unable to overcome his sense of human suffering, grief and pain in life. According to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, Aswapathy feels dissatisfied because, as human beings at present, 'A dire duality is our way to be.' For example, Life in its essence and as a manifestation of divine Consciousness hears the forlorn call of yearning earth to go to earth's rescue, and in answer leaves her native light. She stoops to make her home in transient shapes on earth in the form of Vital life. She casts the Immortal's fire in the unfeeling Vast. As realised by Aswapathy, she also wakes thought and hope on earth. She forces delight insensible earth by manifesting her glory in the form of trees and herbs and flowers, rivers and lakes and seas; in the form of the beauty of beasts; and in the form of man's daring thought.

As Sri Aurobindo reveals, this brighter aspect of the Vital world is one part of the dire duality. The other side of the duality is that, before Life's gifts could reach

the prisoned hearts of human beings, a dark ambiguous Presence questions all the 'glory Life has scattered on earth. On account of the passion-play planned and being enacted by he Transcendent One and his Consort, 'The Secret Will that robes itself with Night/And offers to spirit the ordeal of the flesh,/ Imposed a mystic mask of death and pain. 'As a result, the glory of Life is buried now in the slow and suffering years. In her evolving process on the Vital plane she must obey the law of the Inconscient and accept sorrow and joy as struggling comrades. All her child-god happiness is slain. All her sweetness is changed to a maimed desire. Life's doom now is to feed death with her works. As Aswapathy discloses, her immortality is so veiled that she seems just an episode in an eternal death. The canto dealing with "The Glory and Fall of Life" comes to an end here.

As already observed, Cantos IV and V of Book Two of *Savitri* contain apocalyptic revelations regarding the '] various regions of the Vital world and their presiding deities. By using such terms as "Little Life", "Greater Life" and "The Paradise of the Life-Gods" to describe the entire Vital world, Sri Aurobindo seems to imply the Lower Vital by "Little Life", the Middle Vital by "Greater Life" and Higher Vital by "Paradise".

This is, slightly at least borne out by the fact that he calls Canto IV of Book Two "Kingdoms of the Little life" and describes several kinds of the kingdoms of little life by calling them "creations". Similarly, since he makes the statement that 'A third creation now revealed its face'

(p. 146.), at the beginning of the fifth verse-paragraph of Canto IV, we can reasonably assume that, according to Sri Aurobindo, there are "three Kingdoms" or "three Creations" of the Little Life.

The canto dealing with the Kingdoms of the Little Life, however, begins with a continued analysis of the characteristics of the whole Vital world in general. Note, for example, that, at the beginning of the Canto, Sri Aurobindo says that a quivering uncertain world appears in the emptiness where the feet of Life have Vital world, a writhing of half-conscious force trying to find itself and its hold on things. This force strives to fill the aching gap between earth-pain and the divine Bliss from which Life has fallen. Aswaphy also reveals that, the half-conscious force in Life has joined its hunger to the hunger of earth. Therefore, a Power beyond earth's scope has touched the earth. On account of this, the repose which might have been on earth can no more exist in the world. There is a formless yearning in man's heart. If this tragic condition was not there man could have enjoyed his original childlike and pain-forgetting mind of beasts. Or else he could have lived happy and unmoved like flowers and trees. As the situation prevails at present, man's natural joy of life is overcast since the thoughtless joy of the animal in him is left behind.

Apocalyptically describing the first primeval appearance of Life on earth Sri Aurobindo says, 'Life cast her seed in the body's indolent mould It woke from happy torpor a blind Force / Compelling to sense and seek and

feel.' But the Force struggles for release. Yet, Life keeps on waking yearning in the inert cell and kindling a fire of passion and need in the heart of the body. In this way, she makes the chain which binds her to an instrument of hers. She is filled with instinct, effort, growth and striving nescience. She has brought her claim to her lost right into Matter's tenacity, as also her tireless search, her uneasy heart, her unsure steps and her cry for change. Even then, no great transforming light comes down to Life. As Aswapathy discloses, in this way Life begins her mighty task in Nescience and at present she pursues her unfinished work in Ignorance. Sri Aurobindo describes Life in such revelatory terms as 'A foundling of gods' who wanders here ascending slowly with unconscious steps; Life is 'Like a child-soul left near the gates of Hell / Fumbling through fog in search of Paradise.' With this description of Life, the first verse-paragraph of the Canto on the Kingdoms of the Little Life closes.

Sri Aurobindo seems to devote 'the second and the third verse paragraphs of the Canto to the unravelling of the mystery of the first Creation of Life or the first of the various Kingdoms of the Little Life (which can be taken as the Quarters of the Lower Vital). Mark the opening lines of the second verse paragraph: 'In this slow ascension he must follow her pace'. The mention of 'slow ascension' and 'dim subconscious start' here appears clearly to indicate the Lower Vital world. The 'slow ascension' is that of Life. As the Traveller of the Worlds, Aswapathy

must explore Life's mystery 'Even from her faint and dim subconscious start'. The apocalyptically revealing reason for this, according to Sri Aurobindo, is that 'So only can earth's last salvation come.' Every human being must realise the revelatory significance of the beginning of Life because only by knowing it every one can know the obscure cause 'Of all that holds us back and' all that 'baffles God/ In the jail-delivery of the imprisoned soul.' In order to fulfil this condition, Aswapathy stumbles into a grey obscurity filled with instincts. In this slow ascension (the first Creation of Life on earth) Life is vulnerable to Death and darkness. Thus, Life in the beginning is the inmate and the adopted child of Death and Night. She has hardly any hope to survive. Aswapathy tries to seek the reason for this and finds that Life lies far away from truth and thought which is the original seat of the dethroned, deformed and suffering Power. In her first Creation Life flaunts her animal disgrace. She is fallen and yet chooses to take delight in the vileness of her fallen state and in the graceless squalor of her beast desires. In fact, out of such squalor she first crawls out from her cabin of mud, Matter. As such, a darkness still clings to her and refuses to be effaced by Light. No redeeming touch from above comes to the rescue of Life in the first Creation.

It is at this stage of the first Creation of Life that the need for a body is felt. Accordingly, Life's mind asks for a body to translate its soul. But its prayer is denied.

Therefore, it fumbles after thought in search of help. Even in this effort Life's mind in the first Creation fails. It could only live with great difficulty. Therefore, Life's mind opens into a weird and pigmy world, strange domains where all is living sense. Even then mastering thought is not present there. Only crude child-heart of Life cries for toys of bliss. Her mind flickers. Random shapeless energies drive towards form. Still Life's mind can place no thinking steps. In this way, Life goes on following darkness' clue though she asks for light. She is nothing but Matter smitten by Matter. She glimmers to sense. Perception answers Nature's waking blows in Life. But there is still only a mechanical response from Life. Her rude impulses remain unchastened though they run about jostling. An unseeing desire in her feels out for food. She survives by adopting the gusts of Nature as the only law. In the first Creation of the Lower Vital, Sri Aurobindo reveals, Life happens to be a vain unnecessary entity.

In spite of this, Sri Aurobindo says that still the spirit's wakened eye of Aswapathy does not judge so. Because he sees the hidden apocalyptic purpose in the works of Time. He realises that 'Even in that aimlessness a work was done'. Of course, there are only foulness and force as yet, since it is a tardy fervent working the dark and the ferment of the soul's creation out of mire. Even so, Aswapathy cannot afford to forget the apocalyptic truth that all this grey disguise of Life in the first Creation is donned by a heavenly process and that Life is only a fallen

ignorance labouring to achieve its dumb work. Her hard but destined task is to release the glory of God in Nature's mud. Aswapathy's spiritual sight can see that a shifting flux animates the mute and solid cells in Life's body, leads the thought and longing of the flesh and directs the keen lust and hunger of its will. When Life breaks through the half-drowse of God's delight in the plant, in beast, in winged bird and thinking man, it makes of the heart's rhythm its music's beat. The rapture of God's delight forces the unconscious roots to awake in Life and to ask for happiness. It presses on the core and the vibrant nerve of Life's heart the sharp self-seeking of God's bliss. Therefore, it tears our consciousness. As such, our pain and pleasure have that sting of heavenly rapture for cause. We are thrilled with that rapture. Yet we are blind to its true joy. Hence the sad situation that our soul's desire leaps out towards passing things; all Nature's longing drive turns in us to finite loves and lusts. The early brief attempt of heavenly bliss to exist on earth is here in the first Creation of the Lower Vital, as Aswapathy apocalyptically realises. This attempt pursues all that we dream and do. Yet its roots of will are ever the same. The passions of Life are the stuff of which human beings are made. Thus, Life's passion is the first cry of the awaking world. It continues to be the fountainhead of Life in beast, reptile and thinking man, even after reason is born on earth and soul takes form. The ignorant world of Lower

Life is made under this law. That is why, Aswapathy can feel even in the formless coilings of the first writhings of Life Matter's response to an infant stir of soul .

The next verse paragraph of the Canto²¹ begins with the statement that 'Then came a fierier breath of waking life'. It is reasonable to assume that in this statement we have the beginning of the description of the second Creation of the Lower Vital world. In pointing out how Aswapathy fares in this region of the Lower Vital, Sri Aurobindo points out the revelatory nature of this part of the Vital. Accordingly, there is a gulf of things here in this region. From this gulf the strange creations of the thinking sense arise. They are existences half-real and half-dream. Naturally, such a Life does not hope to survive. That is why there are beings in this region who are born but perish without trace. At the same time, a seeking Power finds out its road to form here. Consequently, patterns of love, joy and pain are built to satisfy the moods of Life. A whole insect kingdom appears crawling in its hedonism. They experience raptures and agonies as they crawl in the march and mire. Along with the insects, there appear huge forms of animals. Though they are great and powerful creatures they possess only a dwarfish brain. Among the human species, pigmy tribes appear as a dwarf model of humanity. In the human model Nature now launches her extreme experience and master-point of the caprice of her design. As Aswapathy discovers, there also arises the Kingdom of the animal self. The apocalyptic meaning of

this is that the divine Force which works by the light of Ignorance begins her animal experiment also. Thereby she fills her world-scheme with conscious creatures.

But, as Aswapathy reveals, each of the patterns of the body brought into being in the second Creation is unable to know its own soul within. It merely lives and longs experiencing anger, joy and grief. In the body thus created in the forms of insect, animal and dwarf humanity there is also a mind which meets the objective world. Those beings of this Creation who wear a human form do not know who they are or why they live. They are so unconscious that Life has no aim for them. They work entirely for the body's wants. In this way, they feel the quiver of life in the outward touch only. For their survival they form a tiny circle of defence against the hostile forces in the large universe. As they prey upon the world they also become the world's prey. As yet they never dream of conquering the forces of the universe and be free from danger.

Similarly, in this Creation there is no conscious code or plan of life. The law of a traditional behaviour is fixed by the creatures of this Creation and is duly followed. The creatures turn in grooves of animal desire. They make even human selves their helpless prey. Each member of the group sees his own reflection in each member of his own kind. All of them serve the aim and action of the group as a whole. The human being of this Creation, for example, considers those who are like himself as parts of his own life or as his adjunct selves.

Man becomes a master of the environment of his life. He becomes a leader of a human mass who come together for safety on a dangerous earth. Therefore, he considers as his enemy any one who is unlike his own kind. If he does not want to live in a group, he lives separately like the solitary animal. None of the creatures of this Creation dreams to make this earth a fairer world. Much worse, none feels some touch divine surprise his heart.

Returning to the spiritually apocalyptic explanation of this kind of life described in terms of scientific evolution of animals Sri Aurobindo says that in war and clasp these life-wants of the beings of this Creation join the All-Life. The apocalyptic reason given is that man the dim being must learn by failure and progress by fall. He must discover his deep soul by suffering.

But Life stops half-way here as she finds her faith no more. In the creatures-of this Creation, only the life can think and not the mind. Sense alone can feel but not the soul. Such is the mystery of the second Creation in the Lower Vital world.

At the end of it, a third Creation now reveals its face. At the outset of this Creation, a mould of body's early mind is made. But it is just a glint of light which kindles the obscure World-Force. Therefore, it endows the driven world of the third Creation with the seeing Idea and arms the act with Thought's dynamic point. As a result, a small thinking being starts watching the works of Time.

Continuing his revelations of Life in the third Creation, Sri Aurobindo says that Aswapathy at first sees a

dim obscure mind-power moving but hidden by Matter and dumb life. There is no thinking self. There is no aim. There exist only unrecognised stress and vague seekings of the Vital kind. There rise to the surface Vital sensations, stabs and edges of desire, passion's leaps and emotion's cries. In the result, all on the surface is dim sparkle and nothing else.

Then came the pressure of a seeing Power', as Aswapathy reveals. The Power draws all creatures of the third Creation into a dancing turbid mass, with the figure of a unitary Light within. The observing Power imposes its sight on Life there. It forces a limit and a shape on the flux of life. It also creates the life-mind of bird and beast and the reptile and the fish. It also creates the primitive pattern of the thoughts of man. As a consequence, there comes a finite movement of the Infinite winging its way through a wide air of Time. Knowledge moves in Nescience and guards a separate soul in the form. its right to be immortal it reserves but builds a wall against the seige of death and throws a hook to clutch eternity. Because a thinking entity appears in Space, an instrument-personality is born in the third Creation. A restricted clamped intelligence also comes into existense. It prohibits the adventure of the Unseen and the soul's walk through unknown infinities. This little being in the third Creation is satisfied with a little joy and knowledge. A thought is there which plans. There is also a will but it strives only for small aims within a narrow scope. Like the

beings of the second Creation, this little being of the third Creation also knows itself as a creature of the mud. As such, it demands no larger law, no loftier air. Yet it seems to be the brilliant crown of Nature's works. Therefore, small egos take the whole world as means to satisfy temporarily life's dwarf lusts and brief desires. The little being of the third Creation is passionate only to survive. He does not know the immortal. He has no greater and deeper cause to live. Thought is his highest point or the lower rim. He sees an image of the external world as also his own surface self. But he knows no more. His mind is tied to the soil. As such, human mind is inspired by common things only. It is attached to a confined familiar world.

In this way, according to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, Life is a play monotonously the same in the third Creation of the Lower Vital also. This petty state of Life is fixed to eternity of changeless type. As such, Life continues to be a little' light born in a great darkness without knowing where it goes, without knowing from where it came. As Aswapathy sees, in the Kingdoms of the Little Life of this kind, 'Around all floated still the nescient haze.'

These various important apocalyptic revelations made by Sri Aurobindo about the nature of the Kingdoms of the Little Life are followed, in Canto V of Book Two of Savitri, by an equally interesting and impressive apocalyptic account of the undisclosed mystery of the

supernatural beings, powers and creatures inhabiting the Lower Vital world and aptly termed by Sri Aurobindo as "The Godheads of the Little Life". Through Aswapathy, the Traveller of the Worlds, Sri Aurobindo begins by defining to us part of the geography of the abode of the godheads of the Little Life. Note, for example, the statement at the opening of Canto V to the effect that the empire of the Little Life is a fixed and narrow power with rigid forms. It is an unhappy corner in eternity. It is protected by ignorance and it lives upon the margin of the Idea. Hoping to learn the secret of this world Aswapathy peers across its fringe. He seeks to disengage the Force that moves this world and the Idea that makes it. He wants to know the ruling spirit of its littleness and its claim on Nature. Here, all lurking things are torn out of their veils and held up to the blaze of Aswapathy's vision. As he discovers, there is here a busy restless uncouth populace. They are the little deities of Time's nether act. They work remote from Heaven's controlling eye. There in this world of the Little Life they plot the small conspiracies of this petty reign. They include such "Godheads of the Little Life" as elfins, imps, sprites, fairer genii as well as fallen human beings with their heavenly parts lost who are the errant divinities trapped in Time's dust. There are also ignorant and dangerous wills of beings. Their mood and their shape are half-animal and half-god. As Sri Aurobindo reveals here, their whispers come to influence us as an inarticulate force. They draw our heart's sanction to their

sting of impulse and do their work in that little Nature. They fill its powers and creatures with unease. They put out the scanty light of our hearts with error's breath. They turn our heart's surface truths to the purposes of falsehood. It is for this apocalyptic reason that Life in the world finds no escape from ignorance. These Godheads make knowledge a poison, virtue a dull pattern and lead our endless desires to an inescapable fatality. In the world of Little Life all is enacted by their influence. What is more revealing is that their empire and their role are extended further. They reach out wherever there are soulless minds and guideless lives and wherever self in a small body is all that counts, wherever love and light and largeness lack. In all such areas of our life these crooked Godheads of the Little Life take up their task. In this way, they extend their reign to all half-conscious worlds. That is why these godlings of the Little Life drive our human hearts here on our earth also. They stand between us and divine truth that saves us .

Unravelling the nature of the Godheads of the Little Life further, Sri Aurobindo says that they follow the wheel of law in their own fields and cherish the safety of a settled type. Their law is kept on earth thrown out of their changeless orbit. Their fixed form of things is lost. They are cast into a creative chaos where all is driven by Chance. For this reason, our life's uncertain way moves circling on while our mind's unquiet search asks always light since our conscious life obeys the in conscience'

laws. As Sri Aurobindo says here, this is our doom until our souls are free. For this reason Life awakes from the unconscious 's swoon and creates man moulding him from the original brute. Man now raises his eyes Heavenward. As a result, the illumined soul-ray falls on human heart and flesh and touches the stuff of which the earthly dreams of man are made. With him, however, an immortal spirit is there behind his little personal form. It does not yet claim the earthly embodiment of man. As such, human life continues to be on the lower level. In this nether life of man he is therefore, pushed in a hundred different ways. He does not feel the hands that drive him. These hands are of a masked ironic troupe. These Godheads of the Little Life are themselves ignorant of their own fount of strength. Since they are supernatural beings inhabiting the world of the Little Life, they are agents of darkness imitating light just as they are perverse channels of a stupendous Will. Similarly, they are tools of the Unknown who use us as their tools. They bring the incoherence of Fate into the actions of mortals. The nether stuff of which these Godheads of the Little Life are made rebels against all higher Truth. Their will lies open only to Titan force. They inflict their little pigmy law on man and curb his slow rise upwards. Ultimately they end up his brief life on earth with death.

In spite of all this, Sri Aurobindo points out in the last two verse paragraphs of the Canto on the Godheads of the Little Life, that man shall rise out of the mischief of

the forces of the nether life. His shape of person shall be 'new-made in the image of the eternal Guest'. However, the one apocalyptic condition for this transformation of the human being is that we must first achieve the spirit's ascent.

In the third Creation of Little Life, Aswapathy now stands in the midst of the grey faces of the demon gods of the Little Life. Then, 'Adventuring once more in the natal mist' 'He through the astral chaos shore a way", and travels 'in stone strength' to the end of the region. As he moves, the watching opacity of the influence of the Godheads of the Little Life multiplies. But he moves on with courage with his spirit's flame as his only sunlight. His departure marks the end of Canto V.

Sri Aurobindo combines in the next Canto his unravelling of the apocalyptic nature of both the Kingdoms of the Greater Life and the Godheads of the Greater Life. In his description of the Kingdoms of the Greater Life (which seems to be, as already observed, nothing but the Middle Vital World) and its inhabitants, Sri Aurobindo thus departs from the pattern he laid down earlier for the description of the Kingdoms of the Little Life and the Godheads of the Little Life for which one separate canto each is devoted. Within the one single Canto devoted to the Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life, he achieves his purpose of unravelling the apocalyptic nature of both the regions of the greater Life as well as the Godheads inhabiting them.

The opening lines of Canto VI bring out the contrast between the dark or grey nether Kingdoms of the Little Life and the brighter atmosphere pervading the Kingdoms of the Greater Life. Note that he describes Aswapathy emerging from the Kingdoms of the Little Life and entering into the Kingdoms of the Greater Life as one who walks 'Towards the far gleam of a tunnel 's mouth, / Hoping for light'. Aswapathy escapes from that grey anarchy.

Though not dark or grey like the Kingdoms of the Little Life, those of the Greater Life constitute an ineffectual world. It is a purposeless region of arrested birth. In that world, being flees from non-being and has the courage to live though not the strength to last long. There the sky above is tormented and full of doubtful haze. It is crying for a direction in the void. So vague questioning meets the query of Space there. There is a dubious hope also for joy of the mind's hazard and the heart's choice. From such a quarter Aswapathy's journey in the Kingdoms of the Greater Life leads him to a strange and uncertain tract 'Where consciousness played with unconscious self/And birth was an attempt or episode.' There, Aswapathy finds that Life labours in a strange air. She is denuded of her sweet magnificent suns. It is a region where one strays and dreams but never seeks to achieve. The reason for this is that marvels of a twilight wonder-land are there, full of beauty. These marvels rouse the passion of the eye's desire, enforce belief on the thought and draw the heart but do not lead it to any goal.

There, Life is a continuous search without any finding. Though all are allured there nothing satisfies, Images which look like living acts are seen. Pale dreams grow real to the dreamer's eyes. The souls which vainly strive for birth and spirits entrapped arrive there. Everything there runs like a hope hunting a chance. All is unsafe, miraculous and half-true. All this mystery of the Kingdoms of the Greater Life is revealed to Aswapathy.

This atmosphere of the world of the Greater Life then becomes full of greater seeking and a broadened joy. They first bring the Kingdom of the morning star which is one of the Kingdoms of the Greater Life. The revelatory nature of this realm of the morning star is that, firstly, it inspires us with our vaster hopes. Because, its forces have made landings on our globe. Its signs have stamped their patterns on our lives. This Kingdom also lends a sovereign movement to our fate. It motivates the mighty flow of our life. Everything which human beings seek in this world, everything we have not yet known or even sought and everything which yet one day must be born in human heart is prefigured in the realm of the morning star. Secondly, as an Energy of perpetual transience, Life hopes to unroll all that could ever be. Therefore, her high procession moves from stage to stage. It is a process march from form to ampler form of life, to formations of a boundless Thought and Force. The revelatory secret and seemingly impossible task of Life as an Energy of this kind is to catch the boundless in a net of birth, to cast the spirit into physical form and to lend speech and thought to the Ineffable. In

her experiments, no doubt, she repeatedly fails but her failure lives as long as the world lasts. Because it is 'A folly and a beauty unspeakable,/ A superb madness of the will to live,/ A daring, a delirium of delight.' Life's failure eternally lasts because it is the law of he" being and its sole resource. A still greater revelatory significance of the Greater Life in the Kingdom of the morning star is that it is enamoured of the Unseen. It calls to some highest Light beyond its reach. In this way, Life in the kingdom of the morning star has its kinship with both the demon and the god. This explains the apocalyptic fact that life hungers for heights and passions for the supreme. To seek and to create thus is its greatness. That is why, as Sri Aurobindo reveals through Aswapathy here, this Greatness of the greater life must create on every plane. For, after all, she is the same on earth, in heaven and in hell. She participates in a big way in every fate. Even when she is opposed or oppressed, she bears God's urge to be born.

After thus enumerating the main revelatory characteristics of Greater Life, Sri Aurobindo turns in the next verse paragraph to the description of the nature and significance of 'The beings of that world of greater life' in the next verse paragraph.²² Accordingly, the beings in the realm of the morning star are tenants of a larger air and freer space. Their seat of self is a deeper living. They live in an intense domain of intimacy where objects dwell as companions of the soul. The actions of the body there are the surface rendering of a life within. The revelatory nature of this Life is that 'A voice of unborn things

whispers to the ear' in all those human beings 'who have risen to a greater Life'. Aspiration shows to their eyes the image of a crown. Her creatures live there in order to work out a seed thrown within them by greater Life. Also, they live to achieve her power in them. Each creature in the greater Life is a greatness growing towards the heights from his inner centre. At the same time however, the creatures who live in greater Life remain content with some small greatness won. This is the apocalyptic anti-climax of the mystery in them. That is why, their responsibility is to rule the little empire of themselves, to be a figure in a private world and satisfy their life-motives and life-wants. A further revelation accounts for this contradiction: 'This was transition-line and starting-point,/ A first immigration into heavenliness, / For all who cross into that brilliant sphere'.

A still more significant revelation is that the beings of that world of greater Life are the kinsmen of our earthly race. Because the world of greater Life borders on our mortal state. It is, however, a wider world. it gives us our greater movements. Its strong formations build our evolving selves. Creatures inhabiting the world are brighter copies of ourselves. They are securely what we strive to be. They are superior to us because 'They follow the unseen leader in the heart,/ Their lives obey the inner nature's law.' For them, 'The soul is the watchful builder of its fate;/ None is a spirit indifferent and inert;/ They choose their side, they see the god they adore.' What is still more significant, even Ignorance in that world aspires

to highest knowledge. Nature goes to the creatures of the world as a conscious force. Their leader or their king is always a high ideal. Besides, They call in Truth for their high government,/ Hold her incarnate in her daily acts'. They are so conscious of Truth that they 'fill their thoughts with inspired voice/ And shape their lives into her breathing form,/ Till in her sun-gold godhead they too share.' At the same time, they follow the contrary nature, in keeping with the revelation made about their self-contradiction. Therefore Sri Aurobindo reveals that, as an alternative to the sun-gold godhead of Truth, they subscribe "to the truth of Darkness'. They are compelled to carry on a war whether it is for Heaven or Hell. Thus, at once they are warriors of Good serving a shining cause or soldiers of Evil 'in the pay of Sin.' Explaining the mystery of this, Sri Aurobindo says that wherever Knowledge is Ignorance's twin, evil and good maintain an equal status. Even so, Sri Aurobindo additionally reveals, 'All powers of Life towards their godhead tend/ In the wideness and the daring of that air' of the world of Greater Life. He also says that Sin also is one of these powers of Life tending towards godhead. (such radical revelations about things we generally condemn as ungodly are scattered throughout *Savitri* and worthy of our highest notice.) As such, in the world of Greater Life Sin also is a divinity. As falsehood she is revered by her worshippers without knowing that she lies with the harlot Power that slays the Soul. Such evil Powers come out in the world of Greater Life uncovering their faces. Because, Sri Aurobindo reveals,

whatever is occult in our world grows overt in that world. There, thought looks at thought to understand each other without speech, emotion clasps emotion in order to be felt. There 'Hate grappled hate and love broke in on love,/ Will wrestled will on mind's invisible ground'. In that world each inhabitant feels another's grief and joy invade and run through his breast and blood. Similarly, 'Being felt being even when afar/ And consciousness replied to consciousness.' After revealing such brighter aspects of the world of Greater Life, Aswapathy immediately unveils its contrary qualities as well. Therefore, he observes, yet the ultimate oneness was not there.' Everything is still imperfect, half-known and half-done though the Superconscient looks down on all beings and objects in that world. No one there truly knows either himself or the world or the Reality hidden everywhere. Only they know what mind can take and build out of the secret Supermind's huge store. In this way there is paradoxically enough, a darkness under them and a bright Void above. They live in a great climbing's space in uncertainty. They can solve no mystery, no riddle. Life, in this world of Greater Life is in this way, the ether of ambiguous life. As Aswapathy moves in this ambiguous world, therefore, 'Himself he grew riddle to himself'.

Aswapathy, therefore, moves further in the Kingdoms of the Greater Life across the leaping springs of birth and death and over shifting borders of soul-change. After all, he is a hunter on the Spirit's creative track eager to follow the trails of Life. As he proceeds, he sees the

only wide source of all things looking towards a wider source beyond. Unravelling the mystery of this Sri Aurobindo says that as Life draws away from the earth a tenuous drag from the Unknown is felt and a higher thought drives her towards marvel and discovery. That is why a high release comes from petty cares in these further regions of the world of higher Life. There Life keeps on circling towards Light but her signs are still covered and remain unrevealed. Enigmatically, in spite of being in the world of Greater Life all the signs of Life lose their purport in the joy of use. Life thus, aims at an invisible target in that world. With a view to understanding this mystery, Aswapathy scans Life's 'subtle tangled weird designs' and her clues traced in the sands of Time. He is able to read all Life's gestures hidden in the labyrinth pattern of her thoughts and hopes and her intimate desires. Ever he meets key-words to Life's mystery here and succeeds in reading the soul's search for lost Reality. All the hidden meanings of Life are read by him. As a result, he finds that, in that world a thousand baffling faces of the Truth look at him with unknown eyes. Similarly, unrecognizable and wordless mouths speak to him from the figures of the masquerade of truths there. In this realm of Greater Life ideas which seem unmeaning flash out Truth; voices coming from unseen worlds speak out the syllables of the Unmanifest. In this atmosphere pervaded by truth, there is the glow of bliss and the beauty of her flowers. He hears the laughter of the rose desires of truth. As Aswapathy moves he feels all these as close real forms. Life in this Kingdom is more concrete than the lives of

men. It expresses the reality hidden in it. What we merely think and feel here is embodied in that world. On account of his Yogic achievements Aswapathy finds himself accepted by Truth's mighty loveliness there. He becomes all that she was or longed to be. In that world he lives with her breaths and sees everything with her eyes so that he might learn the secret of her soul. He thrills to the insistence of her cry in that world. He feels 'the sorceries of her might', "her abrupt mysterious will,/ Her hands', 'Her touch that moves, her powers that seize and drive. '

Significantly again, the other side of Truth in that world is also revealed to Aswapathy. Hence Sri Aurobindo's revelatory statement: 'But this too he saw, her soul that wept within,/ Her seekings vain that clutch at fleeting truth,/ Her hopes whose sombre gaze mates with despair'. As a result, in this world of Greater Life Aswapathy always meets only 'a veiled and seeking Force'.

As revealed in the next verse-paragraph, Life, naturally stares at the Traveller of the Worlds with confused outlines offering a picture the eyes cannot keep. This happens because Life's meanings flee from the pursuing eye of an able observer such as Aswapathy. Life's visage hides life's real self from sight. Only in that Greater Life a cryptic thought is found. Here some interpreting word which makes the earth-myth an understandable story is hinted. As a result, Aswapathy finds that Life in that world is a half-blind chained divinity. He is bewildered by the world in which he is

moving. Yet he is attracted to strange far-off shimmerings in that world led by the fluting of a distant Player. He seeks his way amid life's laughter and call towards some total deep infinitude. A whole forest of Life's signs crowd around him. In the midst of that, Aswapathy understands that everything is the play of the Transcendent One and the Mighty Mother. Because there, as Aswapathy realises 'The Word of Life is hidden in its script'. Therefore, a blind heart-throb reaches joy in life through tears. A yearning towards heavenly heights and an unfulfilled desire block the heavenward climbings of her voice. Life's happiness is short-lived and only on the surface. Her longing remains a deathless and veiled self's call. But, again paradoxically, the secret of Life is that 'Even grief has joy hidden beneath its roots:/ For nothing is truly vain the One has made:/ In our defeated hearts God's strength survive'. According to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, this joy or bliss gives to Life's music 'its anthem swell.' Life lends the glory of her voice to all. Transient yearnings of earth cry from her lips and fade away. Still no help comes to Life from the supernal peace. It is this aspect of Life even in her Greater worlds which leads to the conclusion that 'Here is the gap, here stops or sinks life's force'. No doubt, Life's depths remember the purpose for which the original consciousness assumes the form of the Vital. But the mind has forgotten or the heart mistakes. 'In Nature's endless lives is lost the God.' Life toils to transform herself into

the Absolute. She desires to bring the glory of the Absolute's force here in this world. She wants to bring together bliss and calm. She would like to lift earth to neighbourhood with heaven. She constantly labours to reconcile the Eternal and the Abyss. But in all her efforts Life, even in the Kingdoms of the Greater Life fails to achieve any of these objectives. In this way, this Greater Life wavers between earth and sky. In spite of this, however, life must struggle on although defeated in all her efforts. We have to remember that, in its present form, ' Our life is a march to a victory never won.'

*All seems in vain year endless is the game.
Impassive turns the ever-circling wheel,
Life has no issue. death brings no release.
A prisoner of itself the being lives
And keeps its futile immortality:
Estimation is denied its sole escape.
An error of the gods has made the world.
Or indifferent the Eternal watches Time.²³*

In this brief account of Aswapathy's exploration of the Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life we find all the apocalyptic characteristics of the world of the Greater Life directly and indirectly revealed. with the lines quoted above, the Canto on the higher vita', aspect of the Divine Consciousness in the process of Involution-Evolution comes to its close.

Before he continues his journey into the still higher regions of the manifestation of Consciousness, Aswapathy is required temporarily to suspend his inward journey as a Traveller of the Worlds. Because, the stupendous failure of the Kingdoms of the Greater Life baffles him. Since he is 'One in the front of the immemorial quest'. 'A thinker and a toiler in the ideal's air' Aswapathy (in Canto VII and Canto VIII of Book Two of *Savitri*) turns 'to find that wide world-failure's cause.' In order to do that, he looks away from Nature's face and sends his penetrating gaze into the Vast by whose 'unconscious Breath' the worlds are built. As a result, Aswapathy sees the origin of the lasting pain pervading the world. He sees the very mouth of the black pit of Ignorance and the evil at the roots of life. He descends into the pit of Nescience and Night and dares to unravel the secret origin of all evil. In this Herculean task he is subjected to endless torture. But with his Yogic powers he faces the pain and danger of the world. He meets naked Hell with his bare spirit- Only then he is able to see and explore the hidden heart of Night, "The World of Falsehood, the Mother of Evil and the Sons of Darkness".²⁴ All through his awe-inspiring descent into Night a light is with him. An invisible hand is laid upon the error and pain till it becomes a quivering ecstasy. Then 'Falsehood gave back to Truth her tortured shape./ Annulled were the tables of the law of pain". As a result, Life begins again to beat pure in the corporeal frame of Aswapathy:

*Healed were all things that Time's torn heart had
made
And sorrow could live no more in Nature's breast:
Division ceased to be, for God was there.
The soul lit the conscious body with its ray,
Matter and Spirit mingled and were one.*²⁵

With his objective of understanding the cause of world-failure thus achieved, Aswapathy proceeds further on his way to "The Paradise of the Life-God's" described in Canto IX. The title given by Sri Aurobindo to this Canto seems to imply the Higher Vital world. As in the case of his earlier explorations of the Subtle Physical and the Lower Vital and the Middle Vital Worlds, here also the various revelatory features of the Higher Vital or the Paradise of the Life-Gods are brought out in the form of the various experiences of Aswapathy as he travels to the Paradise of the Life-Gods and explores it.

Accordingly, as he comes out of the world of Falsehood, 'a great felicitous Day' begins to shine around him. It is full of golden laugh in which it holds 'Regions of the heart's happiness set free'. These are the regions of the Higher Vital in the form of the Paradise of the Life-Gods. The regions are immersed in light and perpetually divine. A silence of happiness covers the heavens over them. A ceaseless radiance smiles on their heights. Intense rapture fills the hours in those regions. In such atmosphere Aswapathy traverses scenes of an immortal joy. Because, the Paradise of the Life-Gods is full of abysses of beauty and bliss. It is filled with a light of conscious suns and

with a gladness of great symbol things. -Below them there lie 'cities of Gandharva kings.' The Higher Vital world is full of the white-blue moonbeam air of Paradise. At the summit and core of that wonderful world there are high Elysian nameless hills with their peaks climbing towards a greatness beyond life. As Sri Aurobindo reveals, these are the parts of 'The shining Edens of the vital gods' which are full of deathless harmonies. Everything is perfect there. In these Edens beauty is creation's native mould; peace is nothing but a thrilled voluptuous purity; Love fulfils 'her gold and roseate dreams'; Desire climbs up; Pleasure has the stature of the gods; and all sweet and common things turn into miracles. In the Paradise of the Life-Gods pain is compelled to be changed to powerful joy capable of curing the antithesis between heaven and hell. Apocalyptically significant is the fact that

*All life's high visions are embodied there,
Her wandering hopes achieved, her aureate combs
caught by the honey-eater's darting tongue,
Her burning guesses changed to ecstasied truths,
Her mighty pantings stilled in deathless calm
And liberated her immense desires.²⁶*

Calm and heavenly rest are found there. As a result, the wounded limbs of a warrior like Aswapathy are healed there in the arms of Energies which are stainless and unafraid of their own bliss. There we can meet the forms that divinise the sight. All these rare things come out of 'the ineffable hush' prevailing there, with 'Thoughts whose desire new-makes the universe.' As it happens in

the case of Aswapathy in that Paradise, our body glimmers there 'like a skyey shell'. Our mind and flesh grow capable of containing godhead into humanity. Human body, when it reaches the Paradise of the Vital-Gods, gets the ability to draw spiritual power from sight and sound. Our earth-nature gets reborn and becomes comrade of heaven. All human beings with the Yogic capacity of Aswapathy become equal 'with the godheads of the living Suns' of that Paradise. They are able to hear 'whispers of the Player never seen'; they listen 'to his voice that steals the heart/ And draws it to the breast of God's desire'; heavenly happiness flows through our veins like the rivers of Paradise; and human body is made 'a nectar-cup of the Absolute.' As result, like Aswapathy, human beings reaching the Higher Vital Paradise arrive at 'the rim of ecstasies unknown'. They experience a supreme touch created by the clasp 'of the Wonderful'. Eternity draws close there disguised as Love and places its hands on the body of Time. 'A little gift comes from the Immensitudes,/ But measureless to life its gain of joy;/ All the untold Beyond is mirrored there.' In view of this, the unknowable Bliss overwhelms our limbs there and becomes a fiery ocean of happiness around our soul.

These being the apocalyptically revelatory qualities of the Paradise of the Life-Gods, it is small wonder that, in that world, Aswapathy 'foundered drowned in sweet and burning vast'. 'Immortal pleasure cleansed him in its waves/ And turned his strength into undying power./ Immortality captured Time and carried Life.'

Chapter Notes :

1. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part One*, p.252
2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga : Part One and Part Two*, p.449
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. pp.432-3
5. Ibid. p.433
6. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part Four*, P.1500.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. M.P. Pandit, *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, p.295
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
- 12'. Ibid. pp. 298-9
13. Ibid. p.299
14. *The Mother, white Roses* (Bombay : Compiled and Published by Huta, 1980), p.203
15. Ibid.
16. pp. 1 16-31
17. pp.132-50
18. pp.151-72
19. pp.173-201
20. pp.233-7
- 21 . pp.141-6
22. p.183-8
23. p.201
24. pp.202-32
25. p.232
26. p.235



*THE MENTAL PLANE
OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND
ITS APOCALYPTIC
QUALITIES*



VIII CHAPTER

THE MENTAL PLANE OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS APOCALYPTIC QUALITIES

As against five cantos devoted to the manifestation of Consciousness on the Vital Plane, Sri Aurobindo devotes six cantos—Canto X to Canto XV of Book Two—to the unravelling of the apocalyptic qualities of Consciousness on the Mental Plane. In our study of his disclosures made, about the different forms of what he conceptualises as the Mental in its entirety, however, we , have, for our convenience, to devote two chapters to his disclosures about Consciousness on the Mental Plane. The first of these two chapters will be on what we may term as the surface Mental or the ordinary Mental. The next chapter will be devoted to the higher levels of the Mental world visualised by Sri Aurobindo.

We shall therefore, take up for our analysis and discussion Canto X: "The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Little Mind" in this Chapter. (The next chapter viz., Chapter IX. will deal with the remaining five cantos on the other forms of the Mental.) Following Sri Aurobindo's

ideas of the various kinds of Mind (or the Mental world) let us choose to interpret the term, "The Little Mind" as the ordinary or the surface Mind.

Sri Aurobindo employs three different terms in order to denote the Mental. They are: (1) The Mental Plane (2) The Mental World and (3) The Mind-World. All of them are based on his conceptual framework of Mind. According to him, there is a Mental Plane (or Mental World or Mind-World) as one of the manifestations of Consciousness in its descent into the Involution-Evolution process. In the ascending order from Matter however, Sri Aurobindo maintains, there is a Mental Plane or Mental World beyond the Life -World. It is a world of mental existence in which neither life, nor matter, but mind is the first determinant. There, Mind itself determines and uses material conditions and the life-force for its own satisfaction.¹ In Sri Aurobindo's opinion, the "Mind" in the ordinary use of the word covers indiscriminately the whole consciousness. But in the language of his Integral Yoga, he adds, the words "Mind" and "mental" are used to connote specially the part of the nature which has to do with cognition and intelligence with ideas, with mental or thought perceptions, the reactions of thought to things, with the truly mental movements and formations, mental vision and will etc.. that are part of man's intelligence.² Secondly, according to Sri Aurobindo. 'Mind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains

them as if each were a separate integer.³ It is an instrument of analysis and synthesis, but not of essential knowledge. Its function is to cut out something vaguely from the unknown Thing in itself and call this measurement or delimitation of it the whole and again to analyse the whole into its parts which it regards as separate mental objects.⁴ Further, in its origin it is a principle of light. It is an instrument put forth from the Supermind. Though it is set to work within limits and even set to create limits, the limits are luminous borders for a special working.⁵ Besides, 'Mind is a subordinate power of Supermind which takes its stand in the standpoint of division actually forgetful here of the oneness behind though able to return to it by reillumination from the supramental'.⁶ After all, everything in the mind derives from and is a limited, inferior, groping, partial or perverse translation into mentality of something in the supermind.⁷ Also, 'Mind is essentially that faculty of Supermind which measures and limits, which fixes a particular centre and views from that the cosmic movement and its interactions'.⁸ Moreover, 'Mind is not only capable of ignorance, but,... it works characteristically as a power of ignorance'; it forgets 'itself in a complete inconscience or nescience'.⁹ Writing about the powers of Mind, Sri Aurobindo says that they 'have in the greater Mind-world their own field of fullness of self-nature'.¹⁰ In Sri Aurobindo's views, there are many parts of the mind; each of them is a force in itself with its formations, functions and interests; and they may not

agree with each other.¹¹ According to him, the mind proper is divided into three parts: (1) thinking Mind, (2) dynamic Mind and (3) externalising Mind. Of these the thinking Mind is concerned with ideas and knowledge in their own right; dynamic Mind is concerned with the putting out of mental forces for realisation of the idea; and externalising Mind is concerned with the expression of them in life.¹² All these ideas of the Mind framed by Sri Aurobindo based on his Yogic experience are, in our view, those of the surface Mind or the ordinary Mental. In the next Chapter we shall examine his concepts of the other types of Mind (such as the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, Intuition, the Overmind and the Supermind) which ultimately lead to Gnosis or the Highest Knowledge.

It is believed here that Canto X : "The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Little Mind" brings out the various revelations of Sri Aurobindo regarding the regions of the surface Mind and the supernatural entities inhabiting those regions. In keeping with his stand that the Mental world, or the Mental plane or the Mind-world is above the Vital kingdoms, Sri Aurobindo begins his revelations about the Mind after making Aswapathy come to an end of his exploration of the entire Kingdom of Life. Since, as the Traveller of the Worlds, he has to contact the World Mother after going through all the worlds in the form of which Consciousness has manifested itself, the King had to overpass and leave even the Paradise of the Life-Gods though in that world he found that "Immortality captured

Time and carried Life.' For., as Sri Aurobindo says, 'all must be [left] until the Highest is gained / In whom the world and self grow true and one'. In view of this, all the greatest heights of the Paradise of the Life-Gods have to be transcended by Aswapathy. Another reason for Aswapathy's leaving the Life worlds is that 'These heights declined a greater adventure's call.' That world 'could not house the wideness of a soul/Which needed all infinity for its home.' That is why, Aswapathy leaves the Desire - world and enters into the Mind-world.

As he rises higher, Aswapathy starts realising the nature of the Mental world. According to Sri Aurobindo's revelations made here through Aswapathy, first come the Kingdoms of the Little Mind. they exist in 'an ardent white tranquillity' pervading the regions just above the Paradise of the Life-Gods. From these regions of the Little Mind, secondly, a musing spirit looks out upon the worlds since the large and shining realms of Mind is from the stillness prevailing there. Thirdly, between the Paradise of the Life-Gods and the realms of Mind there is a grey expanse where Day and Night are one. This expanse is a tract of dim and shifting rays. It separates 'Life's sentient flow from Thought's self-poise.' There, uncertainties exercise uneasy government on a ground reserved for reasoned guess. It is a meeting place of Knowledge with Ignorance. At the lower end of the expanse a mind which is hardly able to see holds its difficult rule. The nature of this mind is close to our earthly nature because it is kin to

our mortal thought. This Little Mind is the first means of our slow ascent from the half-conscience of the animal soul. In the region of the Little Mind, the ideas which drive the obscure embodied spirit in us find their power to exist and act as Nature-Force. The forms of an ignorant life are devised here in this expanse. The slow process of a material mind is born in the luminous obscurity of the region. Our material mind slowly advances from a limpino start here. It begins to reason from the half-known to the unknown. This obscure interspace exists between the Paradise of the Life-Gods and the Kingdoms of the Little Mind as a reminder of the fact that our climb commences upwards from man's bare beginning. Human beings must break out of earth's heavy smallness there and search nature with spiritual fire. No doubt, our flight upwards later on is glorious but a very slow crawl precedes our glorious flight. Our human weakness cradles in immortal force.

At the top of the pale glimmer-realms in which Aswapathy arrives, there is, as Sri Aurobindo reveals 'a realm of early Light' symbolising the Little Mind. According to him, it is out of its rays that the full orbit of our Mind was born. There a primeval deft Intelligence ceaselessly works between the hidden ends of being. In that realm a Secrecy breathes in life's moving act. It pitches mind's tent in the vague ignorant Vast. Its remarkable skill endorses Matter's right to think. It cuts sentient passages for the mind of flesh and finds a means

for Nescience to know. It helps the unseeing force to read her works. It imposes its rigid artifice on the soul. It cuts Truth into manageable bits and new-builds Truth's slain body by its art. Then from the secret height a wave sweeps down. A brilliant chaos of rebel light arises. According to Sri Aurobindo, it looks within and wakes the sleeping god. As a result, imagination comes into existence and calls her shining squads to venture into scenes which are yet undiscovered by us. She conspires with inspiration's sister brood to fill "the skies of thought 'with glimmering nebulae.' Darkness grows nurse to the occult sun of wisdom. Falsehood feeds knowledge with her lustrous milk. All this happens because Sri Aurobindo reveals, the Power works upon the growing world in this manner. That is why, ethereal thinkings stream down from the realm of early Light into Matter's world. Its young formations move the mind of earth to work hard, to dream and to create newly. They also inspire the earthly mind to feel beauty's touch and know the world and self. Sri Aurobindo summarises all this occult nature of the Kingdoms of the Little Mind in the apocalyptic statement that 'The Golden Child' thus begins to think and see. 'The Golden Child' mentioned here is obviously the Consciousness aspect of Sachchidananda in its early manifestation in the Mind-world.

Making further revelations about the Surface Mind (or the Little Mind) in its primeval beginning, Sri Aurobindo says that Mind's first forward steps are in those

bright realms of the expanse. Since it is the beginning of its development, the Little Mind is ignorant of everything but eager to know everything. In this way, its eager but slow enquiry begins in those bright realms. There Mind hopes to find out greater things. It is quite alert and lives upon the verge of invention. Even so, everything it does at the early stage of its evolution is, according to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, on an infant's scale. It is a small keen instrument chosen by 'the great Puissance', for the purpose of her play with the Transcendent One. As such, the Little Mind in the primeval beginning passionately pursues a difficult entertainment. It looks within itself but is unable to see God within itself. The reason for this is that the earth is capable of bearing only a slow advance.

In this endeavour of the earth three Godheads inhabiting the Kingdoms of the Little Mind assist her. Using the allegorical device so native to apocalyptic literature, Sri Aurobindo calls them 'A dwarf three-bodied trinity' and reveals that they became the serf of the earth in the beginning of the evolution of the Little Mind. The first of the trinity is 'A pigmy Thought'. It is the smallest of the three Godheads serving the earth, as also 'strong of limb'. In Sri Aurobindo's view, thought lives in bounds. Always it stoops to hammer fact and form. It is absorbed and cabined in external sight. It takes its stand on Nature's solid base. It is an admirable technician but a crude thinker. Its function is to rivet Life to habit's grooves. In this function, it is obedient to the tyranny of gross Matter.

It considers the habits of the world as Law. Similarly, it sees the habits of the mind as Truth. Moreover, it lives content with the common and the known. It is also afraid of the unknown. At the same time, it is a wise treasurer of its ignorance. It draws back from adventure of any kind since it dislikes the dangerous joy of wideness and height. Its capital stock comprises its old sure memories. Whatever sense can grasp seems absolute to it. In the midst of his account of these peculiarities of Thought, Sri Aurobindo makes the significant revelation that 'A smile from the Preserver of the Worlds/ Sent down of old this guardian Mind to earth'. Its apocalyptic significance is that a cosmic might stands behind it. Its vaster plan is kept by a measured Greatness.

The' second of the three serfs is Intelligence. Revealing its apocalyptic qualities, Sri Aurobindo says that it is a fiery spirit and 'a hunchback rider of the red Wild-Ass. In the immemorial past when the Little Mind started emerging, Intelligence leaped down 'From the great mystic Flame that rings the worlds'. Its nature is to eat at being's heart with its dire edge. 'Thence sprang the burning vision of Desire.' According to Sri Aurobindo, it wears a thousand shapes and takes numberless names. In the beginning 'It flamed towards heaven, then sank engulfed towards hell;/ It climbs to drag down Truth into the mire / And used for muddy ends its brilliant Force. I As it prevails in the world, Intelligence goes on changing its colour. Its favourite food is 'insect joys'. It licks at

knowledge with a smoky tongue. Even so, it unwittingly drives always 'Towards the hidden Something that is All.' It is ardent to find new things. But it is incapable of retaining whatever it finds. In this way, a brilliant instability is its mark. Its inborn trend is to err. Always it peers 'into a shadow-hung half-light'. It goes on moving in circles through the darkness of conjecture. It catches 'flash-images of half-seen' truths. Both its first and last natural acts are to seize and possess things without the guidance of reason or the soul. In this way, Intelligence squanders life's force in its attempt to achieve the impossible. It always gives up the straight road and runs on wandering curves. It always looks for untired things and leaves behind whatever it has won. Unlike Thought, Intelligence is attracted towards adventure. Naturally, therefore, it takes fortuitous gains as safe results. Though it always commits errors, Intelligence is not discouraged by them. Similarly, failure cannot slow its fiery hold on things. It is ignorant of the deep law of being's ways. For Intelligence, the sole charm of life is attempt but not victory. therefore, it is always 'An uncertain winner of uncertain stakes'. Instinct is its mother. The life-mind is its father. It always runs its race whether it comes first or last.

After pointing out these negative qualities of Intelligence Sri Aurobindo reveals the mysterious fact that its works are not small or vain or null and void. On the contrary, Sri Aurobindo reveals, Intelligence nurses 'a portion of infinity's strength' and can create the high things willed by its fancy. It is capable of probing the void

and finding a treasure there. Yet its earthly nature is to see in the dark and blink vaguely in the light. After all, its field is Ignorance and its prize is the unknown.

Revealing the mystical qualities of the third of the 'three-bodied trinity'. Sri Aurobindo says that 'Of all these Powers the greatest was the last.' In the primeval past following Thought and Intelligence 'Came Reason, the squat godhead artisan', Personifying reason as a female Sri Aurobindo says that her narrow house is upon 'a ridge in Time'. She is adept of clear contrivance and design. She is 'The strongest, wisest of the troll-like Three.' Her instruments of investigation are lens and measuring rod and probe. With these instruments Reason looks upon an object universe and takes the earth and stars into her hands to try what she could make of these strange things. She has a strong purposeful laborious mind. With its help, Reason invents her scheme-lines of reality. She multiplies her slow half-cuts at truth. She strives to reduce this mystic world to rules. She hopes to know everything although she knows nothing. 'She ferrets out Nature's process, substance, cause.' By adding that, 'Ignorant of all but her own seeking mind / To save the world from Ignorance she came', Sri Aurobindo again reveals the apocalyptic purpose of the incapable role Reason is made to play" in life. He points out that Reason is 'A sovereign worker through centuries,/ Observing and re-moulding all that is'. She brings out hard interventions from her brain and sets them in a pattern of eternal fixity. She is indifferent to the cosmic dumb demand. Another of her

peculiar qualities is that "For the world seen she weaves a world conceived'. She creates world-webs of abstract thought, segment systems of the Infinite 'And myths by which she explains the inexplicable.' According to Sri Aurobindo, the weakness of Reason is that 'In her high works of pure intelligence' and withdrawal from the trap of senses 'There comes no breaking of the walls of mind,/ There leaps no rending flash of absolute power,/ There dawns no light of heavenly certitude.' In the result, therefore, everything Reason achieves is questioned and reduced to nothing. Revealing the hidden reason for this, Sri Aurobindo observes that 'An inconclusive play is Reason's toil' in our life. Consequently, each strong idea can use her as its tool. The roads she follows are of erring sight. She looks upon a set mechanical world constructed for her by her instruments. She aids the senses and makes them 'her seeking's arbiter.' In the process, she keeps only the husks of things and throws aside the kernel. She digs into Matter in order to unearth the processes of all things done. She builds a rational world without a mind. According to her, the world has no mover, no maker, no idea. What is more, a lifeless Energy creates life and brings consciousness into existence, in her opinion. She dismisses the knowledge of the mystic as a mere fancy. She feels no need of soul or spirit. That is why, Sri Aurobindo says, 'not by Reason was creation made / And not by Reason can ' the Truth be seen'. Besides, the little Mind is tied to little things and Reason is one of the Godheads in the Kingdoms of the Little Mind. The sense

of the Little Mind, like that of Reason is half awake in a world of dark Inconscience. At her best, Reason is a rule-maker in a strange stumbling game. She moves between nescience and nescience. Paradoxically, nothing is known by Reason even when nothing remains concealed from her. This is so because, as Sri Aurobindo discloses, 'The truth is known only when all is seen'. Reason is incapable of seeing all. On the contrary, she ties up the Indivisible in small packets instead of unifying. She finds that her hands are too small to hold vast Truth. That is why 'She breaks up knowledge into alien parts'. As apocalyptically unravelled by Sri Aurobindo, these are the merits and defects of Reason, the greatest of the three Powers of the Little Mind.

In the last verse-paragraph of the Canto on "The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Little Mind" Sri Aurobindo reveals that, besides the dwarf three-bodied trinity mentioned above, two more Godheads dwell in those Kingdoms. They are 'Two sun-gaze Daemons' to who' Sri Aurobindo gives the revelatory names of Life-Thought and Thought-Mind. They live, says Sri Aurobindo, in a high breathless stratosphere above. They secondly, overshadow the dwarfish trinity since they are 'aspirants to a limitless Beyond,/ Capatives of Space, walled by the limiting heavens'. The two Daemons live yearning for the straight paths of eternity. They look down on this world from their high station and witness all that is in human Life.

According to Sri Aurobindo's revelations made here, Life-thought is a power which uplifts the laggard world by virtue of being huge and high winged. It is accustomed to a blue infinity. It soars 'in sunlit sky and starlit air'. It is able to see the unreached Immortals' home. Besides, it hears afar the voices of the gods. Its revelatory function is to light the thoughts that glow through the centuries and to move to acts of superhuman force. Thirdly, it reconnoitres 'vistas of dream-fate.' However, it is unable to attain anything though capable to conceive. Because, it draws its concept-maps and vision-plans on too large a scale to be accommodated in mortal Space.

The second Daemon, Thought-Mind is pure by nature. It is 'An imagist of bodiless Ideas,/ Impassive to the cry of life and sense'. From its abode it surveys the cosmic act. it is an "Archangel of a white transcending realm'. It observes the world from its heights.

In this way, after defining the location of the Kingdoms of the Little Mind, Sri Aurobindo apocalyptically identifies five supernatural entities as the "Godheads of the Little Mind", Thought*, Intelligence, Reason, Life-Thought and Thought-Mind. It is important and necessary to note here that, by conceptualising the apocalyptic nature of the ordinary or surface Mind in the form of the Little Mind, Sri Aurobindo creates here his own original brand of spiritual psychology of Mind by giving the spiritual attributes of such psychological terms as thought, intelligence, reason, life-thought and thought-mind. This thorough-bred Indianness of the psychological

interpretation of the components of Mind not only makes *Savitri* a twentieth century Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature but it also proves that Sri Aurobindo's contribution to such modern sciences as psychology are as thoroughly Indian as they are original in being spiritualised interpretations of scientific things. Evolutionary sciences, represent one instance of Sri Aurobindo's original Indian approach to modern science, and psychology represents another. This original interpretation of the psychology of the mind is more astonishing and more stupendous in the last five Cantos (from Canto XI to Canto XV) of Book Two of *Savitri*.

Chapter Notes :

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga : Part One and Part Two*, p.435-6
2. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part One*, p.320
3. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine : Book One, Part one Book Two Part one*, p.162
4. Ibid. p.127
5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, p.53
6. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* , p.263
7. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga : Part Three and Part Four*, p.730
8. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p.267
9. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p.599
10. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p.783
11. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part One*, p.322
12. Ibid. p.326



*THE HIDDEN MEANING
OF CONSCIOUSNESS ON
LEVELS BEYOND THE
SURFACE MENTAL
PLANE*



IX
CHAPTER

**THE HIDDEN MEANING OF
CONSCIOUSNESS ON LEVELS
BEYOND THE SURFACE
MENTAL PLANE**

As pointed out in our examination of the spiritual basis of *Savitri* (Cf., Chapter III) the dialectics of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy consists of the thesis that Sachchidananda comes down in a cosmic descent. The antithesis is that Consciousness rises upwards through the process of Involution-Evolution. His synthesis is that when the two meet and merge into each other a Gnostic Being comes into existence possessing this-worldly characteristics as well as the Sachchidananda qualities of the other hemisphere. The rise of Consciousness through Involution-Evolution goes through the transformation of the involved Sachchidananda successively into the inconscient, the subconscious, the physical, the vital and various levels of the mental manifestations. As stated at the end of the previous chapter, the most remarkable contribution Sri Aurobindo has made to the science of psychology is his visualisation and conceptualisation (as

well as his personal experiences) of the various levels or forms of the Mind above the Ordinary Mental in their ascending order. These higher forms of Mind are : (1) The Higher Mental (or the Higher Mind), (2) The Illumined Mental (or the Illumined Mind), (3) Intuition, (4) The Overmental (or Overmind) and (5) The Supramental (or Superraind or the Superconscient). He has copiously described in several of his prose works each one of these levels of Mind and commented upon their characteristics, distinguishing features and the effects they produce on the human being doing Integral Yoga in order to realise and go through them up to the level of the Supermind. What he has recorded in his prose works in this respect, he has transformed into supreme poetry in the last five Cantos of Book Two of *Savitri*. The epic poem, however, is (as expressed, among other utterances, in the supreme words of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram) far more of the future than of the present times. In view of this, a complete or nearly complete understanding and realisation of what he has stated in *Savitri* is extremely difficult. As such, we can do nothing more than presuming that "The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind" dealt with by him in Canto XI pertain to the Higher Mind; "The Heavens of the Ideal", the subject of Canto XII, deal with the Illumined Mind; Canto XIII: "In the Self of Mind" is about the Plane of Intuition; "The World-Soul" described in Canto XIV is about the Overmental Plane; and that the Supramental Plane or the Supermind is

explicated apocalyptically in Canto XV: "The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge".

In order to carry on our study of the revelatory qualities of Consciousness on all these five Mental Planes, we have, as usual, to examine Sri Aurobindo's concept and ideas of each one of them. He says with conviction that above us and our Mental world there are 'successive states, levels or graded powers of being overtopping our normal mind'.¹ He adds however, that these higher ranges of Mind are degrees of spiritual consciousness and experience. They are hidden in our own superconscient parts. According to him, from the point of view of ascent of consciousness from our mind upwards through a rising series of dynamic powers this 'gradation can be resolved into a stairway of four main ascents... described as a series of sublimations of the consciousness through Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuition into Overmind and beyond it'.² And 'the Supermind or Divine Gnôsis" lies at the summit of a succession of self-transmutations'.³

About the Higher Mind, Sri Aurobindo writes that it is a first plane of spiritual consciousness where one becomes constantly and closely aware of the One everywhere and knows and sees things habitually with that awareness.⁴ He adds, however, that it is still very much on the mind level although highly spiritual in its essential substance; its instrumentation is through an elevated thought-power and comprehensive mental sight; it is not illumined by any of the intenser upper lights; and it acts as

an intermediate state between the Truth-Light above and the human mind below. It communicates the higher knowledge in a form that the Mind (after it is duly intensified, broadened and made spiritually supple by means of Yoga) can receive.⁵ Further, it is a mind no longer of mingled light and obscurity or half-light, but a large clarity of the Spirit. Its basic substance is a Unitarian sense of being with a powerful multiple dynamisation capable of the formation of a multitude of aspects of Knowledge, ways of action, forms and significances of becoming.⁶ The Higher Mind 'is therefore a power that has proceeded from the Overmind,... but with the Supermind as its ulterior origin,... but its special character, its activity of consciousness are dominated by Thought; it is a luminous thought-mind, a mind of Spirit-born conceptual knowledge.'⁷

About the Illumined Mind Sri Aurobindo writes that it is 'a Mind no longer of higher Thought, but of spiritual light' and, as such, a 'Greater Force' than the Higher Mind.⁸ He adds that in the Illumined Mind 'the clarity of the spiritual intelligence, its tranquil daylight, gives place or subordinates itself to an intense lustre, a splendour and illumination of the Spirit; a play of lightnings of spiritual truth and power breaks from above into the consciousness and adds to the calm and wide enlightenment and the vast descent of peace which characterise or accompany the action of the larger conceptual-spiritual principle, a fiery ardour of

realisation and a rapturous ecstasy of knowledge.⁹ This action of the Illumined Mind is enveloped by a downpour of inwardly visible Light. In the descent of this kind there is also the arrival of a greater dynamic, a golden drive of inner force and power. This descent replaces the comparatively slow and deliberate process of the Higher Mind by a swift, sometimes a vehement, almost a violent impetus of rapid transformation.¹⁰

In the ascending order of Consciousness, above the Illumined Mind comes the Intuition. According to Sri Aurobindo. 'Intuition is always an edge or ray or outleap of a superior light; it is in us a projecting blade, edge or point of a far-off supermind light entering into and modified by some intermediate truth-mind substance above us'.¹¹ It is a power of consciousness nearer and more intimate to the original knowledge by identity since it is always something that leaps out direct from a concealed identity.¹² When the consciousness looks into itself and feels directly and intimately the truth or the truths that are there or so contacts the hidden forces behind appearances, there is the outbreak of an intuitive light. Similarly, when the consciousness meets the Supreme Reality or the spiritual reality of things and beings and has a contractual union with it, then the spark, the flash or the blaze of intimate truth-perception is lit in its depths. This close perception is the result of a penetrating and revealing touch which carries in it sight and conception as part of itself or as its natural consequence.¹³ Further, 'intuition is an edge of light thrust out by the secret Supermind'.¹⁴ It 'is

in direct contact with the higher Truth but not in an integral contact. It gets the Truth in flashes and turns these flashes of truth-perception into intuitions-intuitive ideas.¹⁵ Therefore, Intuition is equated by Sri Aurobindo with revelation and inspiration.¹⁶

Intuition manifests itself in the superconscious in its true nature as knowledge emerging out of conscious identity.¹⁷ Another significant aspect of the Intuition is that the Higher Mind and the Illumined Mind' enjoy their authority and can get their own united completeness only by a reference to the Intuition which is 'a third level'.¹⁸

Sri Aurobindo draws a distinction between the Intuition and the Intuitive Mind. 'What is called Intuitive Mind', he says, 'is usually a mixture of true intuition with ordinary mentality it can always admit a mingling of truth and error. Sri Aurobindo therefore avoids the use of this phrase. He distinguishes between the Intuition proper and an intuitive human mentality.'¹⁹ The Intuition 'acts in a self-light of the truth which does not depend upon the torch-flares of the sense-mind and its limited uncertain percepts; it proceeds not by intelligent but by visional concepts: it is a kind of truth-vision, truth-hearing, truth-memory, direct truth discernment. This true and authentic intuition must be distinguished from a power of the ordinary mental reason'.²⁰ On the contrary, 'The intuitive mind... stretches from the Intuition proper down to the intuitivised inner mind--it is therefore at once an overhead power and a mental intelligence power.'²¹

'The Intuition is the first plane in which there is a real opening to the full possibility of realisation; it is through it that one goes farther-first to the overmind and then to the supermind.'²²

About the Overmind, Sri Aurobindo says that it 'is the highest of the planes below the supramental'.²³ it 'is a sort of delegation from the supermind'.²⁴ If supermind were to start here from the beginning as the direct creative Power, a world of the kind we see now would be impossible; ... there would be no evolution in the inconscience of Matter, consequently no gradual striving evolution of consciousness in Matter. A line is therefore drawn between the higher half of the universe of consciousness., and the lower half ... The higher half is constituted of *Sat, Chit, Ananda, Mahas* (the supramental) -- the lower half of mind, life, Matter. This line is the intermediary overmind which, though luminous itself, keeps from us the full indivisible supramental Light'.²⁵ The Overmind receives the supramental Light and divides, distributes and breaks it up into separated aspects, powers and multiplicities of all kinds.²⁶ It is capable of seeing everything calmly, steadily, and in great masses and large extensions of space and time and relation globally. It creates and acts in the same way. It is the world of the great Gods, the divine Creators.²⁷ As such, Sri Aurobindo says, we can recognise in the Overmind the original cosmic Power which has made the Ignorance possible and even inevitable.²⁸ Besides, whereas the Supermind is the total Truth-Consciousness, the Overmind draws down the

truths separately and gives them a separate activity. thirdly, between the supermind and the human mind there are a number of ranges, planes or layers of consciousness. The Overmind is the highest of these ranges; it is full of lights and powers; but from the point of view of what is above it, it is the line of the soul's turning away from the complete and indivisible Knowledge and its descent towards the Ignorance. In the Overmind, therefore, there is no longer the essential, total, perfectly harmonising and unifying knowledge, or rather knowledge for ever harmonious. Of course, in the Overmind there is not yet the actual fall into Ignorance, but the first step is taken which will make the fall inevitable.²⁹

The Overmind in the Integral Yoga is a plane of consciousness beyond individual mind, beyond even universal mind in ignorance. It carries in itself a first, direct, masterful cognition of cosmic truth. It is a creator of truth, not of illusions or falsehood. It is a principle of cosmic truth. A vast and endless catholicity is its very spirit. It takes each aspect of Power and gives to it an independent action. After all, it is the protective Double of the Supermind consciousness. However, it does not possess the integrality of the supramental truth though it is well aware of the essential truth of things.³⁰

As regards Sri Aurobindo's views on the Supermind the following relevant observations made by him need to be borne in mind:

- (1) **Beyond Mind psychological experience finds another power of energy, another note in the**

scale of being. This we will call the supermind. This supermind lives and acts natively in a domain of experience of which the mind becomes aware by a reflective experience and calls vaguely spirit or spiritual being.³¹

- (2) Supermind is between the Sachchidananda and the lower creation. It alone contains the self-determining Truth of the Divine Consciousness and is necessary for a Truth-creation.³²
- (3)Beyond the supramental plane of consciousness which is an intermediate step from overmind and mind to the complete experience of Sachchidananda, are the greatest heights of the manifested Spirit: here surely existence would not at all be based on the determination of the One in multiplicity, it would manifest solely and simply a pure identity in oneness. But the supramental Truth-Consciousness would not be absent from these planes, for it is an inherent power of Sachchidananda...³³
- (4) The Super-mind is in its very essence a truth-consciousness, a consciousness always free from the Ignorance which is the foundation of our present natural or evolutionary existence and from which nature in us is trying to arrive at self-knowledge and world-knowledge and a right consciousness and the right use of our existence in the universe. The Supermind, because it is a truth-consciousness, has this knowledge inherent in it and this power of true existence; its course is straight and can go direct to its aim, its field is wide and can even be made illimitable. This is because its very nature is knowledge: it has not

to acquire knowledge but possesses it in its own right; its steps are not from nescience or ignorance into some imperfect light, but from truth to greater truth, from right perception to deeper perception, from intuition to intuition, from illumination to utter and boundless luminousness, from growing widenesses to the utter vasts and to very infinitude. On its summits it possesses the divine omniscience and omnipotence, but even in an evolutionary movement of its own graded self-manifestation by which it would eventually reveal its own highest heights it must be in its very nature essentially free from ignorance and error: it starts from truth and light and moves always in truth and light. As its knowledge is always true, so too its will is always true; it does not fumble in its handling of things or stumble in its paces. In the Supermind feeling and emotion do not depart from their truth, make no slips or mistakes, do not swerve from the right and the real, cannot misuse beauty and delight or twist away from a divine rectitude. In the Supermind sense cannot mislead or deviate into the grossnesses which are here its natural imperfections and the cause of reproach, distrust and misuse by our ignorance. Even an incomplete statement made by the Supermind is a truth leading to a further truth, its incomplete action a step towards completeness.³⁴

The Supermind, further, is 'A principle of active Will and Knowledge superior to Mind and creatrix of the

worlds'; it is 'the intermediary power and state of being between that self-possession of the One and this flux of the Many.'³⁵

Even at the end of such copious explanation of its significance, Sri Aurobindo says about the Supermind that 'the word is ambiguous since it may be taken in the sense of mind itself super-eminent and lifted above ordinary mentality but not radically changed,... it may bear the sense of all that is beyond mind'.³⁶ He, therefore, says that a subsidiary description is required accurately to limit its significance and adds that such a subsidiary term is "truth-consciousness" since it delimits the connotation of the more elastic phrase, Supermind.³⁷ It is the Supermind or the Truth-Consciousness, because it is a principle superior to mentality. Besides, it exists, acts and proceeds in the fundamental truth and unity of things.³⁸ According to Sri Aurobindo, further, 'This supermind is at its source the dynamic consciousness, in its nature at once and inseparably infinite wisdom and infinite will of the divine Knower and Creator.'³⁹ That is why it is 'at its highest reach... the divine Gnôsis, the Wisdom- Power -Light - Bliss of God by which the Divine knows and upholds and governs and enjoys the universe.'⁴⁰ As such, it 'is the support of the creation and is leading all towards itself'.⁴¹ 'Our direct truth-perceptions come from that Supermind' since it is 'a frill that knows and a Knowledge that effects which creates universal order out of infinity.'⁴² In the Supermind 'the Divine Reality' is 'fully manifested' and 'no

longer works with the instrumentation of the Ignorance'.⁴³ Because 'the Supermind its an eternal reality of the divine Being and the divine Nature. In its own claim it already and always exists and possesses its own essential law of being; it has not to be created or to emerge or evolve into existence out of involution in Matter or out of non-existence'.⁴⁴

The difficulty with regard to our present task of identifying each one of these Mental levels of Consciousness above the ordinary Mental in our study of the levels of Consciousness in *Savitri* is that whereas Sri Aurobindo uses the terms examined above quite clearly in the various prose works of his, in the last five Cantos of Book Two of *Savitri* (as indicated by the titles of the Cantos) he does not at all employ any one of the five terms. On the contrary, he uses such terms as the greater Mind, the Heavens of the Ideal, the Self of Mind, the World-Soul and the Greater Knowledge. Hence our helpless choice (mentioned at the outset of this Chapter) to presume that these terms respectively indicate the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuition, the Overmind - and the Supermind.

According to this presumption then, the manifestation of Consciousness on the level of the Higher Mind is described by Sri Aurobindo by means of the apocalyptic device of Aswapathy as the Traveller of the Worlds journeying within himself in the various realms of Consciousness, in Canto XI : "The Kingdoms and

Godheads of the Greater Mind". The journey of Aswapathy is naturally narrated in the past tense, as we have been noting all along. But for our purpose of examining the apocalyptic significance of Consciousness on each one of the levels through which Aswapathy travels, we have to employ the present tense as we have been doing so far. We have also to discontinue our reference to his travelling as frequently as we have done so far. As far as possible, we shall restrict ourselves to an examination of the nature of Consciousness apocalyptically revealed by Sri Aurobindo in each of the last five Cantos of Book Two of *Savitri*.

The Kingdoms of the Little Mind, then, are followed by the Kingdoms of the Greater Mind in Canto XI.⁴⁵ Just as there are Godheads of the Little Mind here too there are Godheads of the Greater Mind. As in the case of Aswapathy, when we travel from the realms of the Little Mind into those of the Greater Mind our being stretches 'beyond the sight of Thought.' As we travel, a wonder space of the Kingdoms of the Greater Mind arrives into our ken and calls our steps. There we start finding, as we explore the realm, the details of Consciousness manifesting itself probably as the Higher Mind poetically called the Greater Mind by Sri Aurobindo. The first apocalyptic characteristic of Consciousness manifesting itself as Higher Mind is that 'The splendours of ideal Mind' are seen outstretched there' across the boundaries of things known.' Ideal Mind is the origin of whatever little

we are. It is however, additionally 'Instinct with the endless more that we must be'. It is the creator of hopes as yet unrealised by us. It spreads beyond the expanding universe. It soars beyond the boundaries of Dream. It overtops the ceilings of life's climb. At the same time it is exposed to omniscient immensities. It casts its great influences on our world together with its speed, its force, its might and its lights which fight Ignorance and Death. Beauty and mightiness walk hand in hand in its vast ambit. Truths of the Spirit take form as living Gods in the realm of the Greater Mind. Each of them can build a world in its own right.

There are luminous creations in the Kingdoms of the greater Mind which gaze 'On the Ideas that people eternity.' The Godheads of this level of Consciousness are 'The Masters of the Ideal'. They sit on their thrones 'In sessions of secure felicity, In regions of Illumined certitude.' These realms of ideal Mind are far from our labour and yearning and call. They are thus 'Closed to the uncertain thoughts of human mind'. 'But since our secret selves are next of kin' to" them, 'A breath of unattained divinity' flows from them and visits our imperfect earth.

From the ideal worlds of the Greater Mind a thought comes down and moves us to new-model some image of the greatness of the Godheads of the Greater Mind here on earth. As a result, our spirits break free. Our future brings its miracle near to us. The godhead of our future looks at us with present eyes. All the acts once

thought impossible for us now grow natural. Because of the arrival of the thought from the ideal worlds we feel the hero's immortality in us. As Sri Aurobindo reveals here, this happens because we are ourselves citizens of that mother State. Only, as adventurers, we have chosen to live in Matter's night at present as a result of the choice made by the immortal Mind to accept the earth's blindness and to become the servant of Ignorance. But in the Kingdoms of the Greater Mind (or "the ideal worlds") there exist the unfallen planes, the thought-created worlds. In these realms Knowledge is the leader of the act. Matter is made of thinking substance. Our feeling answers Truth's call. Will is a conscious chariot of the Gods. So also, Life carries the voices of the mystic Suns. It brings a happiness of whispered truth. There runs in the Unknown the sound of Wisdom's murmur and the breath of an unseen Infinity. In those worlds, Sri Aurobindo further discloses, 'The chainless and omnipotent Spirit of Mind' broods 'on the blue lotus of the Idea.' Truth pours down the mystery of the eternal Ray. What is more, the joining hemispheres of Sachchidananda in its transcendent spheres and of its Involution-Evolution down below are seen far off. Great stairs of thought climb up to unborn heights on meditation's mounting trance 'Where time's last ridges touch eternity's skies / And Nature speaks to the spirit's absolute.'

Having thus given an introductory idea of the Kingdoms of the Greater Mind (the Higher Mind) in the

first verse paragraph of Canto XI, Sri Aurobindo now proceeds to unravel still more apocalyptic characteristics of these Kingdoms in the second verse - paragraph onwards. In the unfallen planes of the Greater Mind 'A triple realm of ordered thought' comes first. According to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, this triple realm of Thought is 'A small beginning of immense ascent'. Above it there are bright ethereal skies of mind. The highest of these skies of mind strives to be in the neighbourhood of eternity. Similarly, the largest of them widens into the infinite.

Unravelling the mystery of the parts of the triple realm of ordered Thought Sri Aurobindo states that the first realms among them, are close and kin to human mind though they are immortal, mighty and divine. The Godheads of the first realms shape the roads of the greater thinking of humanity. Apocalyptically they are so significant that a fragment of their puissance can be ours. The breadths of these realms are not too broad for our souls to range. their heights are not too high for human hope.

Pointing out their exact location in the higher spheres of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo states that a triple flight of stairs leads to this triple world. The upward slope of the triple stair looks down on our earth-poise. There are wardens of the ascending stair to keep a watch. Their function is to 'intercede with the all-creating Word'. They wait on the ascending stair for the heaven-bound soul on its pilgrimage. the wardens proffer their knowledge to the climbing mind of the soul and fill the life with Thought's

immensities. As Sri Aurobindo discloses, the wardens bring the immortal fire to mortal men.

Besides, the wardens of the stair, there happen to be in the triple realm of Thought 'the guardians of the Eternal's bright degrees' fronting the sun in radiant phalanxes. The lowest steps of the stair which have room for the whole meaning of the world are marked by 'A march of friezes'. As such, in those Kingdoms man grows into an image of undefaced God. As for objects there, they become 'the fine coin of 'Beauty's reign'.

The terrains served by those levels are described by Sri Aurobindo as wide. More significantly, such Godheads as World-Time's enjoyers, favourites of World-Bliss, the Masters of actual things, lords of Time, Playmates of youthful Nature and child God and Creators of Matter by hid s'tress of Mind are found standing in front of the ascending epiphany of the triple stair of the triple realm, of ordered Thought. They are, Sri Aurobindo discloses, 'a race of young keen visioned Gods,/ King-children born on Wisdom's early plane'. They teach the mystic play of world-making in Wisdom's school. For their play, 'They have made their plan of. the concealed and known/ A dwelling-house for the invisible King.' There the All-containing is contained in form. Oneness is carved into measurable units. The limitless is built into a cosmic sum. Unending Space is beaten into a curve. Indivisible Time is cut into small minutes. The infinitesimal is massed to keep secure the mystery of the Formless who is cast into form. There a termination is set

for every eager Power restraining its will to monopolise the world. Therefore, Knowledge is rebuilt from cells of inference into a fixed body. Bound in this manner it grows but cannot last. It breaks and leaves its place to the body of a new thinking. In this way, a timeless Spirit is made the slave of time there. The Unbound is cast into a prison of birth to make a world so that Mind could grasp and rule. The Gods of the Greater Mind tie the movement of the Transcendent One 'to date and norm and finite scope'.

Sri Aurobindo further discloses that subtle archangels inhabit the triple realm of Thought with a light of liberating Knowledge shining in their eyes. These archangels live in the mind, according to Sri Aurobindo, and know truth from within. Their seeing thoughts fill in the blanks left by the seeking sense. After all, they are 'High architects of possibility... engineers of the impossible,/ Mathematicians of the infinitudes/ And theoreticians of unknowable truths'. As such, they join the unknown to the apparent worlds. they wait upon the timeless Power and investigate the cycle of her works. Because, their mind can penetrate her occult mind. They assign a reason and unchanging rule for every turn of her mysterious course. The immense Inconscient's scheme stands quite explained to them. What is more significant, they possess the ability to discover and trace 'The psycho-analysis of cosmic Self' and 'The unknown pathology of the Unique.'" Similarly, adds Sri Aurobindo, they 'Cast into a scheme the triple act of the One.' Their motives which

are complicated work out unity. Without their knowledge, a wisdom reads their mind to themselves. The habit of their million paths follow from their giant randomness of Force.

Another revelation Sri Aurobindo makes here is that in that realm, Mind's knowledge in its pride of universal lore overtops the Omniscient's power. The Eternal's puissances obey the orders of Thought. Each mystiered God inhabiting the realm is forced to have a revealing form. Besides, he is given his settled moves in Nature's game. In this way, in the triple realm of Thought 'The mighty Mother's whims and lightning moods' are chained to a cause and aim. An idol of bronze replaces her mystic shape. The archangels of the realm boldly fix a date for the birth and death of the worlds. They measure the distant and unseen heights. They visualise the viewless depths till all that can exist in all time seems to be known. They coerce everything by number, name and form. In short, they leave nothing untold and incalculable.

Revealing the other side of the nature of the archangels, Sri Aurobindo points out that, in spite of all this, their wisdom is surrounded with nothingness. Though they can find several truths they are unable to hold the one Truth. Secondly, they are incapable of knowing the Highest. As archangels of the realms of Thought, no doubt, they know too much. But by knowing too much they miss the Whole to be known. They leave the fathomless heart of the world unguessed. As a result, the

Transcendent keeps his secrecy away from them. Mentioning the highest part of the stairs Sri Aurobindo says next that "the wide summit of the triple stairs' can be reached by means of bare steps climbing up to a pure absolute sky. At the summit the sovereign Kings of Thought (the greatest of the Godheads of the Greater Mind 'Have made of Space their wide all-seeing gaze/ Surveying the enormous work of time'. At the summit where they live all-containing consciousness supports 'Being in still embrace.' The thoughts of the sovereign Kings are partners in the vast control of Being. An all-ruling consciousness is present there. Unknowingly Mind serves a higher Power at the summit. It becomes channel and not the source of all. The Kings of Thought are audacious in their sense of God-born strength. Therefore, they have the audacity to dare to grasp 'filth's absolute with their thought. They bring to Mind what Mind can never reach. They hope to conquer Truth "s supernal base. In the atmosphere of the summit the ear of Mind is withdrawn from the outward's rhymes, it discovers the seed-sounds of the eternal Word It hears the rhythm and music which built the Worlds.

The Kings of Thought inhabiting the triple realm absolute walls of thought and speech in order to park and hedge the infinitudes. Thus they make zero of a multitude. They find in negation the meaning of the All. Likewise they discover the absolute positive in nothingness. They are in the habit of compressing Nature into a formula.

They employ their enormous labour to make all knowledge one. With this, however, the Mind's wisdom possessed by the Kings of Thought stops contented. It feels complete.

Commenting on the apocalyptic nature of the various functions of the Kings of Thought in the triple realm of Mind Sri Aurobindo reveals that all this is the play of the bright gods of Thought. They have systematically planned 'to snare the feet of truth' And keep her captive for the thinker's joy/ In his little world built of immortal dreams:/ There must she dwell mured in the human mind,' as the splendid and cherished property by him who possesses her. Consequently, she sanctions and inspires his words and acts. Her possessor dominates a prostrate world by her. She is his now and, as such, she must live for him alone. He is lost in her and she is his heaven here. Observing this play of the bright gods of Thought, Truth smiles upon' the gracious golden game,' She pretends to yield to him the sunlit sweetness of her secrecies and makes earth her home though heaven is too small for her. In this way, Truth comes into the narrow limits of thought. She lowers her height to the stature of our souls and dazzles our eyes with her celestial gaze. 'Thus each is satisfied with his high gain / And thinks himself beyond mortality blest; / A king of truth upon his separate throne.

But Sri Aurobindo reveals again that neither thought nor word can capture eternal Truth even in the Kingdoms of the Greater Mind. Truth is so very vast that

'The whole world lives in a lonely ray of her sun.' Human mind dreams that the chains of thought have made her hours. But actually we tie ourselves in our vain efforts to tie down Truth. We are unable to see what small and insignificant figure of her we hold in our mortal hands. We can never share her immortal liberty.

In this way, Sri Aurobindo unravels in Canto XI the various apocalyptic strengths and weaknesses of the Higher Mind by employing the allegorical concept of "The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind". As we have already seen in our examination of Sri Aurobindo's concepts of the higher kinds of the Mind, all mental worlds leading up to the Supermind have, no doubt, their own individual greatnesses. But they also have in their own supreme way their own higher incapacities. That is why, Sri Aurobindo makes Aswapathy pass from the Kingdoms of the Greater Mind to the Heavens of the Ideal.

As we have already chosen to assume, Sri Aurobindo unravels the apocalyptic nature, qualities and functions of the illumined Mind in Canto XII bearing the title "The Heavens of the Ideal",⁴⁶ He unfolds the first characteristic in the opening line itself by saying that the Ideal always beckons Thought from afar. Therefore, tireless Thought as the strong discoverer aspires to go higher. While doing so, it reveals at each step a luminous world. Thought leaves known summits for the unknown peaks of Knowledge and Wisdom. It seeks the lone unrealised Truth. It longs for that Light which knows no

death and birth. In such Heavens of the Ideal, each state of the soul's ascent is built into a constant heaven which is always felt here on earth. At each pace of the marvellous journey of Thought in those Heavens, a new degree of wonder and bliss is formed in the mighty stair of Being. (The stairs continue to exist even in the Heavens of the Ideal.) At either end of each of these shining stairs there exist the heavens of the ideal Mind. Describing the various parts of the apocalyptic Heavens of the Ideal Sri Aurobindo says that 'The lovely Kingdoms of the deathless Rose' glimmer one one side of the stairs 'In a glory and surprise of the seized soul/ And a tremulous rapture of the heart's insight/ And the spontaneous bliss that beauty gives'. He also reveals that there are superconscious realms of heavenly peace above the spirit, just as there is the Inconscient's sullen dim abyss below. But, according to him, between and behind our life there dwells 'the deathless Rose'.

*It blooms for ever at the feet of God,
Fed by life's sacrificial mysteries.
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.*⁴⁷

Apocalyptically, so tremendous is the quality of the deathless Rose that because of its presence between and behind our existence "Life yields to the divinity within' in an outburst of heavenly joy and ease, 'And gives the rapture-offering of its all, / And the soul opens to felicity.'

An unending bliss is felt by us because of the Rose and 'A sudden mystery of secret Grace/ Flowers goldening our earth of red desire.' All the high gods reveal to us their names and their undying powers. A fiery stillness wakes our slumbering cells. A passion of the flesh to becomes spirit. In this way, 'the miracle for which our life was made' is marvellously fulfilled at last. Human life undergoes a remarkable transformation. In that condition, faces of immortal light are seen together with 'The wings that crowd Thought's ardent silences' and 'The eyes that look into spiritual Space. As a result of this impact of the deathless Rose in the Heavens of the Ideal, the centres of celestial force to hidden in our body 'Open like flowers of a heavenly atmosphere'. Even our 'Mind pauses thrilled with the supernal Ray, / And even the transient body then can feel / Ideal love and flawless happiness. Our heart's sweetness and delight are 'Freed from the rude and tragic hold of Time'. (All these apocalyptic qualities of 'the deathless Rose' are the same as the qualities of what Sri Aurobindo has conceptualised as the psychic dwelling in human beings.) All this high change Sri Aurobindo indicates as possible in the high realms of the Heavens of the Ideal. 'What here is in the bud has blossomed there./ There is the secrecy of the House of Flame,/ The blaze of Godlike thought and golden bliss'. There are, in the Heavens of the Ideal, the wonderful voices and the sun-laugh. The joys of Time are witnessed there. But more significant is the fact that the Immortal's touch is pressed

on our bosom. We become able to hear 'the flutings of the Infinite'. In the Heavens of the Ideal, there are also the imperishable beatitudes. Several worlds climb towards some far unseen epiphany like 'A million lotuses swaying on one stem'. Sri Aurobindo says that all this atmosphere existed on one side of the eternal stairs.

He then proceeds to point out that "the mighty kingdoms of the deathless Flame / Aspired to reach the Being's absolutes" 'On the other side of the eternal stairs'. The apocalyptic quality of the 'deathless Flame' is pointed out in the words: 'Out of the sorrow and darkness of the world,/ Out of the depths where life and thought are tombed,/ Lonely mounts up to heaven the deathless Flame.' 'It burns for ever on the altar Mind'. Its heavenly flamings can never cease once they are kindled. Much more significant revelation is that the Flame 'rises through a mortal's hemisphere' and that 'It enters the occult eternal Light / And clambers whitening to the invisible Throne. / Its worlds are steps of an ascending Force'. Where it burns, the homes of illumined Might, Heavens of unchanging Good and heights of the grandeur of Truth's ageless ray start appearing to our view 'And call our souls into a vaster air.' They bear up the sleepless Flame on their summits. They point above themselves through an ether of God-mind 'Towards some gold Infinite's apocalypse.' Of course, they exceed us far and yet, 'to exceed ourselves-they call' to us 'And bid us rise incessantly above.' Those summits live far away from our eager reach in the Heavens of the Ideal.

Stating that 'through the Ideal's kingdoms' Aswapathy moved at will, Sri Aurobindo indicates that anyone well-versed in the Integral Yoga can move at will through the Heavens of the Ideal and find that all there is "an intense but partial light'. In each of the kingdoms a high-browed Idea dwells and unites all knowledge by one master thought. It persuades all action to one golden sense. It subjects all power to a single power. Similarly, it makes a world 'An absolute idea's perfect home.' According to Sri Aurobindo's revelation, these realms in the Heavens of the ideal offer to the traveller 'A quenchless flame or an unfading flower' as an 'Emblem of a high kingdom's privilege.' Also, there appears in that realm a shining Angel of the Way and presents to the seeking of the soul 'The sweetness and the might of an idea' containing 'The heart of the meaning of the universe,/ Perfection's key, passport to Paradise.' There also exist regions where these absolutes meet and make a circle of bliss. In those regions, light stands embraced by light and fire weds fire. But, curiously enough, everyone existing there is able to merge in others without losing his body in order 'To find his soul in the world's single Soul'.

Through the experiences of Aswapathy the Traveller, Sri Aurobindo thus brings out all these characteristics of what appears to be the Illumined Mind. At the end of Canto XII however, he points out that there is yet a sphere 'diviner' than the Heavens of the Ideal and, like Aswapathy, every seeker has to pass into it leaving

behind the Heavens of the Ideal. Sri Aurobindo indicates this by saying that 'Onward he passed to a diviner sphere:'

*There, joined in a common greatness, light and bliss
All high and beautiful and desirable powers
Forgetting their difference and their separate reign
Become a single multitudinous whole.
Above the parting of the roads of Time.
Above the Silence and its thousandfold Word,
In the immutable and inviolate Truth
For ever united and inseparable,
The radiant children of Eternity dwell
On the wide spirit height where all are one.*⁴⁸

This description of the 'diviner sphere' beyond the Heavens of the Ideal seems to refer to the plane or world of the Intuition dealt with at length in Canto XIII: "In the Self of Mind".⁴⁹ In the very first line of the Canto Sri Aurobindo points out that a bare indifferent sky comes there at last where Silence listens to the cosmic Voice alone. Also there comes 'A finis-line on the last page of thought', together with a blank of wordless peace. At this finis-line the climbing hierarchy of worlds comes to a pause. The traveller of the Worlds has to stand there 'Alone with an enormous Self of Mind' which holds all life just in a corner of its vasts. The Self of Mind, however, takes no part in the world from which it springs. In the same way, it is indifferent to its own defeats. It hears the cry of grief but makes no sign of sympathetic response.

Because its gaze falls impartial on evil and good. As Consciousness manifesting as the world of the Intuition, it sees destruction come but does not move in order to avert it. In this way, it does not act but bears all thoughts and deeds patiently. Because it is 'The witness Lord of Nature's myriad acts/ Consenting to the movements of the Force.' Sri Aurobindo reveals here that the Silence maintained by the witness is the secret base of the Thinker. That is why. the world is formed hidden in silent depths. The act is born from hidden silences. The reason is that 'In secrecy wraps the seed the Eternal sows/Silence, the mystic birthplace of the soul. 'Secondly, 'A seeing Self and potent Energy' meet in the supreme and timeless silence of God. As a result, all creation rises self-made from the dual power of Self and Energy. If we become one with the still self, we grow one being with it and become wide, powerful and free. We become spectators of a self-conceived drama and look on the world watching its motive thoughts with luminous prophecy in our eyes. We appear to understand and know everything. Nothing more is demanded or wanted. In this region, we can stay because the Self and the Silence are conquered by us. Consequently, our soul gets peace. It comes to know the cosmic Whole. At this point, as Sri Aurobindo reveals, all too suddenly a shining finger falls on all things and shows to our mind that, really speaking nothing in the world can be known. In order to know things, 'That must be reached from which all knowledge comes.' In this way, scepticism

enters into us and the sceptic Ray disrupts all that appears and strikes at the very roots of thought and sense. As a result, a doubt corrodes even our means to think. Distrust is thrown upon all the instruments of our Mind. A perverted Ignorance appears as a figure of knowledge covered in dubious words. All devices of Mind become only a trap to catch winged thoughts existing in weak and brief light. But they become dead once they are captured in fixed forms of Mind. Our power of Reason loses her confidence in her tricks and her turns of thought. In this way, existence' self is overshadowed by a doubt. All this happens because 'This great spectator and creator Mind' is only a delegate of some half- seeing. It is a veil between the human soul and the transcendent Light. It is not the living body of God but only an image. Even the calm spirit which looks upon its own works is only some pale front of the Unknowable. The wide and witness Self seems merely a shadow. Its liberation and its calm appear to be a void recoil from time-made things. In the realms of the Self of Mind thus, the nameless Force is not there though there is deep peace. 'Our sweet and mighty Mother' is not there at all. Similarly, the Bliss which is the splendid grain of creation is absent.

Pointing out this predicament, Sri Aurobindo reveals its remedy by stating that 'A greater Spirit than the Self of Mind / Must answer to the questioning' of the traveller's soul. Because, in the Self of Mind there is no firm clue and no sure road. As a result, partial experiences

cut the Whole into small bits. In this condition, in the realm of the Self of Mind, we look above but find that all is blank and still. Similarly, we look below and realise that all is dark and mute. However, between these two extremes the noise of thought and prayer, of strife and labour is heard. 'It is 'A rumour and a movement and a call' 'Rolled ever upon the ocean surge of Life/ Along the coasts of mortal Ignorance.' Beings, forces, forms and ideas crowd on its breast in order to establish supremacy. It is a sleepless stir. 'A Nothingness', a huge creator Death, a mystic Void' reposes at the bottom beneath the voices and the march. In this atmosphere, the spirit moves veiled in from the infinity of Self. It wanders in a world of beings and momentary events within the spiral of its acts. Or else it runs around the cycles of its thought. Yet it knows no more than in the beginning. The spirit feels that existence is a prison from which the only escape is extinction.

When the Traveller of the Worlds of Consciousness, such as Aswapathy or any other Integral Yogi is confronted with such a terrible situation he finds that, out of his seeking and journeying a secret answer to his difficulty emerges. Sri Aurobindo reveals this in the opening lines of Canto XIV: "The World-Soul"⁵⁰ From this it appears that, as a welcome variation of the monotonous pattern of closing a Canto with the end of the particular kingdoms or realms described in it, Sri Aurobindo lets one canto flow into another in continuation of the same subject as is dealt with in the earlier of the two Cantos.

He discloses that 'In a far-shimmering background of Mind-Space/ A glowing mouth was seen, a luminous shaft'. This statement seems to indicate that the 'sceptic Ray' which falls on our soul in the Self of Mind has its termination in the form of a luminous shaft which is 'Away from the unsatisfied surface world'. The shaft descends into 'the bosom of the unknown'. It is 'A well, a tunnel of the depths of God.' It plunges in order to reach the last profound of the world's heart. From that heart there surges a wordless call 'Pleading with some still impenetrable Mind/ Voicing some passionate unseen desire.' As a result, there steals out into the Mind 'A mute and quivering ecstasy of light,/ A passion and delicacy of roseate fire' as if it was 'a message from the world's deep soul,/ An intimation of a lurking joy/ That flowed out from a cup- of brooding bliss'. Attracted and encouraged by the 'wordless call' the traveller has to continue his journey 'led by a mysterious sound.' The apocalyptic nature of that sound is that it is all sounds in existence 'yet still the same.' It is 'A hidden call to unforeseen delight / In the summoning voice of one long-known and loved,/ But nameless to the unremembering mind'. Its effect is so extraordinary that it leads our truant heart back to its rapture. In this way, the immortal cry heard in the realm of the World-Soul first ravishes the captive ear of the Traveller then it sinks 'to a whisper circling round the soul.' It sounds like 'the yearning of a lonely flute' the music of which fills the eyes with tears of longing joy. This is but natural because, in the realm of the Self of Mind our soul is assaulted by scepticism whereas in the kingdom of the

World-Soul, the soul recovers from the shock. The 'eternal loneliness' earlier felt by the soul gets solaced by that call. An old forgotten sweetness comes back sobbing. A sweet perfume comes floating in the quivering air', following the 'wordless call'. Besides, 'A mystic happiness' trembles in the heart 'As if the invisible Beloved had come'.

The effect of the call enables each traveller of the Worlds, to enter into a wonderful bodiless realm in the sphere of the World-Soul. it is 'The home of a passion without name or voice'. Journeying there, we find that the realm is a depth answering to every height, a nook which can embrace all worlds. We feel all this because in that wonderful bodiless realm there is the silent soul of all the world. There, 'A Being' lives who is 'a Presence and a Power,/ A single Person' who is himself and everyone and who cherishes the sweet and dangerous throbs of Nature which are changed into divine and pure beats. This Being is capable of loving us without any return for love. He meets the worst and turns it into the best. He heals the bitter cruelties of earth and transforms all experience to delight. The wonderful bodiless realm in which the Being lives has the power to reveal divinity because it is Infinite and coeval with the mind of God. Within itself it bears a seed from which the Eternal is new-born. It also carries a Flame that cancels death in mortal things. Therefore, all anguish and turmoil of heart disappear there. The intimacy of God is felt everywhere there since no veil and no inert barrier is felt between us and God. The apocalyptic quality

of the realm is that, there distance does not divide and time cannot change. A fire of passion burns there in spirit-depths. A constant touch of sweetness links all hearts. In everything there lives an inner happiness together with a sense of universal harmonies and a measureless secure eternity of truth and beauty and good and joy made one. In this way, in the bodiless realm of the World-Soul there is found 'the welling core of finite life' and a formless spirit becomes the soul of form.

From this merger of Canto XIII and Canto XIV into one single narration though formally separated, it is reasonable to presume that Sri Aurobindo combines his apocalyptic account of the manifestation of Consciousness on the levels of the Intuition and the Overmind together. Because, the nature and qualities and functions of the 'wonderful bodiless realm' supplied in Canto XIV seem to be those of the Intuition as well as those of the overmind. After all, as Sri Aurobindo himself maintains, there is no rigid demarcation between one apocalyptic world of Consciousness and another as visualised, conceptualised and actually experienced by him. The core qualities of each such world are, no doubt, distinct and originally characteristic of the world concerned. But the border-land between two such worlds seems to be blurred and indistinct. The doubt regarding such things is difficult to be removed at present on account of the incomprehensible nature not only of *Savitri* as a literary work but also of Sri Aurobindo's

spiritual philosophy. In the future, probably, all such doubts will be cleared.

The qualities of the world of the Overmind seem to be extended into second verse-paragraph of the Canto on the World-Soul. Because, as Sri Aurobindo goes on revealing from the very first line of the paragraph, in that realm all is soul 'or made of sheer soul-stuff'. The sky there is of soul covering 'a deep soul-ground'. Everything there is known 'by a spiritual sense'. Thought is no longer there in that realm. On the contrary, a knowledge near and one seizes on all things by a moved identity. Life there is only an impassioned force 'Finer than fineness, deeper than the deeps,/ Felt as a subtle and spiritual power,/ A quivering out from soul to answering soul'. It is 'A mystic movement, a close influence,/ A free and happy and intense approach/ Of being to being with no screen or check'. Like Life in that realm, body also is not there because bodies are not needed since the soul itself is its own deathless form' capable of meeting at once the touch of other souls 'Close, blissful, concrete, wonderfully true'. This being the case, when a traveller who happens to be in these realms is able to know things by their soul and not by their shape. He meets beings inhabiting the realms and communicates with them without speech. "There is also a strange spiritual scenery in those worlds. There is a flow and a fixity in a soul-space. Air there is the breath of a pure infinite. The realms are full of a fragrance which wanders in a coloured haze. Beauty lives there at home in

her own house and appeals to the soul and not to the eye. Everything there is beautiful by its own right and it does not need 'the splendour of a robe.' All objects in the region are like bodies of the Gods. They are the symbol of the Spirit surrounding a soul. What is apocalyptically significant about the realms is that 'world and self' are 'one reality' there.

After the description of the realms of the World-Soul, Sri Aurobindo goes on to the description of the beings living in the area. As he reveals, the inhabitants of the realms are those who once happened to be on earth. They sit there 'In shining chambers of spiritual sleep.' They have passed beyond the pillar-posts of birth and death. They have left behind 'the heavens and hells of their long road'. This is so because they have now returned into the world's deep soul. Therefore, their person and their nature have undergone a change. They remain waiting there 'for the adventure of new life. 'They are prepared to face again the problem-game of birth and 'The soul's experiment of joy and grief'.

In this realm, the spirit finds the silence of its starting-point in the formless force and fixity of the world of Soul. Forces, lives, beings and ideas are taken into the stillness of the world of Soul. 'There they remould their purpose and their drift,/ Recast their nature and re-form their shape.' They always change and always grow by changing. They even pass through 'a fruitful stage of death / And after long reconstituting sleep / Resume their place of the process of the Gods'.

Next, Sri Aurobindo reveals that 'the fashioning chamber of the worlds' is in these realms. Regions of delight and peace are beyond the chamber as also 'Mute birth-places of light and hope and love,/ And cradles of heavenly rapture and repose.' In this atmosphere we grow aware of the eternal moment. Our knowledge knows by identity and does not need thought or word. Our being sees itself without its veils. Because, Life's line falls away from the spirit's infinity. There appears a road of pure interior light. It is a lonely road 'between tremendous Presences'. There the traveller passes on like a single and conscious power walking under the watching eye of nameless Gods. He walks towards the end of the road. But the end begins again and approaches the source of all human and divine things. there we are able to behold 'The figure of the deathless Two-in-One' 'in their mighty union's poise'. they are

*A single being in two bodies clasped,
A diarchy of two united souls,
Seated absorbed in deep creative joy;
Their trance of bliss sustained the mobile world.⁵¹*

These Two, however, are not the only apocalyptic Beings of the realm. For,

*Behind them in a morning dusk One stood
Who brought them forth from the Unknowable.
Ever disguised she awaits the seeking spirit;
Watcher on the supreme unreachable peaks,
Guide of the traveller of the unseen paths,
She guards the austere approach to the Alone.*

*At the beginning of each far-spread plane
Pervading with her power the cosmic suns
She reigns, inspirer of its multiple works
And thinker of the symbol of its scene.
Above them all she stands supporting all,
The sole omnipotent Goddess ever-veiled
Of whom the world is the inscrutable mask;
The ages are the footfalls of her tread,
Their happenings the figure of her thoughts,
And all creation is her endless act.⁵³*

Because of such divinely apocalyptic nature of Two-in-One and the Divine Mother, the spirit of the traveller reaching their presence is made 'a vessel of her force'. In the silence of 'the fathomless passion of his will' such traveller stretches out 'to her his folded hands of prayer'. 'In answer to his prayers a gesture comes from her: One of her arms slightly parts 'the eternal veil' covering her face. A still and imperishable light appears. The traveller is 'Attracted to the large and luminous depths / Of the ravishing enigma of her eyes'. He is able to see 'the mystic outline' of her face. As a result, he is 'Overwhelmed by her implacable light and bliss'. He becomes 'An atom of her illimitable self / Mastered by the honey -and lightning of her power,/ Tossed towards the shores of her ocean ecstasy'. He sends out 'from the rent stillness of his soul / A cry of adoration and desire / And the surrender of his boundless mind'. His silent heart overflows with his self-giving to her. Small wonder therefore, that he falls 'down at her feet unconscious, prone.'

Thus, by depicting Aswapathy the Traveller as a person capable of reaching up to the presence of the Divine Mother on this plane, Sri Aurobindo probably implies that the realm of the World-Soul is the Overmind. This is all the more likely because the next Canto (the very last in Book Two of *Savitri*) Canto XV,⁵³ is designated by him as "The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge", the term "Greater Knowledge" implying the Divine *gnôsis* which pervades the realm of the Supermind.

As Sri Aurobindo implies with reference to Aswapathy the Traveller of the Worlds, any Integral Yogi acquiring the ability to explore the worlds, Consciousness is able to stand 'Above the Witness and his universe' in a realm of boundless silences 'Awaiting the Voice that spoke and built the worlds.' Round such explorer there is a wide and absolute light with a diamond purity of eternal sight. On this level of Yogic awareness, a consciousness lies 'still, devoid of forms,/ Free, wordless, uncoerced by sign or rule,/ For ever content with only being and bliss'. In that atmosphere there also lives a sheer existence in its own peace on the bare and infinite ground of the single spirit. At this stage of his Yoga, the explorer has arisen out of the sphere of Mind. He has left the rule of colours and shades of Nature. He now lives in the colourless purity of his self. This is so because the plane of consciousness which he has reached now is that of undetermined spirit which can either be a zero or a round sum of things. It can also become a condition in which everything either ends or else begins. The undetermined

spirit here becomes everything which symbolises the absolute. This realm is like a high vast peak from where spirit can see the worlds. It can observe the wide epiphany of calm, the mute home of wisdom, A lonely station of Omniscience,/ A diving-board of the Eternal's power,/ A White floor in the house of All-Delight. 'Here comes to the traveller 'the thought that passes beyond Thought' as also 'the still Voice which our listening cannot hear', 'The Knowledge by which the Knower is the Known,/ The Love in which Beloved and Lover are one.' All these things stand in their original plenitude. Because, this is the realm where the spiritual birth was created. Here closes the slow movement of the finite towards the Infinite. In this region, innumerable roads leap into Eternity or else run singing to meet the veil less face of God.

On this level, the Yogic explorer is released from the limiting chain of the known. Therefore, he now knocks 'at the doors of the Unknowable.' Gazing from there with an immeasurable outlook he sees 'the splendour of the spirit's realm,/ The greatness and wonder of its boundless works,/ The power and passion leaping from its calm'. He also sees the rapture of the movement of the spirit as also of its rest. Within his vision comes 'The million pointing undivided grasp / Of its vision of one same stupendous All,/ Its inexhaustible acts in a -. timeless Time'. All things there are 'A glorious multiple of one radiant Self,/ Answering to joy with joy, love with love'. There all things are 'moving of God-bliss' :

*There forces are great outbursts of God's truth
And objects are its pure spiritual shapes;
Spirit no more is hid from its own view,
All sentience is a sea of happiness
And all creation is an act of light.*⁵⁴

These are some of the apocalyptic qualities of what appears to be the plane of the Supermind. In such an atmosphere of the world of the Supermind, the traveller comes out of the neutral silence of his soul and passes in its fields of puissance and of calm. There he sees the powers that stand above the world. He passes through the realms of the supreme Idea' in search of 'the summit if created things/ And the almighty source of cosmic change.'

On such heights of Consciousness, Knowledge calls the seeking traveller to her mystic peaks 'Where thought is held in a vast internal sense / And feeling swims across a sea of peace/ And vision climbs beyond the reach of Time.' Consciousness in the world of the Supermind makes him 'An equal of the first creator seers'. There he moves through regions of transcendent Truth accompanied by an all-revealing light. There distance becomes the extent of the traveller's own huge spirit. He is set free from the fictions of the mind. He gets no more baffled by the triple dividing step of time, Past, Present and Future. His spirit's single wide regard holds the continuous atream of Time. Then, a universal beauty reveals its face to him. The invisible apocalyptic significances sheltered behind the insensible screen of form uncover to him all their

deathless harmony. They hand over to him 'the key to the wonder-bock of common things.' 'The enchantments that uphold the cosmic web / And the magic underlying simple shapes' stand up revealed to the explorer. He hears the ever unspoken voice of Reality when it awakens the mystic cry of revelation. In that world he finds the birth-place of the infallible Word. Also, he lives in the rays of an intuitive Sun. He is freed from death and sleep. He sails on seas of cosmic Mind in order to cross the ocean of original sound. He reaches 'the last step to the supernal birth' and walks 'near the high verges of eternity'. He climbs up to the gold ridge existing 'Between the slayer and the saviour fires'. He reaches the belt of the unchanging Truth existing in this region. Here there are 'borders of the inexpressible Light' which he meets. There is also 'the presence of the Ineffable' there and he is thrilled with it. The flaming Hierarchies which are above are seen by him. There are also in that region 'The sun-eyed Guardians and the golden Sphinx / And the tiered planes and the immutable Lords.' A wisdom sits there in a vast passivity waiting on Omniscience. It merely listens for the all-seeing Thought 'And the burden of a calm transcendent Voice.' When the traveller arrives at this point, Sri Aurobindo reveals, he has 'reached the top of all that can be known'. Naturally, therefore, his sight surpasses the head and base of creation as a whole; and 'The triple heavens' reveal their suns to him. The spiritual achievement of the traveller becomes so intensely significant that 'Almost the Unknowable'

discloses its rim to him and 'All but the ultimate Mystery' becomes his field. The infinities of his self begin to come out. The universes hidden from human sight call out to him. A million energies 'Arisen from the marvel of the depth/ And burning from the superconscious heights / And sweeping in great horizontal gyres' join each other and become the Transcendent One. The traveller is made a portion of the majesty of the One. He lives at will in that Ray.

Sri Aurobindo reveals that in that high realm of the Supermind no untruth can come. Similarly, all are different there and yet all is one. There 'The Person in the World-Spirit' rides anchored 'In the Impersonal's ocean without shore', thrilling with 'the mighty marchings of World-Force'. All acts in that high realm are the comrades of God's infinite peace. The body of human beings becomes 'An adjunct glory and a symbol self' and is delivered to the soul as an immortal point of power, as a block of poise. The realm figures in it the sense of a whole universe. There consciousness is "a close and single weft". The far and near are one in spirit-space. The "moments there are pregnant with all time. Thought is able to rip open the screen of the superconscient. Idea itself becomes sight and sight becomes 'a flame-throw from identity'. Life in that high realm is 'a marvellous journey of the spirit, / Feeling a wave from the universal Bliss.' Thus, the realm is 'the kingdom of the Spirit's power and light'. As such, in that

Kingdom the traveller comes out 'new-born, infant and limitless' and grows 'in the wisdom of the timeless Child'. So extraordinary is the realm that 'A great luminous silence' whispers to the heart of the explorer there. His knowledge catches an unfathomable inview and a boundless outview. He thinks and feels in all. His gaze acquires power. He becomes able to commune 'with the Incommunicable'. "Beings of a wider consciousness' become his friends. The Gods themselves converse with him behind Life's veil. His whole being grows neighbour to the crests of Nature. 'The primal Energy' takes him in its arms. His brain gets wrapped in overwhelming Light. An all-embracing knowledge seizes his heart. In him rise thoughts which "no earthly mind can hold.' As a result, he becomes absolutely able to scan 'the secrets of the Overmind' and to bear 'the rapture of the Oversoul.' He becomes 'A borderer of the empire of the Sun,/ Attuned to the supernal harmonies'. Therefore, he links creation to the Eternal's sphere. His finite parts approach their absolutes. What is apocalyptically important, his actions frame 'the movements of the Gods' and his will takes up 'the reins of cosmic Force.'

The mention of the Overmind and the Oversoul by Sri Aurobindo at the close of the Canto on "The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge" probably indicates that in Canto XV of Book Two of *Savitri* he simultaneously deals with the realms of the Overmind and the Supermind. As

we have already observed, the border-lines between any two given worlds or planes of Consciousness are, after all, not very clearly defined.

Even so, it is impossible to conclude that such a supremely accomplished Integral Yogi as Sri Aurobindo has omitted or failed to demarcate clearly the various higher levels of the Mind. Of course, such a definitively clear-cut demarcation is not explicitly dealt with in Book Two of *Savitri*. It is done, though much more briefly than in Book Two, in Book Ten, Canto IV: "The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real". More precisely, it is done in the last but one verse-paragraph of the very last speech of Savitri addressed to Death before his total annihilation and divine transformation.⁵⁵ After giving her own (needless to say, Sri Aurobindo's,) apocalyptic interpretation of Death,⁵⁶ existence-⁵⁷ and man⁵⁸ as a prelude, Savitri says, 'On summit Mind are the radiant altitudes/ Exposed to the lustre of Infinity'. From this point onwards she undertakes a brief review of the higher levels of Mind from the Higher Mind to the Super Mind. The first 'radiant altitudes' or 'outskirts and dependencies of the house of Truth,' or 'Upraised estates of Mind' are those of the Higher Mind. The apocalyptic peculiarities of the of this level of Consciousness identified by Savitri here are : (1) There man can visit but there he cannot live and (2) there 'A cosmic Thought spreads out its vastitudes;/ Its smallest ports are here philosophies / Challenging with their detailed immensity.' Savitri then adds that the ascending

light' of Consciousness can climb still higher to the realms of the Illumined Mind. These realms are described in the following lines :

*There are vasts of vision and eternal suns,
Oceans of an immortal luminousness,
Flame-hills assaulting heaven with their peaks,
There dwelling all becomes a blaze of sight;
A burning head of vision leads the mind,
Thought trails behind it its long comet tail;
The heart glows, an illuminate and seer,
And sense is kindled into identity.⁵⁹*

After this brief description of the revealing nature of the Illumined Mind, Savitri proceeds to unravel the mystery of the Intuition. Accordingly, the Intuition is 'A highest flight' which 'climbs to a deepest view'. Therefore, 'Intuition's lightnings range in a bright pack' 'In a wide opening of its native sky'. These lightnings hunt out all hidden truths from their lairs. Since Intuition possesses a fiery edge of absolute seeing, it blazes its way into the unknown retreats of self. It rummages the sky-recesses of the brain. It lights up the occult chambers of the heart of man. Likewise, it strips bare the secret soul of all that exists. In the realm of the Intuition, Thought possesses the sun-bright eyes of revelation. The eternal Word as a mighty and inspiring Voice enters there into the privacy of the inmost cabin of Truth and removes the veil covering God and life.

Passing on next to the realms of the Overmind, Savitri states, 'Then stretches the boundless finite's last

expanse. / The cosmic empire of the Overmind'. Obviously, the first apocalyptic quality of the plane of the Overmind is that it is 'The cosmic empire'. Secondly, it is a buffer state of Time bordering Eternity. Thirdly, it is too vast for the experience of Man's soul. Similarly, in the world of the Overmind, all gathers beneath one golden sky. The Overmind is a house of infinite possibility. Therefore, it accommodates 'The Powers that build the cosmos'. It is also the abode of gods. As such, each god from there builds a world of his own nature. Ideas are ranged there like a group of suns. All Time is one body there just as all Space is a single book. The realm of the Overmind also possesses the universal gaze of the Godhead. The most important apocalyptic feature of the world of the Overmind is that it demarcates 'the boundaries of immortal Mind:/ The line that parts and joins the hemispheres / Closes in on the labour of the Gods'. In the same way, the Overmind separates Eternity from Time. This means that beyond the Overmind there begins the higher hemisphere with the realm of the Supermind where 'the Truth supreme,' 'All-ruler, ruled by none,' 'Omnipotent, omniscient and alone,' dwells 'In her glorious kingdom of eternal light'. Secondly, 'Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight,/ Above the silence of the wordless Thought' there 'The Mighty Mother sits in lucent calm / And holds the eternal Child upon her knees, /

Attending the day when he shall speak to Fate.' In this realm, there exists the image of the hope of our future. The realm of the Supermind is characterised by the presence of the imperishable harmony since the Mighty Mother is one of the divine beings dwelling there. All contradictions of the world climb to her there and become one. Like superhuman Truth, superhuman Light also lives there. Divine Love, divine Bliss and divine Beauty characterise the realm. What is more, 'There the perfection born from Eternity / Calls to it the perfection born in Time'. Similarly, perfection calls the truth of God as also the image of God. The image of God overtakes finite shapes. There is a world of everlasting Light. Dwelling more on the Supermind Sri Aurobindo makes Savitri state as follows :

*In the realms of the immortal Supermind
Truth who hides here her head in mystery,
Her riddle deemed by reason impossible
In the stark structure of material form,
Unenigmaed lives, unmasked her face and there
Is Nature and the common law of things.
There in a body made of spirit stuff,
The hearth-stone of the everlasting Fire,
Action translates the movements of the soul,
Thought steps infallible and absolute
And life is a continual worship's rite,
A sacrifice of rapture to the One.
A cosmic vision, a spiritual sense
Feels all the Infinite lodged in finite form*

*And seen through a quivering ecstasy of light
Discovers the bright face of the Bodiless.
In the truth of a moment, in the moment's soul
Can sip the honey-wine of Eternity.⁶⁰*

When the *Chit* aspect of Sachchidananda goes through this process of spiritual Involution-Evolution assuming and passing through the Subconscious, the Physical, the Vital, the Ordinary Mental, the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuition, the Overmind and the Supermind in the form of human consciousness, it first discovers 'A Spirit who is no one and innumerable,/ The one mystic infinite Person of his world' multiplying his myriad personality and sealing his divinity's stamp on all his bodies. The human consciousness realises that it is this Spirit who sits in each created thing. As the Immobile he stands behind each daily act. Likewise, as the Ineffable he puts on a robe of speech where all its words move in beauty and inspire with their gleam. Because of it, every thought takes up its destined place recorded in the memory of the world. In the same way, the vast, impersonal and supreme Truth fits the hour and circumstance faultlessly. As a result, in this realm of the Spirit, the synthesis part of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual dialectics achieves its consummation which is described in the following words :

*All there is a supreme epiphany:
The All -Wonderful makes a marvel of each event,
The All -Beautiful is a miracle in each shape;*

*The All -Blissful smites with rapture the heart's throbs,
A pure celestial joy is the use of sense.
Each being there is a member of the Self
A portion of the million-thoughted All,
A Claimant to the timeless Unity,
The many's sweetness, the joy of difference
Edged with the intimacy of the One.⁶¹*

It is such circumstances which will, as Sri Aurobindo implies here, bring into existence a community of Gnostic beings or Supermen (whom Aswapathy aptly describes, as we have already seen, variously as 'Omnipotent's flaming pioneers', 'Forerunners of a divine multitude', 'The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,' 'The massive barrier-breakers of the world', 'The labourers in the quarries of the gods,' 'The architects of immortality', 'High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,/ Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways' and the 'high divine successors' to the inefficient mortal beings of today). According to Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, when the spiritual adventure undertaken by Consciousness culminates into this kind of achievement, the earth shall be touched by the Supreme and Nature will be filled with 'a mightier Presence'. There shall be a total transformation of earthly life described by the Supreme in His last words to Savitri and Satyavan as follows :

*Thus shall the earth open to divinity
And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
And meet the deity in common things.
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.⁶²*

Chapter Notes :

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 933
2. Ibid, p.938
3. Ibid.
4. Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry And Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), p.342
5. Ibid.
6. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 939
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. p.944
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. p.948
12. Ibid. p.946
13. Ibid. p.946-7
14. Ibid. p.615
15. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part Four*, p.1158
16. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, p.124 fn.
17. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p.65
18. Ibid. p.946
19. From an unpublished note of Sri Aurobindo written about 1940. Cf., *Glossary of Terms in Sri Aurobindo's Writings*, p.66
20. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p.458
21. Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, p.350
22. M.P. Pandit, *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, p. 134
23. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p.1159
24. Ibid. Part One, p.243
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid. Part Four, p.1154
28. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p.284
29. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part One*, p.257
30. M.P. Pandit, *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, pp. 177-8

31. Sri Aurobindo Circle : Thirty--second Number (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Society, 1976), p.13
32. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga : Part One*, p.239
33. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p.320
34. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation*, pp. 41-2
35. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p.122
36. Ibid. p.124
37. Ibid. pp.124-5
38. Ibid. p.143
39. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God : And Other Writings*, p.7
40. Ibid. p.73
41. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation*, p.73
42. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p.405
43. Ibid. p.266
44. M.P. Pandit, *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, p.254
45. pp.260-76
46. pp.277-82
47. p.278
48. p.282
49. pp.283-8
50. pp.289-96
51. p.295
52. Ibid.
53. pp. 297-302
54. p.298
55. pp.659-63
56. pp.656-7
57. pp.658-9
58. p.659
59. pp.659-60
60. p.661-2
61. p.663
62. pp.710-1



CONCLUSION



X CHAPTER

CONCLUSION

Admittedly, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is an extraordinary work in many respects. It is the longest blank verse poem ever written in English. Cast in the epic mould of John Milton (and therefore of Virgil, the ancient Roman classical poet), it is quite unlike Milton's epics in every important respect. So also it is entirely different from such Western epic poems as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer, the *Aeneid* of Virgil, *The Divine Comedy* of Dante, *Jerusalem Liberated* of Tasso, *The Faerie Queene* of Spenser, the *Excursion* of Wordsworth, *The Hound of Heaven* of Thompson, *The Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold and such twentieth century longer poems as the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound. The extraordinariness of *Savitri* consists in the fact that it appropriates into itself very many essential qualities of each one of these European poetical works and yet transcends all of them. By virtue of his encyclopedic knowledge of the West and its entire culture since the beginning, the author of *Savitri* has certainly benefited from his closest acquaintance with

these Western writers and their masterpieces. He gives, throughout *Savitri*, sufficient evidence of his familiarity with the Western masterpieces of literature. And yet, *Savitri* is almost worlds apart from any one of them. If at all there is any work to which *Savitri* comes closest it is the *Veda* together with the *Upanishads*, the *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavadgita*. Whereas it is as esoteric and spiritual as these sacred writings of so-called Hinduism, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* at best takes almost unlimited inspiration from them and yet remains original by being esoteric in its own way and spiritual in its own way. As an epic poem it is not only spiritual like the *Veda* but also highly subjective like Wordsworth's *Excursion*. But its subjective nature again is original and unlike that of Wordsworth's or of any other poet. The lengthy epic poem of the twentieth century written in Greek by Kazantzakis, *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*, probably comes somewhat close to *Savitri*. It is, however, unlike the modern Greek epic because it has the theistic background. Again, it is not religious like such theistic epics as *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, though certain elements of all leading religions of the world can be discerned in it. For all its spiritual and religious aspects, however, *Savitri* is not religious scripture. Like the *Bhagavadgita*, it deals with the various kinds of Yoga and includes in it all of them. Even so, it evolves its own original Yoga system, the Integral Yoga which Sri Aurobindo fully explicates in his prose work, *The Life*

Divine, Its Integral Yoga is based as much on Vedanta and the Tantras as on Sri Aurobindo's own original theory of spiritual evolution and occultism. As demonstrated in this thesis to a certain limited extent, *Savitri* is, above all, the finest specimen of apocalyptic literature. But in being apocalyptic, *Savitri* is again considerably different from the apocalyptic literature in Judaism and Christianity on the one hand and, on the other, in Hinduism. No doubt, it contains all the generic characteristics of apocalyptic literature of the West. But, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, it is once again original as apocalyptic literature. To take but one simple example characterising the originality of *Savitri*, the concept of God in this poem is entirely different from the concept of the personal God of Judaism and Christianity. So is it apocalyptically different in its conceptualisation of man, the world, creation, existence and the whole phenomena.

Another distinctive quality of *Savitri* is its remarkable multi-facetedness. As a specimen of apocalyptic literature, for example, it lends itself to ample interpretation on several counts. So numerous are the various aspects of *Savitri* as apocalyptic literature that a considerably large volume can easily be written on each one of the aspects. The same applies to its nature as an epic poem.

Savitri is an Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature not merely because its author is an Indian. It is Indian because the quintessence of all the various spiritual, philosophical, religious, occult and cultural aspects of life

led in the Indian subcontinent since the Vedic times are integrated in it. As such, in spite of its inclusion of so much of the thought, philosophy and culture of the West into it, *Savitri* is most unlike anything that is Western.

This being the inexhaustible nature of the aspects and qualities of *Savitri*, the one almost insurmountable difficulty of a doctoral researcher venturing to explicate any given aspect of the epic is of trying to do justice to its paramount significance and yet limit himself or herself to the academic rigours of the viable size of the doctoral thesis. The academic study undertaken in this thesis is no exception to this. To deal with the salient features of *Savitri* as an Indian specimen of apocalyptic literature within the limits of an academic thesis is a task by no means easy or simple. Yet, an attempt is made here to produce an academically viable study of some limited length trying to bring out the significance of *Savitri* as a specimen of apocalyptic literature. On account of academic expectations of this kind, the study undertaken here had to be within certain constraints. Length or size of the thesis was the main and important constraint of this kind. That is why, this study has necessarily become selective rather than exhaustive. Another constraint is in respect of explicating all the salient features of apocalyptic literature (identified in Chapter II) with reference to *Savitri*. Several volumes of writing would be needed if all the various characteristics identified were traced in detail in the Indian epic. Hence

the helpless conclusion to restrict the explication to only one (but the most important and generic) feature of the work, viz., the revelatory aspect.

"Revelation" in *Savitri* is again apocalyptically different from revelation in Judaism or Christianity. Here the revelation is, no doubt, with reference to the 'inbreaking' of God into human life. But God or the Deity according to the Vedantic, Tantric and occult background of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical and spiritual theory (analysed in Chapter III) is not the personal God of the Semetic religions. On the contrary, it is Sachchidananda with special reference to its Consciousness aspect which is the equivalent of God in *Savitri*. In view of this, the study of the revelatory aspect of *Savitri* has to be restricted to the explication of the nature and presence of Consciousness going through the process of Involution-Evolution from the gross physical to the Supramental levels through the vital, the ordinary mental, higher mental, illumined mental, intuitive and overmental worlds. Since Consciousness at present is at the stage of the *Homo sapiens*, Sri Aurobindo's revelatory visions in respect of human life (Chapter IV) and man (Chapter V) had to be necessarily examined. Only then does this study turn to an examination of the apocalyptic nature of each one of the worlds through which Consciousness passes (in Chapter VI to IX). Even with regard to the single though most generic characteristic of apocalyptic literature, viz., revelation, this study had to be necessarily restrictive. No doubt, quite a few selected passages from almost all

Books of *Savitri* except Book Two are taken up for explication in Chapters IV and V. But in all the successive Chapters this study relies almost exclusively on Book Two of *Savitri*. This does not, however, mean that the epic in its other Books does not dwell upon the apocalyptic qualities of the various occult worlds through which Aswapathy travels. Far from that, other parts of *Savitri* such as Book Seven and Books Nine, Ten and Eleven do reveal the apocalyptic nature not only of the worlds mentioned in Book Two but also of the various transcendental worlds existing beyond the Supramental world, according to Sri Aurobindo. The explication of these passages is intentionally given up either because of constraints of size or because they do not directly pertain to the progress of 'the adventure of consciousness'. The omission, however, stands.

It is hoped that the spiritual and occult concept of Consciousness propounded by Sri Aurobindo is convincingly projected in this study as the equivalent of God or the Divine. Similarly, the equivalent of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth is the Life Divine which emerges as the complete transformation of the earthly life after Consciousness ascending upwards from below rises successfully to meet Sachchidananda descending from above. For want of space as also on account of the decision to restrict a study to the revelatory aspect alone, no elaborate explication is given in respect of these two aspects.

The frame of reference for the explication of apocalyptic qualities of *Savitri* is evolved on the basis of the views of the Western scholars on apocalypticism with exclusive reference to apocalyptic literature in Judaism and Christianity. Yet, no detailed account of the nature and significance of the two types of apocalyptic literature and their contents is attempted in the study. Nor is a comparative estimate given comparing *Savitri* with the *Bible*. Similarly, specimens of Indian apocalyptic literature such as the *Veda*, the *Upanishads*, the *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavadgita* are more implied than explicitly dwelt upon. As in the case of the *Bible*, the readers' knowledge of these works is taken for granted. Secondly, *Savitri* is visualised as a typical twentieth century product not merely because it was written in the century but also because, in its encyclopedic sweep, it embraces and expresses the essence of the twentieth century thought and spirit as much in philosophy and metaphysics as in sciences and scientific developments, chiefly in respect of the theories of Involution-Evolution. *Savitri* is representative of the twentieth century spirit also because of the refreshingly new, original and apocalyptic reinterpretation of the ancient Indian specimens of apocalyptic literature.

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