CHAPTER 2
THEIR WORLD VIEWS

Epics are exquisite representations of the cultures that produce them. And every culture is the product of particular ideas and concepts that synthesise and get materialised to form an identity of its own. When this process with a set of ideas, beliefs and practices are adhered to for a period of time, moulding and shaping the life conditions of a people bound either by racial or geographical factors, it settles to an accepted way of life. It is this that forms the backbone of their literary, religious and cultural traditions, which they eternalise through their masterpieces in literature. Every literary epic speaks out the concepts of life nurtured by the people who created it. There is perhaps a shift in the values upheld by the different generations through ages and an ameliorative process of progress is visible as time moves forward. Hence the development of the perceptive process from the peripheral to the profound is obvious.

As the fundamental theme of all art is man, the basic questions of his existence and his relation to his surroundings as well as the creator is discussed in the epics. From Homer to Aurobindo it is this question that is repeatedly thrown up, as the poets attempt an interpretative explanation of the human predicament. The poets decidedly took different parameters to evaluate and relate the significance and purpose of life, but all of them assert the fundamental fact that
life with all its struggles has a purposive direction and is meaningful in its cause and conduct.

As the meaning of existence is relative of the cause of creation, the quest for the first impulse and a search for the causative factor resulted in the realisation of a superior intelligence as the agency behind this eternal play of shaping, maintaining and destroying to reshape again. Almost all cultures and civilisations recognized this factor as God and invested it with attributes beyond their limitations aspiring to please and submit to its omniscience and positive benevolence. The characteristics and qualities they ascribed to it depended on the values they tried to preserve, values that their age considered of paramount eminence, in which they tried to excel. Hence the fighting clans saw in him a perfect warrior challenging the most ferocious to destruction while the materially aspirant societies saw in him the progenitor of all wealth and prosperity.

God is referred to in all religions and their scriptures at times as a being with human attributes and qualities, frequently interfering with the human destiny blessing, protecting as well as demanding the homage and subservience of his creations. Here he becomes a qualifiable being with infinite capabilities enjoying a superhuman existence. This aspect of God is at the same derived from his non-qualifiable nature as an omnipresent being without any attributes. Formless and featureless, non-definable it exists as the ultimate truth, the source of everything animate and inanimate in this universe.

Milton and Aurobindo acknowledge both these aspects of the supreme Self in their vision. The nature of God is defined universally as love, benevolence,
compassion and ever protective factor, constantly aiding and guiding his creation to the fulfillment of their life’s mission. There have been instances of direct Divine intervention in the destiny of humans either in person or an agency, whereby man is made conscious of, corrected or offered an opportunity to rectify his mistakes. Milton and Aurobindo discuss all these different functional aspects of the Divine in their epic, posting a complete picture of the supreme self, reflecting the traditions and faith of their respective cultures. Yet it seems that in the vision of Milton and Aurobindo these aspects are projected in such manner that a thread of similar thought and expression are obvious inspite of their religious-cultural difference.

Milton was not too much an individualist that he did not adhere to any particular form of worship, nor did he align himself with any religious sect. This was perhaps because of his avowed allegiance to the personal concept of God that he cherished consequent to his long interaction with the religious and metaphysical literature and his intense introspective nature. It was by the end of his life that he withdrew from such practices, to the extent that even family prayers were not heard in his home. Milton’s concept of God is practically an offshoot of the Christian vision of God. The idea of the superiority of God over scripture and scripture over tradition, yet individual conscience over scripture reflects the influences he had from the Presbyterian school of thought.

But as a poet the imaginative felicity stretches his concept to higher plains and the vision takes a wider perspective. It is not relegated to the picture of a single deity engaged in constant creation, maintenance and annihilation. Milton
points at the abstract omniscient nature of Godhood expressed through the glory of his creation. At the same he also paints the sober holy paternal figure of a God creatively involved in the active process of designing creating and administering a massively infinite range of his creations assisted by angels of different degrees who possess divine powers though on a much smaller scale. This polytheistic pattern though very much a poet's creation gives a stable and secure nature to the concept of Heaven, reflecting the political and social infrastructure of his times.

The worship of this God, who in his Divine nature accepts and acknowledges the prayers and rituals of his creations, is stressed as a means to overcome the struggles of human existence. Particularly as this is man's primary duty sealed on him by the very fact of being mercifully created and thereafter protected. Milton's definition of his function as a poet makes this clear. He through this vocation wanted to:

... inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church, to sing the victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general
relapse of kingdoms and states from justice and God’s true worship.¹

In return he believed that the eternal would enrich with all utterance and knowledge sent out his seraphims with hallowed fire of his altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. Though the poet has succeeded in painting a grand picture of God and his heaven with powerful and impressive imagery it has attracted criticism that question the credibility and poetic felicity of the presentation. Aurobindo himself refused to accept the veracity of the representation. In his words

Milton’s Heaven is indeed unconvincing and can be described as grotesque and so too is his gunpowder battle up there, and his gods and angels are weak and unconvincing figures, even Adam and Eve, our first parents, do not effectively fill their part except in his outward description of them.²

Perhaps this element of anachronism can be attributed to an effort on the part of the poet to give a convincingly realistic picture to the intensity and magnitude of the struggle, but at the same it strikes a note of discordance in the presentation of the Supreme. It simply equates him to a level of human possibilities and attributes. The very picture of God is at times shown in such a manner that he looks like the projection of an exaggerated human extension in Heaven displaying human weaknesses. An instance of this is the willing acceptance of flattery and homage his person receives from the angels and man, as well as the insistence of the same
from his creation. It is this that the fallen angels react against, as they abhor this daily schedule:

With warbled hymns, and to his godhead sing

Forced hallelujahs; while he lordly sits

Our Sovran, and his altar breathes

Ambrosial odors and ambrosial flowers

Our servile offerings?³

Both Milton and Aurobindo through ample references in their poems highlight the Divine as unqualifiable and absolute, omniscient in its goodness and glory, pervading the entirety of the universe. It is interesting to note that the poets share this mystic vision though they stand apart in the cubicle of their respective religious grooming. They could, as poets visualise in common the glory of the God idea. Milton inherited this concept from the Armenian school of thought, where the abstract nature of the Divine is perceived as an active principle. God sees future events as if they were happening now, but does not cause them to happen, any more than a human being who foresaw them could be said to be theirs cause.⁴

To Milton the world of religion, the spiritual and the world of matter that of science were not conflicting entities. He believed that they were manifestations of the same idea. He perceived God as the author of all, naturally the domain of science and matter being but aspects of his creative splendour. God thus becomes abstract and concrete at the same time, the difference being only in the interpretation and approach of it when applied to the subjective experience. He
saw Truth as essentially plain and bright in its nature and that the Divine principle which permeates everything as the Principle that created understanding proportionate to truth:

If we will purge with sovereign eye that intellectual ray which God planted in us, then we would believe the scriptures protesting their own plainness and perspicuity, calling to them to be instructed not only the wise and learned but the simple, the poor, the babes, foretelling an extraordinary effusion of God’s spirit upon every age and sex, attributing to all men, and requiring from them, the ability of searching, trying, examining all things and by the spirit discerning that which is good.\(^5\)

This ‘effusion of God’s spirit’ which reveals the permeating presence of the Divine in everything has immediate reference to the similar belief in Indian thought of the presence of the God factor in everyone. Aurobindo gives this vision a very clear picture through the lines:

The absolute, the perfect, the Alone

Has entered with his silence into space

He has fashioned these countless persons of one self,

He lives in all, who lived in vast alone

Space is Himself, times is only He.\(^6\)

Milton’s God exists in the eternal present witnessing the past, present and future, though he does not cause them to happen. In his abode Heaven, beyond the perceivable layers of this universe he sits controlling the movements and
destiny of the created without actually interfering in them, yet practically supervising the minutest details of the created world. Though critics have opined that the God in *Paradise Lost* is merciless and deliberately predestined the fall of man, the explanation and consequent justification of this in the epic reveals Milton's attitude toward the Calvinists theory of which he was a believer in the early stages of his life. But then Milton's competence is challengeable.

Milton gives a twist to the orthodox concept of Trinity in Christianity. On personal level he was not a strict believer in Trinity. In his treatise, *Christian doctrine* he shows his dislike towards the concept. To him the idea of God as the Father figure held more significance, which he posted as the highest and Supreme factor of the Trinity. The Son assumes a secondary role but above the Holy Spirit. Milton considered the Holy Spirit being of a lesser order when compared to the Father and Son. The idea of the Father being the Supreme Creator and God, from whom the Son assumes seems the acceptable notion, an idea resolutely asserted through the coronation scene. "Into thee such virtue and grace / Immense I have transfused, that all may know / In Heaven and Hell thy powers above compare."7

Thus the Son is created to in his own self as second omnipotence to the Supreme One and "Of all things, to be heir and to be king, / By sacred unction, thy deserved right."8 He believes that the Son has a separate existence and individuality and is co-eternal with God the Father. The Christian belief of Christ's intercession with God for the sake of man, and his separate being as an agent of the Divine father from whom he draws the essence of his nature point to this secondary role. God is more a symbol of power and might than justice and
compassion. And hence the primary quality expected from the created to maintain a harmonious relation with the creator is obedience and loyalty. The ‘jealous God’ of the Israelites asserts his right as the Supreme and even when he confers freewill it is done with the assumption that the free choice would ultimately be in the direction of his stipulations.

God is an autocrat who with his angels stands in contrast to the democratic yet individualistic attitude of the fallen angels. Mercy is perhaps another way of bringing back those that have broken away from his camp. And if at all there is suffering for those who have separated their ways from Him it is because of the punishment that is given to them. Satan is relegated to Hell and man thrown out of Paradise, resulting in their respective sufferings. It is the vengeful dismissal by God that culminates in much misery in both cases more than the natural outcome of their actions. The created universe speaks of the power protection and providence of the Divine. And here itself lies the chaos of darkness, inhabiting the Hell of Satan both having a symbolic function.

God as the Holy Father acts through the Son when it comes to terrestrial matters or in other words he appears in the form of his Son. It is the Son who implements earthly creation, and later is sent to judge and sentence the erroneous couple. It is the Son, who acts as the mediator and later assumes the role of the saviour; here Milton brings Divinity closer to man. The sentiments and compassion that flow through the words of the Son reflect the intensity of his understanding of the human predicament. The picture of the intercession of the Son on behalf of man and the consequent preparedness on his part to accept the
burden of atoning for the primary sin through abject surrender and obedience, mirror the other side of the adamant punishing form of the Holy Father.

The duality of the Father-Son aspect of the Supreme God is very carefully handled by Milton so that the bifurcated role stands in sharp contrast. God as the Holy Father stands as the transcending figure projecting power and authority while as the son he radiates mercy compassion and purely altruistic qualities. This multifaceted nature of the Divine, with its centrally focused emphasis on the eternal values like obedience faith order and ever unfolding purity of purpose and means give a wholesomeness to the concept of God.

Every religion has an allegorical plane of interpretation. Milton was aware of the allegorical explanation applied to the scriptures even before the time of Christ. The view that the Garden of Eden represented the soul of man, with Adam as reason and Eve as passion is reflected in the imagery of Paradise Lost. Milton relates the abstract in a perceivable form though he reminds us through the words of Raphael to Adam that the true nature of God and his greatness is beyond the comprehensive capability of man. The description of divine personages and their behaviour in human terms then is an attempt on the part of the poet to relate unimaginable facts in intelligible symbolic figures.

The Genesis story, very briefly referred to in the scriptures is augmented and the different contexts expanded so as to fit into the framework of his perception of the Divine as well as the order of creation as he understood it. For instance the fall of man, relatively unimportant in the context of The Old
"Testament" became the crucial event of human history, the source of all our sins, the crime which Christ had to expiate.\textsuperscript{11}

The very concept of God as an all-pervading factor, all-containing in its omniscience is upheld by Aurobindo, in tune with the traditional perception handed down through the ages. Many poets before Aurobindo throughout the length and breadth of the country have brilliantly expressed this vision shared by the many schools of thought in Indian theological thinking. But when he gives expression to it in \textit{Savitri}, through powerfully ignited verses that scatter the spark of his enlightenment, the experience doled out becomes exclusively different. Aurobindo succeeds in creating the same unified effect by which the idea assumes perfection in the oneness of his vision. The presence 'in which God sits impassive everywhere' and again 'the bliss whose rapture dreamed the worlds'\textsuperscript{12} are clear pictures that reveal the intensity of this experience.

The \textit{Bhagawat Gita} wherein the nature, functions and attributes of God are elaborately discussed relates his aspect as the supreme witness beyond all possible definitions of human assessment. God acts as a supreme witness and never gets actively involved in the human drama. He stands aloof from all the activities of his creations as an all-knowing presence leaving man to the course of his creations.

The presence of godhead in man, the 'grace and beauty of spiritual light'\textsuperscript{13} is further explained as the mover of the human soul. This power patiently waits the return of the soul from its birth and death sojourns: "Great patient, calm it sees the centuries pass / Awaiting the slow miracle of our change."\textsuperscript{14}
This picture of love and compassion that is God, forms the basic tenet of his concept of the abstract nature of the Divine. Though without any assignable attributes, it is all embracing and universal in nature functioning with a definite motive. It is not that Aurobindo is echoing the findings of the ancient seers as he himself was given to the search in his life both through intellectual pursuits diving into almost all available religious and philosophic material and at the same resorting to mystic practices. The seer surpasses the poet in him when it comes to the revelation of the mystery of the Divine for the references to the silent presence of the Divine in its passive overwhelming potential as the witness is clearly delineated. God in this sense, becomes the supreme self ever present in all the activities mental, spiritual and physical as a Divine spectator, and a passive yet determined powerful promoter when it so require

He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,

He works through the hard breadth of battle and trial

He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears

... A mighty guidance leads us still through all.¹⁵

This is due to his mercy, compassion and love, qualities that flow from his divinity to the innumerable created beings that wallow in ignorance and suffering. These abstract virtues get personified in him, as his mode of communication to his creation. Aurobindo resorts to paint in abstract terms a picture of God that reveals the extreme of positive virtues that he personifies. "Beauty is his footprint showing us where he has passed / Love is his heartbeat rhythm in mortal breasts / Happiness the smile on his adorable face."¹⁶
The abstractions thus assume a form, which sparkle in the purity of the Divine. This understanding matures into a more abstract revelation. The vision settles into a realisation of the divinity of Man, a microcosmic reflection of the entirety of creation. This experience comes closer to the perception of the Supreme as a dimension by yet involving and interlocking itself with destiny of the universe as

A fourth dimension of aesthetic sense
Where all is in ourselves, ourselves in all,
To the cosmic wideness re-aligns our souls
A kindling rapture joins the seer and the seen.17

This is made possible because of the intensity of the personal search compounded by the mystic nature, which takes the poet through the secrets of a transcendental being. The sublimity of the experience reached “God found in nature, nature fulfilled in God”18 sounds similar to that of the pantheist’s vision where the Divine manifests himself through the creative splendour of Nature. But in Aurobindo it is not merely a pantheistic vision that is projected. It is the vision of the mystic whose diligent eyes penetrate into the mysteries of an elusive truth through the disciplined and sacred schools of Indian esoteric and Tantric methods. This approach is obviously made clear in the lines

As when the eyes stand at an invisible point
Till through the intensity of one luminous spot
An apocalypse of a world of images
Enters into the kingdom of the seer.19
Here God-experience is not that of a devotee surrendering himself and attaining the realization of his aspired divine form, nor is it that of an intellectual cognizance of the supreme but a sudden insight into the uncharted layers of a higher dimension. Here the god consciousness attains a totally different magnitude.

Aurobindo's preoccupation with the God concept was strangely different from the other mystics and religious figures. He did not advocate through his teachings or practice, a ritualistic method to propitiate God nor compose hymns to be sung in praise of the individual deities. His very reference to a deity or any such concept had strong inner connotations or referred to the higher idea represented by the name.

At times one feels that there is a mystic touch in the lines of a Wordsworthian spirit in his perception of the Divine. The pervasive glory of God reflected in the created objects signifies this outlook. The poet here sees God as beauty, the overflowing splendour manifested in the created world. "That rapturous smile everywhere / It flows in the wind breath in the trees sap / Its hued magnificence blooms in leaves and flowers."  

The very impulse of life force that animates the universe and man is identified as the Divine touch. The concept of God finds itself expressed in its abstract and omniscient aspect pulsating the entire range of the created, both the animate and inanimate world, in beast and winged bird and thinking man. The heart's rhythm is its music beat and it forced the unconscious tissues to awake:
"And ask for happiness and earn the pang / And thrill with pleasure or laughter of brief delight."

The perception involves every movement, every vibration of the created phenomena. The idea expands to include the totality of the universe a vision which is more in tune with the Upanishadic perception of "Sarvam Kalvidham Brahma" or "Everything is but Brahma" the Supreme One. It is fundamentally a vision that unites and unifies everything to a cosmic vision. The spiritual essence of the existence of man is so significant that he is allowed access to the secret enclosures of the subtle word through the path that he chooses. The method adopted by Aswapathy to reach the presence of the Divine is by expanding himself and containing the entire universe within himself an exercise which takes him to the extreme limits of eternity, to the house of the spirit.

Savitri penetrates the Earth and meets the powers that control the world. Thus when Aswapathy attains the essence of his vision by going upwards Savitri gets it from below. If the process in one is that of penetration in the other it is that of expansion. The idea clearly that the universe in its macrocosmic magnitude is the same as that in its microcosmic minuteness and that it can be both by externalisation of ones being and internalisation of the very same faculties using the tools of spirituality, is carefully painted by Aurobindo. Thus man stands on the threshold of the two ways, free to select and follow the path of his choice for his spiritual realisation. This picture of the spiritual self of man is due to the latent quality of the higher self that has taken the temporal structure of the body. Yet though by ignorance there is a misunderstanding of one's true nature. There are
times when "A greater personality sometimes, / Possess us which yet we know is ours."²²

These are the signs of a higher self that exists within us unseen but constantly experienced. The prophet and the poet is aware of this nature or indirectly actualizes it in their moments of inspiration when their "minds hush to a bright Omniscient."²³ These memories linger within man as shapeless memories and at times there is a moment's escape where the ignorant veil is lifted from our eyes and we realize the

All seeing eagle peaks of silent power
And moon-flame ocean of swift fathomless bliss
And calm immensities of spirit space
In the unfolding process of the self.²⁴

This concept then is based on the visions of the ancient seers of India. We have on one side the absolute vision of the Supreme as a non-qualifiable entity permeating the entire universe as the seer poets before him. He relates God on both levels—as the absolute omniscient principle and as an active deity constantly interacting with his creation assisted by his subordinate selves, a long array of minor deities who are but his own emanations. The roles of the deities fall in line with the traditional Hindu concept though Aurobindo places them more or less in a symbolic context.

The picture of God as the great Mother, the essential source of all Divine and human emanations assumes the highest significance as the presentation of the supreme Father in Milton. By sublimating his animal instincts consciously and
identifying himself with the unique soul power man can hasten the process of evolution considerably. But he has failed in this and even has distanced himself from the natural cycle by shifting his awareness to the vital and physical being. This has brought him new gains but drifted him from the natural track of nature. To restore and accelerate the process of evolution he has to shift upward his will from the physical being to the soul power and obey the higher call to shape and reshape himself in the image of the greater truth.

It is only a preface of the epic

Climb of human soul from its flat earthly state

To the discovery of a greater self

An the far gleam of an eternal light

Thus the pursuit of the subtle ideal of the kingdom of God, the secret of the reign of the spirit over mental, physical and life aspects leads and cements his very being to this spiritual essence. The secret of transformation lies in the transference of our centre of living to a higher consciousness and in a change in of our main power of living. This will enable man to take a leap in this direction without resorting to the cumbersome process of evolution through nature and time. This state of transition brings in the superstructure of the rising human awareness to the height of the superconscience wherein the supramental status of the Gnostic being thus evolved might fitly characterised as Divine life. In the words of Sri. Aurobindo:

The Gnostic individual would be in the world but would also exceed it in his consciousness and live in his self of transcendence.
above it; He would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by a separative individuality. The true person is not an isolated entity, his individuality is universal; for he individualises the universe. It is at the same time divinely emergent in a spiritual air of transcendental infinity, like a high cloud-surpassing summit; for he individualises the divine transcendence.

It is this divinity that Aswapathy and Savitri attain though the transitions in both instances are relatively fast. Through the different sheaths of life forms and modes of being both reach the ultimate state of their divine nature. Aswapathy reaches at the cause and aim of universal evolution. The adventure of consciousness in the universal evolution is meant to lead to new creation of life, to create new life in terms of the spirit, not to continue this round of subjugation to nature. He finds that the Purusha that at present is confined to the tangibility of the illusionary ways of the Prakrithi should get detached and freed, to assert its superiority over nature. And when this is done the Divine light would be perceived as ubiquitous and 'all nature gets bathed in ether of bliss.'

Then the purpose of evolution that is to create a new life would take a different turn based on the purity of the pure consciousness. The purpose of evolution gets served when the forces behind creation—the static and the dynamic aspects—shed off their dual being and gets united into a single self, dissolving all the pluralities of its play. "While a tardy evolutions coils wind on /
And nature hews her way through adamant /
A divine intervention thrones above."
Life would reflect the divinity it embodies free of the crudity it carries along with it at present. Existence would be a divine experiment and cosmos the soul's opportunity. All the deep gulfs of ignorance in the universe get bridged. Divinity would be released so as to make the universe its natural habitat. Divine beatitude and blissful serenity would take over as the usual disposition of man replacing his present delightful moments of transitory joy and happiness. And the transition from the world of darkness to that of light and from death to that of deathlessness would become a manifested reality. The Universe would transform to a Paradise of peace and bliss. Man would walk in his divinity, a celestial being radiating the glory and splendour of a divine life. To Aurobindo the poet, this futuristic vision of superb perfection, manifested itself in the imaginative sphere, as a portent to the coming glory, was more realistic in its effect.

It this synthesis of the modern ideas and the fusion of this to the age-old Christian vision, that makes Milton palatable to the modern age. It is exactly this mode of approach that we find in Aurobindo. He does not discard the findings of the present analytical approach as incongruous with the intuitional knowledge arrived at by the rishis of the past. Whereas he succeeds to incorporate the two into a meaningful vision that explains in realistic terms the enigma of the Almighty. Both the poets portray God as a qualifiable and nonqualifiable entity. They explain the abstract as well as concrete aspects relating the abstruse, philosophical and the altruistic nature of the concept. They do not blindly adhere to their respective religious stipulations but freely venture to give an iconoclastic definition of the Divine.
Concept of Man

The history of the human arrival spans across time casting its shadow over every activity that has taken place on the globe. From the early Paleolithic creature to the high-tech homosapien it is the story of the development of his intelligence or to put it more correctly the uncovering of the infinite potentials latent in him. Here it is the vision of the seers, poets, prophets, and philosophers as well as men of science that give a direction to his course. It is in this context that the concept of man, as shown by the two epic poets assumes significance relative to the picture of life discussed and the evolutionary process of his nature portrayed through the epics.

The disputed spontaneous and evolutionary theories of his origin synthesise here to reveal the qualities of both, as Milton and Aurobindo take the spontaneous and evolutionary creation respectively as the basis of his origin and steer his progress both physical and spiritual through the evolutionary path. The concept of man as an animal with his physical and mental characteristics distinguishing him from the fellow creatures, and the discriminative factor heralding a path of development distinct from the other animals is perhaps the empirical and rational way of looking at the species. Here he is the product of the multiple thought process, of his emotions and other qualities both external and internal.

Like every other creation he is an offshoot of nature, living and dying in a world benign and yet cruel to the course of his existence. If this is the picture of the physical and mundane man, there is the antithesis to this, the spiritual man...
whose primary preoccupation in life is to concentrate on his progress on the
spiritual plane and redefine himself. His awareness is shifted or at least an attempt
made so, to enable him to realise his true self beyond his casual self and enjoy an
existence without the earthly limitations.

It is possible to perceive in Milton and Aurobindo all these aspects which
combine to form a unity that pulls the individual to his progression and self-
fulfillment. Hence the concept of man as a physical being with his base on the
material plane, a spiritual being with his strength rooted in the inner self, and an
evolutionary being undergoing transitions to realise the purpose of his creation is
taken into account for a study.

The material level is shown as the foundation on which man becomes
aware of himself in contrast to the other creations with the external world lending
him an identity of his own. It is this that slowly activates the mind-factor in him,
which gradually shifts from the grosser to the subtler levels, or the lower to the
higher states awakening within him the inner impulse for the search of his true
nature. And as the process develops he passes through the various phases of
existence, these transitions marking his evolution. Though there are schools of
thought that separate these stages into entirely different levels of being, the
physical placed in antithetically opposite to the spiritual, Milton and Aurobindo
discard this compartmentalisation amalgamating the two into a comprehensive
unity.

Milton observes that it is only in men that the spiritual and material aspects
together blend to give a symmetrical wholeness. Man possesses a rational soul
aspiring for excellence refinement and progress always looking up. At the same
development of a lower nature within a body that is more akin to
the lower form of creation. Thus the eternal spiritcamped in a corruptible body,
exposed to a material world is in a constant swing to its higher nature. As man
stands in between heaven and the earth he represents duality, a version of the
microcosm of the universe. The story of Paradise Lost emphasises that
"reasonable existence is only possible as long as man aspires beyond himself and
believes in the validity of the great ideals we call justice, goodness and mercy."
It is this that is pointed at in Comus where the poet uses pagan mythology for the
allegorical expression of Christian truth.

  The purgation of man from his earthly sins to return to the prelapsarian
phase where he becomes free of the stain of corruption or the possibility of being
corrupted because of his incorrigible nature would transfer him to the true glory
of his self. "Evil into the mind of god or man / May come and go so unapproved
and leave / No spot or blame behind."34

  Milton shared the belief of his age in the theory of humours, which
postulated that the human nature was comprised of the four basic humours-
bloods, phlegm, cholera and melancholy. The balance of these four humours that
 correspond to the primary elements conferred perfect health of body and mind.
Each individual displays a character determined by the proportional balance of
these humours in the body. Hence in the upward movement, the body accepts
the more tangible balance of the humours, ensuring the physical and mental
being. The body and the soul are linked together by the elemental force of blood, performing the essential bonding functions in the material body.

The three types of spirits that control human nature come from the liver, the vital [from the heart] and the animal [from the brain]. These three together form the three aspects of the functional human being. Man shares the vegetable soul the sensitive soul and the rational soul with the plants, animals and angels respectively. The vegetable soul enables to grow, the sensitive soul assists in the sensory perception and the rational soul facilitates rational intellect. It is this view of human physiology that leads Satan to tempt Eve through the sensory perception so as to reaches the thought stream.

The human body is thus put to such limitation by its very composition. The spirit part of man’s soul is ever in an attempt to overcome the animal part and the natural part. The defects of the spiritual part are reflected in the physical self through some deformity or abnormality. The inclination of the spirit self to gradually impose itself and attain a mastery over the physical being naturally points to the evolutionary nature of man. Milton’s concept of music reflects a similar aspect. He believed that there was a harmony of parts in the entire human being and that if the body, mind and reason were combined in a harmonious proportion it would echo the music of Heaven.

And to this he stipulated the necessity of adhering to a fixed pattern of virtues that would enhance the moral, spiritual and material wellbeing of the individual. The acquisition of knowledge should ultimately help the individual to enhance the spiritual stature of his being. Man unlike Satan is expected to use his
intellectual powers towards such spiritual progress. This knowledge which originates from God is directed to him and would enable man to rightly identify the meaning of his existence. Knowledge should be applied in such a way that it leads to righteous deeds, the end of such deeds being the capability to represent God’s truth. True wisdom consists in recognizing the limits of one’s own reason and in relying instead on faith revelation and providence.35

The motive behind the creation of man is Divine pleasure. And this becomes fulfilled only when man realises the meaning and purpose behind his creation. Adam is quick to realise this though Eve fails to take note of it in the right perspective. With the entire physical infrastructure laid open before him and the many pleasures he is allowed to partake man is expected to employ himself to the appointed work which is to radiate love, obedience and faithfully acknowledge the Divine will, by extolling the infinite goodness of God. Thus the ordained basic function of man is spiritual in nature and significance.

It is this that Milton’s Adam realises but fails to practice. He is wise enough to know that the purpose of God’s creation and the assurance of the promulgation of a race of humans from him call for an adherence to this framework of life. Yet the human element that he represents, being conditioned on the basis of freewill and reason, which makes him raise the many doubts and queries that disturb his inquisitive intellect, lead him to violate the stipulations that hover around his life in Paradise. Milton does not find fault with man and if there is an accusation on his disobedience it is done with a touch of compassion and mildness. Milton concedes their weakness but is also unfailing in reminding that
their behaviour was quite normal being created as humans on the physical, mental and emotional plane.

This does not prevent Milton from pointing to the essential Divinity in man. The idea of the dichotomic nature of creation where God stands apart and the created perennially taking a parallel road without the two converging at any point is ruled out. The account of the hierarchical chain of creation though not an orthodox view, reveals the interrelation between the spirit represented by the creator and matter signified by the created. The basic oneness from which creation had its beginning and the oneness to which it is directed is emphatically highlighted through the words of Raphael: “O Adam, one almighty is, from whom, / All things proceed, and up to him return.”

This monism is the basis of Milton’s “optimism.” It embodies a religious, organic, and wholly anti-mechanistic view of nature. This fundamental vision embodies the spirit of the union of all creations into the cauldron of an absolute goodness and divinity that is envisioned in the oriental philosophical systems as the ultimate indivisible truth. The difference is only in the diversity of appearance and the functional quality. Everything sprouts from a common base, the one first matter. The progress of the human evolution is towards this finality and the consummation of everything to a common Divinity.

That man is on an evolutionary scale is suggested through the words of God who assures that the present misery and suffering shall come to an end and man shall regain his true nature godhood. And perfectibility in Milton is not quite a matter of becoming ‘gods’ –that echoes Satan's temptation of Eve [IX. 710-17]
rather, of becoming one with God. 38 This is in no way the evolutionary concept of the oriental vision but something unique to his perception, yet the undertone is that of a perspective close to the vision of transformation into the Divine as held by Aurobindo. The metamorphosis from the casual and ordinary to the unique and extra-ordinary, from the mundane and material to the ethereal and spiritual is clearly suggested, thus insisting that the human drama is a story of a flux that consistently and continuously unfolds itself to a Divine realization.

The suggestion then is strong and the voice definite that the world shall mature into a state of perfection where in the primary necessities of life, shall be taken care of without the imposition of an authority as man shall become one with God. The transition would be total so that man would see golden days and fruitful of golden deeds with joy and love triumphing and fair truth. “For regal scepter then no more shall need; / God shall be all in all.” 39

This transition then is set by nature. Through proper knowledge, disciplined adherence to Divine stipulations and contemplation of the created phenomena, man gradually ascends towards God. This vision of the earth transforming itself into a habitat of the Divine, where man assumes the role of an immortal spirit freed from the agonies and sufferings of his present estate would be the climax of the human saga. “And earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth / One kingdom, joy and union without end.” 40

If the essential attribute of man as discussed is divine his basic nature is spiritual. The sum of his earthly sojourn points to the ultimate upliftment of his spirit towards this divinity. This perhaps can be attained only through the
application of the right measures that would enable this progression. This is possible as man is created in the image of God. This identity confers on him the right through the worship of God to master the creations on earth, air and water. “And multiply a race of worshippers / Holy and just; thrice happy if they know / Their happiness, and persevere upright.”

The spiritual essence of life then is to be attained through a simple and austere life that involves a schedule of prayer, penitence and a contended life, with ungrudged acceptance of the pleasures conferred by God. Existence should be treated as a Divine gift, without undue stress given to the cares and anxieties that wandering thoughts and notions. The unwanted inquisitive nature should be curbed, as the purpose of human creation is not to advance his intellectual faculty by delving deep into the concealed mysteries of God but to “Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid, / Leave them to God above, him serve and fear.”

It is the observation of heroic qualities that evolved elevate him to his rightful place in the hierarchical order of creation or perhaps to a higher role than that of his creation. The world represented by the religious and theological aspects of such virtues, which would facilitate to build a richer Paradise within himself than the one he had lost due to his failure to abide by it. Qualities like humility, obedience, repentance, wisdom and Faith entrust him to disciplined life in tune with the doctrinal Christian virtues that award the fulfillment of the final realisation of life.

Milton affirms the necessity of these virtues towards the manifestation of the inner capabilities of the individual, as the dormant goodness in man alone would elevate him to regain the lost Paradise. As Heaven, hell and Eden are both
places and states of the mind, so that nearly all physical descriptions more or less symbolic and carries an explicit or implicit moral judgement\textsuperscript{43} the proper journey into the inner recess of the mind, would facilitate the actualization of the liberation. And virtues are beacons that guide the traveller safely to this state of mind. It is to be noted that the poem is in a way a Christian pilgrimage of the soul back to its home through the plains of good and evil, love and hate, humility and pride, reason and passion, liberty and servitude etc. The process of recovery involves the panorama of human history and all its evils, but includes Christ's mission on earth, and the fallen Everyman and Everywoman gain a new understanding of sin and life and love.\textsuperscript{44}

Humility as a way of life is antithetical to pride. It is pride that instilled the impulse to disobey thus leading to the fall. Milton depicts these qualities as despicable and applies them to the villain Satan and his crew. The heroes are quite humble and obedient, suffering their fate uncomplainingly. As a Christian virtue, humility facilitates obedience. The contrast offered by a study of the trio Satan, Christ and Adam illustrates this. Satan feels it undignified to obey God as the individualist he is. He is more an egotist who values the present state of comforts and powers more than a transformation to a higher level at the cost of his sense of self-respect. It is then this vainglory that inhibits him from elevating himself to godhood.

To escape from this false pride man is endowed with the faculty of reason. Milton uses the term reason as the capacity to discern truth and right, and wisdom and also includes the virtue of preserving them. It is the choice of the
right path that matters. "Both what they judge and what they choose; for so / I formed them free, and free they must remain / Till they enthrall themselves." 45

It is man's sense of intelligent application of his reason and the priority given that would enhance his emancipation. This wisdom ends in the submission of the individual will to the selected path, be it that of God or a higher idea. This surrender to the ideology and the accepted superiors confirms one's faith in the system which when embraced with certitude provides the strength and conviction to withstand temptations. Absolute faith is the natural corollary of a spiritual life if at all it should show results. And it is this faith, the trust that Eve lacks in her prelapsarian state, distrust in God, Adam and the system that created her that ensures her fall. But when she corrects herself after the fall towards the end of the epic and is ready to submit herself to the will of God through Adam, there is the hope and assurance of a positive change.

The factors that work against the instilled faith in man are the forces of temptations. The absence or lack of faith in the individual gives way to the temptations, which act to negate the process of ascension. It is the victory of man over the temptations that install the heroic quality in him. Milton endorses this view in his Areopagatica: "he that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian." 46

In Milton's vision of the human struggle, temptations hold a major part. The key figures of his epic Adam, Eve and the Holy Son as well as the lady in Comus and Samson undergo the test of temptation. Out of these characters it is
only Eve who fails and fails miserably inspite of the warnings and premonitions that she receives. The others successfully manage to withstand the trial. Though Milton’s perception of patience does not involve such intrinsically complicated targets, it aims at the wellbeing of the individual on both the physical and mental plane. It leads to the refinement of the individual on the different dimensions of his existence. And it becomes the essence of mutual affection and understanding of each other. The virtues discussed here coordinate and transform those who possess it into meaningful entities and also the world to which they belong, a peaceful one, where life becomes a blessing and a boon.

Almost all epics do contain such characters that in the final reading imprint themselves in our minds as the venerable ones. The term patience includes wise thinking and the capacity to forgive. It has been regarded as a virtue that leads to spiritual awakening and physical wellbeing. It is the central cord that decides the happiness and prosperity of a successful conjugal life. There are many illustrations in the epics that prove the merits of patience and an equal number that show the tragic consequences of its antithetical approach. Patience like faith has been regarded as a divine virtue by all cultures and religions though the mode of approach has been consistently different.

In Milton the vision of patience gets greatly changed from the traditional perception of the virtue. It is not merely suffering and stoically enduring the hardships. It also implies the willful acceptance of suffering for a higher cause and the endurance willingly of the consequent suffering without any complaint or regret. He considers this heroic element of physical and mental fortitude as true
patience. We have this genre of patience in Jesus Christ, who willingly suffers on the cross for the cause of man. Milton makes this clear through the lines “...Suffering for truths sake Is fortitude to highest victory. ...”

Eve lacks this virtue before the fall. She is rather hasty and impulsive giving way to the tempter to act through her. Patience calls for wise thinking for it is not mere abstinence from action. It is positive action well timed. Hence it is attuned to humility, obedience and temperance in one’s thoughts and deeds. Milton associates the highest and the noblest form of action as the mature expression of patience. Eve falls short of all this and suffers the tragic outcome.

Adam too falls short of this patience. Adam does not opt to preserve the superior interest of the subtle self but yields to the lower inclinations. Such actions brought him to the accusations of Eve that he could have restrained her using his authority and superior position. The absence of patience in the prelapsarian Adam and Eve is compensated towards the end, when certain of their fall they accuse each other, and finally settle down to an acceptance of their fate. They submit themselves to the Divine plan, prepared to undergo the possible suffering willingly. It is this newly attained fortitude that enables him to optimistically assert that henceforth he would not fly death, nor would prolong Life much but would keep this cumbersome charge, “Which I must keep till my appointed day / Of rendering up and patently attend / My dissolution.”

The basic spiritual attitude to life and the ascetic culture that determined the codes of conduct, decided and controlled the destiny of the masses that looked up to spiritual figures for guidance even in worldly life. Hence it became a
way of life to apply the same fundamental codes of conduct in both spiritual and worldly life, for the ultimate aim in both were the same salvation or freedom from the cycle of births and deaths.

This attitude inculcated by the seers was strengthened by the voluminous literature they created and popularised for this purpose. The values of life propounded through this were always only those that promoted the progress of the individual. Patience is upheld as a noble virtue which stills the mind, frees the ego of its negativity and instills pure positive charge in the individual.

The presence and practice of the virtues enhance the process of development and within the dedicated framework of mutual love and affection binds the individual to his object and his surroundings in rapport, pushing the evolutionary process further. Milton presents man as a creation on its way to a higher sense of being evolving at the spiritual and physical plane simultaneously. The fundamental nature of man is spiritual and his fall is consequent to his failure to realize this.

Aurobindo acknowledges the physical aspect of human existence and he portrays the worldly and sensuous aspect of man, as he interacts with his environment and surroundings. On the physical plane he is the sum total of his emotional, intellectual and instinctive being. It is through his emotion that he responds to the world, through his intellect that he understands and qualifies the world, through his instincts that he explores into the unknown and uncertain aspects of existence.
If the natural corollary to these aspects in him is in a balance with his disposition it enables him to function properly and actualise a healthy life. He is the intelligent thinking being, moralised, controlling his instincts and emotions by his will and his reason, acquainted with all that he should know of the world and his past, capable of organising intelligently by that knowledge his social and economic life, ordering rightly his bodily habits and physical, being, this is the conception that now governs civilised humanity. As his existence is deep rooted in the emotional and intellectual proviso of his being, the parameters of his worldly success lie in the successful application of these factors for the betterment of his individual life with relation to the society and environment of which he is a part. Even in his personal and domestic attributes the significant points that call the shots are his realisation of the role of temperance and cool headed will to overcome the trials and tribulations of nature that are constantly thrown against him. Hence the fruition of the purpose of his toil on the material plane is the integration of these faculties.

To invest his span of time in the serious pursuit of his higher being with the aid of his body-mind principle, firmness of determination and all-embracing love that is unconditional is a prerequisite. The physical, being the gateway to the experiences of the inner self, would ultimately assert itself to promote his spiritual fulfillment. It is this that Aswapathy and Savitri embody. They are depicted as purely worldly characters, as a king and a princess and not as ascetics. It is through these characters who by their very station in life are embodiments of
worldliness, that he portrays the supreme attainments of an ideal material and spiritual life.

The life depicted in the epic clearly illustrates the yearning of the characters towards a comfortable and successful material life by worldly standards. They long for the glories of a happy and settled life like ordinary human beings inspite of their spiritual leanings. This is obvious from the way that they display their feelings and react to the situations in life. They suffer the pangs of love, despair and fear of the inexplicable. They long for worldly positions, express their individual desires and exhibit at times mundane passions, though with the refined touch of elegance, natural to their character evolvement. They show ignorance and suffer the consequence of their mistakes. They respond to social responsibilities and adhere to the prevalent codes of conduct.

The term material existence ordinarily means the pursuit of mental and physical life to fulfil one's worldly obligations, both social and individual. This naturally implies both the higher and lower aspects of its complex nature. The lower stratum refers to the life of senses, sensations and emotions. And we have the higher side that disposes the moral, ethical and aesthetic aspects. The fundamental factor that controls all these aspects is the intellect. Thus it is the intellect that basically decides and determines the fulfillment of all the functions on the physical level. Naturally all the diverse conflicts that disturb one's mind are due to one's own failure in identifying the right course of his destiny. At this level, when the mind and intellect are preoccupied within himself then the resultant type of life is a physical life, purely akin to that of a non civilised barbarian.
It is only when the thoughts on the physical level sublimate themselves and has altruistic leanings, when they have organisational and social connotations that life on the material plane becomes productive. It is this integral harmony that results in the blossoming of the material aspect of existence. The poet applies this approach to the lives of both Aswapathy and Savitri thus making their existence meaningful. Aswapathy has more concern for the social and organisational welfare than his individual interests. Hence the ultimate boon that he sought for was the wellbeing of humanity at large.

Unlike other spiritual oriented depictions, where the material is discarded, to highlight and signify only the spiritual, here we have people who with their extraordinary spiritual power, aim to attain a balance on both aspects of existence. Aswapathy on reaching the highest state of yoga, realises the impossible—the vision of the Supreme Mother and seeks for the blessing of a daughter. He aspires to bring down the spiritual in material form, to get the abstract materialised to a tangible form, so as to illumine the dark corridors of human existence. He does not ask for anything that would augment his personal gratification or gain.

Savitri inspite of the consistent and persuasive reminder by her parents against marrying a person who is destined to die within a year, opts for him as her mate. The intensity of her compassion and her determination to save him is so much that the particular doom of the prince only augments her stand. Her physical existence is put to ransom for his life. And her struggle to defeat death and darkness stems from her love and compassion for the suffering and striving
masses who being helplessly weak do not possess her ability and strength. In both cases we have the intellect appropriately applied and the consequent action turns powerful enough to generate universal well being on all levels.

The physical when pursued for purely sensuous ends degenerates life into a crude barbarian existence. But when it is the expression of a mature, mental and intellectual aspiration that is selfless it assumes dignity and refinement. This attitude by itself elevates the physical towards an evolvement with the spiritual, eventually advancing the evolutionary phase of life. Thus it is a compact sense of complimentariness between the physical, spiritual and evolutionary aspects in life and the consequent transformation that Aurobindo postulates. Neither the life nor the body exists for its own sake, but as vehicle and instrument of a good higher than its own. They must be subordinated to the superior needs of the mental being, chastened and purified by a greater law of truth, good and beauty before they can take their proper place in the integrality of human perfection.50

The purpose of life thus turns to be a mission that promotes the process of existence, the pursuit of ideas, knowledge and beauty as well as the qualities of exalted character and conduct. In the first case it is the aesthetic enlivening of being and in the second state the ethical and moral polishing of its outlook. Though these two aspects seem incongruous in their nature the proper perception of the significance of the two opposing attitudes would confer the integration required modelling a meaningful life. Yet Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that physical life and physical culture is not an end in itself. Even to have a healthy body, a strong vitality and an active and clarified mind and a field of their action and enjoyment, carries man no more than a certain distance. These three things
do not make the sum of a complete manhood; they are means to an ulterior end and cannot be made for ever an end in themselves.⁵¹

To them the seen and the unseen held the same importance as they were aware of the undeveloped or dormant faculties in man that could sooner or later charter these realms with the same facility with which empirical world is apprehended now. Aurobindo distributes this significance in his perception. The material becomes the inseparable inevitability to the fulfillment of the spiritual. Hence we find that his characters live and absorb themselves in a wholehearted involvement of the material pleasures without exclusively identifying themselves with the physical self. Aurobindo accepts the physical being as an extension of the spiritual. It is the sequel to the vibrations of spiritual essence within the poet brings out these perceptions through lines that clearly state in diverse movements the entirety of the human activities on the physical and material plane. "A touch of god's rapture in creation acts / A lost remembrance of felicity."⁵²

The perception is justified on counts of inter-relationships and complimentary functioning. Many western poets share this approach which is contrary to the belief that the spiritual and physical are entirely exclusive entities. Though attempts to juxtapose the two might appear far-fetched, the Metaphysical poets understood the physical as inseparably linked to the spiritual. In the poems of John Donne this inseparability attains a highly subtle and intellectual perspective. It is the absence of this holistic perception that leads to ignorance and identity crisis; "He is a spirit in an unfinished world / That knowst him not and cannot know itself."⁵³
Aurobindo presents man as basically a spiritual being who has a specific purpose through the life of a mortal being. Existence is a divine experiment played on the opportunity of the cosmos, the primary of making a sure approach to God. In this man is aided by nature for

The word was a conception and birth
Of spirit in matter in living form
And nature bore the immortal in her womb
That she might climb through him to eternal life.

This fundamental idea unfolded by the ancient rishis of India further goes on to establish that the actuality perceived by the individual need not be the reality. It is equated to a dream, which dissolves on the waking of the dreamer. This substantial illusion if positively perceived and pursued with detachment and discipline has in it the power to open up the profound truths through the realisation of which the individual consciousness gives way to the universal consciousness. Hence it is observed that the householder, if he pursues his vocation with detachment, lands up practically in the same spiritual attainment and self-realisation that a seer acquires after a life of intense practices and rigorous austerity. Aswapathy and Savitri are shown as people who entertain the casual life of a worldly being but are capable of exercising the most difficult occult accomplishments. The physical and the spiritual levels of being here compliment to give wholeness, where the spirit and the physical being with all its emotive and intellectual features, function reciprocally to arrive at the ultimate experience.
The human being is the synthesis of multi-dimensional sheaths conjoined into a physical and spiritual wholeness, held together by the magnetism of the spirit. The physical, being the expression of the spiritual in its gross inconscient state, embowers the consciousness a superb calm unbounded by the brief and the finite, a sense of some ultimate self without personal confines. The purpose of life is the shattering of these levels or sheaths through realisation of the true nature of the self. The presiding deity of all the shows both external and internal inhabits the innermost core in the brilliance of the effulgent soul: “A static oneness and dynamic power / Descend in him, the integral godhead seals / His body and soul take that precious stamp.”

When the mental sheath is properly awakened and is directed to the innermost recess, to the transcendental reality, it comes in touch with the other worlds. This is achieved through sharpening the senses by training them through the effective means of yoga. The stilled mind as it ascends towards the subtler planes severs itself from the body enters into a new consciousness and a series of supra-physical worlds until man breaks into the infinity of God.

Aurobindo through his yoga sought to bring down the Ultimate, to bring it on to the terrestrial from the supra-ethereal level and thus eradicate the darkness of the inconscient. And the world of the spirit explored by the inner being materializes in all its reality, ultimately leading to the grand presence of the Supreme. This is the substance of Aswapathy’s voyage into the unknown vistas of the layers of the psychic and spiritual centres. The various layers of the mind and
higher mind, which in its totality constitute the fabric of the human psychic and spiritual being are transmitted through Savitri:

. . . that Sri Aurobindo is for an integral union with the Divine, a wholeness fulfilling every part of him; he will not rest with sudden dynamic realisation of the spirit-seized mind ruling the body and driving the life impulse with a super human energy of thought and will, yet without those subtle delicate influences of the Divine that are received when the being is bent not only in god knowing but also god-loving, on growing the devotee and saint as well as the sage and prophet.  

Aurobindo visualized by the term spiritual an awakening into the inner truth. It is the slowly withdrawing from the process of total identification with the externals and experiencing the silence of the deep interiors of the mind. This would gradually levitate the individual to its subtle modes to the core State of all his thinking. And here he comes into communion with the omniscient greater Reality that is also the inhabitant of his inner self. This contact with the higher Reality effects a transformation of the whole being into a new existence. This experience of Aswapathy is finely conveyed through the lines:

Only a while at first these heavenlier states,
These large wide-poised upliftings could endure,
The high and luminous tension breaks too soon,
The body's stone stillness and the life's hushed trance,
The breathless might and calm of silent mind;
And slowly they fail as sets a golden day. . . .

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58
Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner inspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our being, to be in communion with it, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, anew self, anew nature.69

The ultimate progress of man is dependent on the Quantum of subliminal and the mystical the “intuitive heart, the inward turn”60 and “the power of the spiritual gaze to give it a purpose.”61 When these are rejected our life seems “to be a necessity without aim or cause.”62 Along with this, man has momentary visions of his glorious past. One is here reminded of the similar glimpses of greatness experienced by the Wordsworth related through the celebrated Ode.63 If the soul in Wordsworthian imagination comes ‘as clouds of glory,’64 here it is ‘a breath that comes down from the supernal air.’65

The essence of human existence thus becomes a spiritual transformation. Aurobindo upholds this as the central mission of the human voyage through its earthly abode. And by spirituality he means the turn inwards where the real truth of man is to be found. Though the early religions looked beyond the earth for the fulfillment of the spiritual practices it is here that we have the assertion of the possible reward through a total transformation. The true spiritual aim is to regard man not as a mind, a life and a body, but as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfillment upon earth, not only in Heaven beyond, which after all it need not
have left if it had no divine business here in the world of physical, vital and mental nature.\(^6^6\)

It is this aspect of his spiritual vision that makes him a more acceptable poet. Moreover this is in line with the penetrative strides made in modern psychology, where the presence of other dimensions within the visible world is suggested. The vision of man as an emerging God and the transformation of the present strife ridden world to a Paradise with the possibilities of peace and bliss, offers a positive panacea to the pessimistic vision that poets like Eliot and Yeats promulgated in their earlier poems.

Aurobindo saw life as a continuous process through time. He believed that our present fate is a child of past energies.\(^6^7\) He upholds the idea of transmigratory existence and the evolution of the soul from life to life. The picture of the individual progressing in the divine direction refining himself through many births and deaths is suggested through the lines: “Determining predestined shape and act / Passenger from life to life, from scale to scale, / Changing his imaged self from form to form.”\(^6^8\)

The process of evolution as defined by the Darwinian concept is rather a physical one than a spiritual one. It refers to the higher gradation gradually assumed by the physical being which includes the brain and intellect, in its attempt for a progressive survival. But when it is referred to in relation to man, the concept undergoes an elevated sense of direction in the Indian mind. The evolutionary process operates simultaneously on the physical and spiritual level gradually transforming him to a divine being.
As there, so here, the impulse exists more or less obscurely in her different vessels with an ever ascending series in the power of its will to be; so there, so here, it is gradually evolving and bound fully to evolve the necessary organs and faculties. As the impulse towards mind ranges from the more sensitive reactions of life in the mental and the plant up to its full organisation in man, so in man himself there is the same ascending series, the preparation if nothing more, of a higher and divine life. The animal is a living laboratory in which nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the super man the God. 69

The aim of life is described as an attempt to widen the boundaries of the existing levels of consciousness. The description takes into account the waking, dream, deep sleep states, finally showing the automation of all in Thuriya. The blossoming of the cerebral and the rational, the emotive and the spiritual gradually take place with nature operating on the terrestrial plane and the mystic spiritual impulse propelled by the supraconscious, the Universal spirit.

Aurobindo believed that the terrestrial evolutionary working of nature from matter to mind and further was a double process. On the material level, it is the outward physical evolution with the unit of the consciousness operating and effecting progressive changes from birth to death, aided by factors of heredity. This is a chain process connected through generations and runs in time to an
ameliorative improvement amplifying itself continuously as each generation improves upon the previous one. The outward form thus attains sophistication, which gradually accommodates the inward changes that simultaneously take place along with this. Complementing the physical evolution the invisible process of soul evolution takes place through a repeated process of births and rebirths into ascending grades of form and consciousness. Thus the two aspects of evolution together function to give way to a cosmic evolution.

The world is a beginning and a base
Where life and mind erect their structured dreams
A death bound littleness is not all we are
Immortal our forgotten vastness
Awaits discovery in our summit selves.  

And the cosmic inhabitant, the universal Spirit, would finally manifest itself in all these forms asserting the superiority of the spirit over matter. Matter by itself, by each units of progressive evolution gives room to the progression of consciousness. This naturally leads to a world where matter loses its crudity and transforms to the purity of the spirit, immaculately subtle in form and essence acting as a means for the total manifestation of the spirit in its true glory. This would be the realisation of the ultimate purpose of human existence. Thus in Aurobindo’s vision man is in his evolution speeding to a stage where the superman with his supermind would emerge from the incessant transitional phases of humanity.
Man has idealised reason creating a perceptive view based on the parameters of scientific methods. He is bound to effect a smooth sail in the right direction of the evolutionary process, which alone will liberate him from the limitations and sufferings he is exposed to at this stage. Man appears to be a creation caught between the two evolutionary states. He suffers from a double nature - one that of the animal in his vital and physical being and another that of a half-divine nature. In Aurobindo's words: "Man at his highest is a half-god who has risen out of the animal nature and is splendidly abnormal in it, but the thing he has started out to be, the whole god, is something so much greater than what he seems to him as abnormal himself as he is to the animal." 71

On one side he expresses his instincts, impulses, desires quite analogous to that of an animal and on the other side he possesses an orientation towards qualities that are of a half-divine nature being self-conscious, intellectual, ethical, intelligently emotional and intelligently dynamic. This integration of two poles in the same being drives his energy and effort to identify his basic self with either of these. Both the animal part and the semi-divine part have a tendency to increase and develop the corresponding qualities that each stands for. Thus the animal in him goes for enjoyment and increasing material possession while the semi-god tries to enjoy aesthetically, intelligently and ethically. Yet the process of refinement consistently operates which attempts to alienate the animal part, with the dominant role gradually assumed by the semi-divine nature.

The two masters agree on many points in their perception and evaluation of man. They uphold both the physical and spiritual aspects of existence in all its
significance and acknowledge its mutually complementary nature. They speak of
the essential divinity of man which beckons him to acts of excellence and godly-
nature as well as leads him to a higher state of being. And in both the poets this
evolvement is directly proportional to the surrender to a higher will, and the
quantum of disciplined virtuous conduct of one's earthly life. They concede
through their epics that their vision of man involves a state where knowledge,
action and power are used to bring out the increased and heightened sense of his
being both physical and spiritual.

But when he is measured against the bigger canvas of cosmic purpose,
when the individual experiences are reckoned collectively, there appears a
purpose, a mission that gradually gets fulfilled in the totality of human efforts and
experiments. It is the wholeness that seers perceive where man is a small ring in
the big chain across time. The rings bind together each strengthening the previous
and latter ones and in the process contribute to the form and purpose of the
chain.

The plain fact is that calamity has fallen upon us and we have forgotten
who we are. We can trace our kin to the ape, with great wealth of detail and
proof for this miserable pedigree, but we cannot remember our kindred with the
angel. Man has forgotten the great traditions that have passed from generation to
generation—the great wisdom of the ancients, the great mystery institutions of
Central America and Athens, the sacred gurukulas of the rishis of ancient India
where sacredly and secretly the study of the human self was undertaken with
passion and earnest inquisitiveness. It is with this long lost involvement with the
highest thoughts of the inner being, the mature visions of his multi-layered intuitiveness that the two poets celebrate through these epics.

The experience in Paradise, the inner voyages by Aswapathy and Savitri are the flashes of these illuminations, of the mind in its search for the true identity. On various levels the physical, spiritual and evolutionary. The happenings on the garden of the Eden constitute the symbolic representation of the happiness joy, conflict, failure, hope and later realisation of the individual in the awareness plane where Eve is the practical sense that leads Adam the intuitional self to its misunderstanding and consequent fall. Similarly Savitri and Aswapathy are the facets of the mind's higher self, pursuing the ultimate beyond the congenital nature of desire, confidence and attainment.

The genius of the East as Northrop has pointed out is that it has discovered a type of knowledge and has concentrated its attention continuously, as the west has not, upon a portion of the nature of things which can only be experienced. . . . The basic Oriental premises, which have made these experiences what they are, and which have defined the standpoint from which the orient views them must . . . be grasped.72 And when it is grasped we understand that this concept of man is in tune with the mental and physical strata of his being, realised by the pure state of vision of the poets. It is the mixing of this vision with characters from real life, in the cauldron of inspired imagination that produces creativity of this dimension:

A creative work cannot be considered in itself only; it must be considered in reference to man. It establishes an additional bond
between the world and human existence. . . Creative work thus may seem to have a dual role, at the same time it enlarges the universe by adding or uncovering new dimensions, it also enriches and expands man, who will be able to experience these new dimensions inwardly.73

If there appear random instances of differences particularly in an interpretative approach of their perceptions this should be assigned to the stimulation they received from culturally opposite contexts. Yet beyond the peripheral dissimilarities we find the unifying factors holding fast and linking the findings of the two seer poets into a compact wholeness of vision and representation. This victory of man over his mind marks the triumph of his soul over the body thus establishing the truth that the primary mission of human existence is spiritual regeneration and this is evolutionary in nature.
NOTES


8 Ibid. lines 706-707.


11 Ibid.


14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid. Bk. II, Canto. ii.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid. Bk. I, Canto..iii.

19 Ibid. Canto. iv.

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid. Bk. II, Canto. iv.


23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.


41 Ibid. Bk. VII, lines 629-632.

42 Ibid. Bk. VIII, lines 167-168.


44 Ibid.


48 Ibid. lines 553-555.


53 Ibid.

54 Ibid. Canto.iii.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.


61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.


64 Ibid.


68 Ibid. Canto.iii.


