Chapter 5

The Revelation

In the later poems\textsuperscript{18} of Sri Aurobindo we encounter a flood of spiritual revelation. The poems record his deep spiritual experiences. The poet who grows into a yogi and a seer beholds the "inmost truth" of existence by the light of a "unifying vision"\textsuperscript{19} (Aurobindo, The Upanishads, Introduction 4). With a serene rapture the poet asserts: "All veils are breaking now" ("A God's Labour" 102). Consequently he expresses with a creative joy "the wonder and beauty of the rarest spiritual self-vision and the profoundest illumined truth of self and God and universe" (ibid 1).

Seclusion in Alipore jail inspired his soul's adventure. Spiritual experiences there set the agnostic and sceptic in him at rest. The wisdom of the Veda and the Gita were felt by his inmost mind and soul. His outlook changed completely. His surrender to the Divine was total. He, "a faulty and imperfect instrument" was growing stronger and more perfect with a "higher

\textsuperscript{18} Later poems refer to the poems bunched together with the titles "Short Poems 1930-50", "Sonnets 1930-50" and "Poems in New Metres" in volume 5 of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library.

\textsuperscript{19} "Unifying vision" refers to a realisation akin to that of the Vedantic sages that "the self in us is one with the universal self of all things and that this self again is the same as God and Brahman, a transcendent Being or Existence . . . (Aurobindo, The Upanishads, Introduction 4).
strength" (Aurobindo 2: 6) flowing into him. He distinctly heard the voice that came from within. "I have heard His voice and borne His will / On my vast untroubled brow" (A God's Labour 103-04) -- writes the poet expressing his inner experience. All life became yoga for him and all activities, including literary activities, were accompaniment to sādhanā. Yoga and poetry became a unified action. As a result poetry became a means of contact with the Divine and of self-expression, ie the expression of one's own inner being. As Sri Aurobindo advanced in yoga he ceased to write for the service of ego or for any other purpose but wrote solely for the service of the divine, "from the Divine and for the Divine" (Aurobindo 9: 505). He realised that he could transcend ego and give up ego-feeling without giving up activity, especially poetry or other creative human activities. He himself testifies that it took him years and years "to get the ego out of them" (Aurobindo 9: 506).

With the elimination of ego the interference of the intellect ceased and yielded to an inner silence. The deeply established inner silence freed his mind from thoughts and heart from disturbing emotions. He experienced a peace "stupendous, featureless, still" ("Nirvana" 10). Perhaps a similar peace and silence settled in Wordsworth when the poet opened himself to the "reality and truth of the self-surpassing Imagination" (Murry 283) and felt that blessed mood in which even the "breath of this corporeal frame" ("Thintern Abbey", 143) and the motion of human blood seem "almost suspended" (145) and "we are laid asleep / In body, and become a living
soul" (145-46). By silencing the noise of intellect Sri Aurobindo outgrew intellect and opened himself to overhead inspiration. His poetic expressions were no more mental creations. He discovered the inexhaustible source of his poetry in a growing self within. To state the idea in his own words: "The expression in poetry and other forms must be, for the Yogi, a flowing out from a growing self within and not merely a mental creation or an aesthetic pleasure" (Aurobindo 9: 508). His mind, free from all limiting shackles, became a free mind "in communion with the Cosmic Thinker" (Aurobindo 9: 503). In such a heightened and expanded state of awareness he ceased to be a mere literary man and grew into a yogi-poet. A seer's vision became his natural possession. His goal was clear—to speak the word given to him by God. Highlighting the distinctive features of a yogic-literary man he writes:

A literary man is one who loves literature and literary activities for their own separate sake. A Yogi who writes is not a literary man for he writes only what the inner Will and Word wants him to express. He is a channel and instrument of something greater than his own literary personality.

(Aurobindo 9: 503)

The later poems indicate a distinct evolutionary leap ahead from the poems discussed in the previous chapter. The idea of evolution is inherent in Sri Aurobindo's scheme of things. Problems of belief, debate, subsequent mental convictions, thought, criticism of life are now replaced by intimations
from the regions of higher consciousness. Philosophic strains of the middle period are no more heard because philosophy and poetry are rolled into one. Philosophy ceases to be an intellectual or imaginative speculation. It is transmuted into a realised truth. A total shift in sensibility, joy of expanded consciousness and a new intensity are the marks of these poems. The poet sings out of "an ecstasy of luminous knowledge and an ecstasy of moved and fulfilled experience . . ." (Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, Introduction 1). He finds his theme. His utterances carry the thrill of fulfilment. The poet becomes fully aware of the essential nature of poetry, ie the role it plays in human becoming. Flowing out of the overhead sources of inspiration these are the poems of vision and totality that point to a future of infinite possibilities and self-fulfilment. Ghose holds that these poems are "intimations of another kind of awareness, harmony and correspondence beyond thought" (*The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo* 13).

The inner life of the yogi is reflected in the later poems. These poems are a sort of "link between the outer and inner working of Sri Aurobindo" (Sundaram, *The Advent* Aug. 1975: 44). Like the Vedic hymns the poems of this period are the vehicle of the poet’s "self-expression in some important or even critical moment of his life’s inner history" (Aurobindo 10: 10). These poems thus communicate experiences unfamiliar to our mind. One who can overcome the initial shock caused by this unfamiliarity finds in these poems a source of inspiration.

Usually the crises and strifes of modern life attract a poet and prevent him from looking deeper. As a result his poetic vision is blurred.
But in the midst of this modern chaos we hear in these poems the calm voice of a Rishi. Sri Aurobindo elevates poetry to be identical with the knowledge of Self. Ghose hears in these poems the voice of a Rishi who sings "the heroic hymn of the Ascent of Man" (Circle 1980: 72). These poems awaken the hope to heal the fever of our time. Upanishadic truth re-emerges in these poems and acquires a fresh authenticity.

The later poetry of Sri Aurobindo is a call for transformation and self-discovery. The dividing voice of ego is hushed and the uniting voice of the tranquil self that experiences One in all gain strength. Here we meet the poetry of cosmic consciousness and of integration. Poetry here epitomises the eternal march of human mind from knowledge to knowledge. The march becomes a quest for reality. Poetry here becomes a creative energy "which makes us aware of the more that we have yet to be" (Ghose in Indo-English Literature, Ed. Sharma 49).

According to Sri Aurobindo, "a larger field of being made more real to man’s experience will be the realm of the future poetry" (Aurobindo 9: 232). A yogi’s mind takes things in their entirety and everything becomes a part of a vast Reality. His inner eyes see things as they are, not as they appear. When the yogi and the seer merge with the poet, the later’s utterances express reality. Sri Aurobindo tries to achieve this in his later poetry. Here the poet is a mediator between this world and the other worlds of light and bliss, between the physical mind and other higher levels of consciousness. Poetry here becomes "the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic
voyage of self-discovery (Aurobindo 9: 16). In view of the poet’s attempt to
discover the mystery of existence, poetry assumes a new significance and
man acquires a new image. Enlightened with an integral vision of life the
poet looks beyond the oppositions and separativeness of existence and finds
the ultimate unity. His poems become the songs of harmony presenting a
world-view characterised by a total inclusiveness in place of a partial and an
intellectually formulated world-view. His yogic or spiritual experiences
shape the Aurobindonian world-view and bring to the front the soul-value
and expansiveness of our universe. Sri Aurobindo points out that the
intuition of things grasped by a poet’s imagination rising from "mental
seership" (Aurobindo 9: 517) is far insufficient than the vision of things
grasped by spiritual experience.

Because of this unfamiliar way of seeing man and existence the
readers of poetry in general carry an impression that Sri Aurobindo, the
poet, is remote from life and is obscure. But the fact is that Sri Aurobindo
does not swim on the surface. He dives deep and explores the unknown.
Quite naturally his later poetry reveals the unexplored areas of awareness
and presents a world of insight and subjective experiences unfamiliar to our
mentalised intellect or physical mind. Yet they are profoundly real because
they are realised in a state of heightened awareness. Reality gets revealed
differently according to the perception and vision of the artist or creator. He
takes partial hints from life, but his creation cannot be a copy of things
outside. With his imagination and vision he reconstructs a world of his own.
that takes shape in his inner mind. Sri Aurobindo who is also a critic, writes in a letter that "each artist is a creator of his own world" (Aurobindo 9: 329). Even the realists like Zola and Tolstoi did it.

Unfamiliarity of the ordinary mind with transcendental experiences conveyed in the later poems creates a communication gap. Sri Aurobindo is well aware of this difficulty. In view of this problem, the reader is required to develop an inner receptivity by opening himself to these experiences and by developing an willingness to accept a novel manner of expression. Brooks and Penn Warren appropriately write that to get the knowledge hidden in poetry we have to "submit aourselves to the massive, and subtle, impact of the poem as a whole" and to participate "in the drama of the poem" (Preface xiii). This is true in case of the poetry of all great poets. Helen Darbishire finds that when Wordsworth speaks at his greatest moments he speaks so quietly that "an ear not intent on his meaning catches little" (173). What Sri Aurobindo writes about Blake’s poetry may be appropriate for his own: "In reading such writing the inner being has to feel first, then only the mind can catch what is behind" (Aurobindo 9: 529). Moreover, as the source of this poetry can be traced back to perennial Indian wisdom, it requires us to be familiar with that source so that we can feel the power and force of expression in this poetry.

There is a general impression that Sri Aurobindo, the poet, is indifferent to the problems of suffering humanity. But his poetry aims at establishing man on the sure-ground of self-identity. Hence it gives
expression to our aspirations and possibilities, essential reality and fulfilment instead of our chaos and turmoil, futility and frustration. The yogi-poet looks within to seek deliverance for man from agonies through a change of consciousness. He soars into the higher states of awareness to lift man from the abyss. But his foot is firmly set on earth. With the firmness of a redeemer the poet writes clearly:

I rise like a fire from the mortal's earth

Into a griefless sky

And drop in the suffering soil of his birth

Fire seeds of ecstasy. ("The Blue Bird" 5-8)

Man is the centre of his colossal scheme to raise the earth to the Divine. His own description of his experience discloses his deep love for man: "It is only divine Love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness towards the Divine" (qtd. in Purani, The Life 267).

His lifelong endeavour is to find out the path that leads to self-discovery or revelation of our essential identity that in turn leads to the ultimate unity. In search of this identity and unity gnostic Being is his achievement and answer. Attempting to explicate the idea Ghose writes:

The poet Sri Aurobindo, more than the philosopher, stands for a renewal of modern man. One may as well look upon the poetry as healing, a healing of the dichotomies and dissonances
of modern living, "its corruption of consciousness" that one sees and feels, helplessly, almost everywhere. The healing, one might add, is in terms of the vijñāna and ānanda puruṣa, the Gnostic Being. Here is a return to the roots, the revolution of the Word that shall "surprise the animal with the occult god."

(Circle 1980: 70)

He intends to make life an extraordinary adventure by proclaiming that "all life is yoga." Yoga, to him, is not anti-life. It helps to see life with its wholeness and its essential unity. Yoga is thus an inward and perfect seeing. It brings fulness to life by removing its limitations and imperfections. As his later poetry is the felicitous expression of his yogic experiences, it touches human heart with a warmth and power to transform life rather than with a coldness leading to rejection of life.

An aspiration to transcend physical limitations and to manifest the divine in life finds expression in the poems under discussion. All the four stanzas of the poem "Bride of the Fire" quiver with the poet's intense aspiration to experience the spiritual truths during his upward journey. The being, free from desire and grief, calmly awaits the manifestation of power, beauty and delight. With a firmness sustained by the zeal of aspiration the poet writes: "I have shed the bloom of the earthly rose, / I have slain desire" (3-4). He considers himself a fit medium for the manifestation of divinity: "I can bear thy delight" (8). He becomes the representative of all aspiring souls. The poem is a song of man's aspiration for self-fulfilment. The first
two lines of every stanza contain the prayer and the last two lines spell out the condition that will facilitate fulfilment.

The poem is addressed to the bride, ie the active force of the god of fire, the Vedic Agni. The fire symbolises the divine power, beauty, ecstasy and the divine voice. Precisely, the fire stands for Truth-consciousness. The poet aspires to be surrounded with the luminous beauty of the light of Knowledge and its power. He longs to lose himself in the divine bliss. So he writes rapturously in a mood of surrender: "I would see only thy marvellous face, / Feel only thy kiss" (11-12). He wants to hear the "voice of Infinity" (13) forever. The fire becomes for him a "living sun" (16) which suggests power and knowledge. The poem is thus an invocation for the expression of the divine glory in the individual being.

"The Blue Bird" is yet another note of the "sweet and the true" (3) that records the poet’s spiritual adventure. The aspiration to possess the divine glory as expressed with pure passion in "Bride of the Fire" finds fulfilment here: "I rise like a fire from the mortal’s earth / Into a griefless sky" (5-6) or "My pinions soar beyond Time and Space / Into unfading Light" (9-10). But self-fulfilment is not the desired end. The poet is not enamoured of the "griefless sky" and "unfading light." They rather strengthen his will to enlighten and transform the "mortal’s earth." The whole poem is a vivid spiritual experience expressed through luminous images. Vividness and clarity are the mark of the poem. While giving expression to his spiritual and mystic experiences Sri Aurobindos is never
vague or hazy. The consummation comes in the last stanza with the poet almost attaining the vastness of the infinite:

Nothing is hid from my burning heart;
My mind is shoreless and still;
My song is rapture's mystic art,
My flight immortal will. (17-20)

The bird in this poem suggests the human soul that rises upwards in the process of quest. This "flight" is not a self-willed one, it is rather inspired by "immortal will." It leads to a union between the bird and and God and in the bliss of that experience the poet's song becomes "rapture's mystic art." The very first line drops a clear hint that the bird is not a mere physical form. The expressions like "I rise like a fire", "my pinions soar beyond", "I measure the worlds" (13) indicate the upward flight of the bird or the seeking soul. The adventure as well as the attainments are highly inspiring. The "griefless sky", "unfading Light", "the bliss of the Eternal's face" (11), "the boon of the Spirit's sight" (12) and "perched on Wisdom's tree" (14) are the attainments on the way of spiritual quest. The attainments of the yogi-poet indicate the possibilities open for man.

Spiritual adventures and experiences that illumine life and add new glory to it are not the only themes. The poet never forgets the "mortal's earth." Events like the horror of the demoniac stride of fascism find expression with the fascinating portrait of the mute cat on the staircase. But the poet looks at things and events differently. In the poem "Despair on the
Staircase" the cat is not only "an image of magnificent despair" (2) but also "a charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman" (12). The poet discerns a magnificence in the cat's despair, glory in her eyes and discovers in her "beauty's dumb significant pose" (5) the "tragedy of her mysterious mind" (6). Such things add grandeur to the ordinary. Again the touch of humour makes the narration quite amusing and enjoyable as is evident from these lines. "Her tail is up like an unconquered flag, / Its dignity knows not the right to wag" (9-10). The same cat also appears to him as "fur-footed Brahman" (12). This is a subjective way of looking into mundane things by the poet. In the poem "The Shell" Tennyson also finds shell "a miracle of design." Sri Aurobindo's poem ends with a touch of humour. A small thing rather poses a formidable problem: "Whether she is spirit, woman or a cat" (13). The poet builds the image of the cat with touches of humour and grandeur. Though the cat is a trivial creature the poet shows an intimate understanding of it. The cat's physical appearance provides clue to the poet to delve into its mental state. At the same time the physical appearance fails to delude him and he gets the glimpse of Brahman in him. The poet's understanding of the terrestrial life and his supra-terrestrial awareness are yoked together in this poem. In "The Rum Tum Tugger" T.S. Eliot also highlights a cat's peculiar traits with warmth and intimacy. But it remains a thoroughly terrestrial creature. Sri Aurobindo discovers in the cat, besides its physical features and behavioural peculiarities, the presence of Brahman.

In "The Children of Wotan" the lines tread creating a shuddering effect as they try to catch the horrid impact of the "armoured march" (1)
of Hitler’s men. They are a "cross of the beast and demoniac with the
godhead of power and will" (24) and have "made the mind a cypher" and
"strangled Thought with a cord" (19). Thus they present the veritable image
of the precursors of gloom. With their exulting and triumphant march all
bright possibilities seem to be strangled and a grim future looms large. The
beastly hordes of Hitler, ironically enough, claim to be the "supermen
dreamed by the sage" (23) and proudly proclaim their mission:

"We are born in humanity’s sunset, to the Night is our
pilgrimage.
On the bodies of perishing nations, mid the cry of the
cataclysm coming,
To a presto of bomb and shell and the aeroplanes’ fatal
humming,
We march, lit by Truth’s death-pyre, to the world’s satanic
age." (25-28)

The perverse ambition and demoniac boldness of Hitler and his band
are brought out with appropriate diction. The poem catches vividly, as
Sethna puts it, "the perversely religious vision and exultation that was one
of the most effective elements in the cult of Nordic race and blood . . ." (Sri
Aurobindo 371). Behind this grim picture the concern of the seer-poet, who
aspires for the manifestation of the forces of light, is distinctly discernible.
The very first line carries his anxiety : "Where is the end of your armoured
march, O children of Wotan?" (1). Hitler’s forward march is seen not only
as a historical event by Sri Aurobindo. It is viewed as an assertion of dark forces. This explains the poet's anxiety to see the end of the march of the children of Wotan.

"A God's Labour" reveals the poet's dream "to build a rainbow bridge / Marrying the soil to the sky" (5-6). Here the poet sings of the transformation of man and earth with a Promethean passion sublimated by a divine aspiration. A mighty aspiration, though with a different vision, to quicken a process of regeneration on the earth had once troubled the poet of "Ode to the West Wind." To bring about the desired effect he aspired to embody the spirit of the West Wind, the force of destruction and regeneration:

Be thou, Spirit fierce,

My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe

Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth! (61-64)

"A God's Labour," on the other hand, seizes a spiritual vision of godhead's descent into the earthly nature ("Coercing my godhead I have come down / Here on the sordid earth" [17-18]) to light "Heaven's fire ... in the breast of the earth" (109). It is a lucid exposition of Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga. The experience and vision of Sri Aurobindo and Shelley are not identical. But both the poets submit themselves to their vision and inspiration.

Man's present dismal condition prompts the godhead to act. This shows divine's love for man. Man is steeped in inconscience and trapped in
his animal self. To release man from "darkness and strife" (37), to lead him
from "a fragment of Truth" (43) to "the Truth of truths" (45) is the
pronounced task of the incarnation. He cannot rest till the work is over. But
the burden is so heavy that divine love alone can bear it. The poet discloses
what necessitates the descent of the higher self to inspire man to tread the
path of light:

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way. (13-16)

The burdens are many— to labour "twixt the gates of death and birth"
(20), to suffer in "Matter's night" (25), to bear thousands of "gaping
wounds" (53). Yet the divine mission is not suspended. What follows is the
vivid picturization of the vision of the yogi-poet. Such poems are composed,
remarks Iyengar, "in a condition of complete cerebral calm, in a trance of
waiting as it were" (Sri Aurobindo 616).

The godhead's mission continues. Many secrets are uncovered in this
process: "I saw that a falsehood was planted deep / At the very root of
things" (81-82), "I have seen the source whence her agonies part / And the
inner reason of hell" (91-92). Ultimately "the gulf twixt the depths and the
heights is bridged" (105).

In the following lines the poet's vision takes the shape of a distinct
visual picture:
Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn
Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stair-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end. (109-16)

The crowning fulfilment comes as follows: "There shall move on the earth embodied and fair / The living truth of you" (123-124). But much labour and suffering precede the achievement.

"A God's Labour" creates an impression that it is a poetic description of the inner struggle of the poet in his attempt to lead mankind to the light of self-identity. That is why we are tempted to describe this poem as "the seer's autobiographical revelation" (Ghatak 45).

Though a brief poem comprising only three stanzas, "Who Art Thou That Camest" reveals a mystic vision. Here the vision does not merely vanish as in an earlier poem "Revelation," but its impact is felt:

Captured the heart renouncing
Tautness of passion-worn strings
Allows the wide-wayed sweetness
Of free supernal things. (9-12)

This last stanza also indicates the conditions of the heart that can be illumined by the flame of revelation. The initial questioning gets lost in the
brilliant light of the "august uprising" (5). "Fire-trails" (8) not only dispel the darkness of midnight, but also capture the heart. The poem shows a significant development from the evasive nature of the poem "Revelation" so far as the vividness and enduring impact of the vision and certitude in expression is concerned.

Sri Aurobindo's sonnets, mostly written in late thirties, are the sparks from his inner being. The theme of these sonnets indicates that the seer-poet strives to actualise the union of the matter with the spirit. Mysteries and possibilities of life and bliss of realisation constitute their theme. An intuitive touch in expression, an inspired intensity and concentrated force of revelatory truth are the features of these sonnets. The titles of the pieces are mostly self-explicatory. We feel in them "a breath of the spirit's vast serenity" ("The Little Ego" 14). They give us a conviction that the little ego or the small self is lost in the supernal light of Truth.

These sonnets come from the soul of the seer-poet as naturally as "the leaves to a tree" (Murry 304) when mind's activity stops and it becomes the willing instrument of his inner being. They flow out under the spell of inspiration when mind becomes synonymous with inspired creativity. Many Indian saint-poets have composed such inspirational songs in a state of surrender when mind simply becomes a channel of expression. The melodious bhajans of Meerabai are the spontaneous expression of her soul's adoration and love for Lord Krishna the vision of whom suffused her total being and inspired these poems. The enlightening dohas of Kavir, rich with an insight
into life based on his soul's realisation, are also composed under inspiration in a mood of surrender. These poems, of course, lack Sri Aurobindo's integral vision. But being the inspired songs filled with devotion and love for the poet's individual divine they have also their source of inspiration in a higher state of consciousness above mental and intellectual.

"Transformation" is a pure transcription of the poet's experience of inner bliss and power and growing vastness of self. In the joy of realisation, the transformed seeker proclaims: "I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine" (3). He attains an inseparable union with the Infinite. But this blissful, ineffable experience of the "influx of Unknown" (8) has been facilitated by a deep spiritual śādhanā indicated in the opening line of the sonnet: "My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream." The result is a self-losing inner bliss:

Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme
And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine
Channels of rapture opal and hyaline
For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme. (5-8)

This poem is a record of total transformation and consequent fulfilment. This is an invitation to light and bliss and is an inspiring story of man's release from the shackles of flesh and "senses' narrow mesh" (11). The moment slavery to Nature ends, "measureless sight" (12) opens leading to infinite and illimitable freedom. The climax of the poet's realisation is described in the closing lines:
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
    My body is God's happy living tool,
    My spirit a vast sun of deathless light. (12-14)

This poem reflects the poet's state of consciousness. In a letter Sri Aurobindo writes about the type of poetry which express things "with an absolute truth but without effort, simply and easily, without a word in excess or any laying on of colour, only just the necessary" (Lettersof Sri Aurobindo [Third Series] 25). This sonnet and many others belonging to the later period illustrate this contention of the poet.

"Nirvana" is the poetic expression of a spiritual experience of the silent Brahman consciousness. It is his first concrete spiritual experience. This experience of Nirvana fills his mind with a deep silence. Thoughts and feelings totally vanish under the spell of this overwhelming stillness. "The mind from thought released, the heart from grief" (2). In that state of absolute stillness different forms and activities of Nature seem utterly unreal like "a cinema's vacant shapes" (7). In the midst of this overpowering sense of unreality the "illimitable Permanent" is the sole Reality. The opening line describes this revelation: "All is abolished but the mute Alone." Again a re-assertion follows in the first line of the second stanza: "Only the illimitable Permanent / Is here" (9-10). The poet himself describes this feeling of unreality as follows: "When I was in Bombay, from the balcony of the friend's house I saw the whole busy movement of Bombay as a picture in a cinema show, all unreal and shadowy" (Purani, Evening Talks, Second Series 62). The experience is described in the following lines:
The city, a shadow picture without tone,
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
Flow, a cinema’s vacant shapes; like a reef
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done."

An ever-lasting inner peace is the result of this revelation. This also results in the extinction of ego. The experience of the poet finds a delightful expression in a moment of calm creative joy:

A Peace stupendous, featureless, still,
Replaces all,-what once was I, in It
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite. (10-14)

The “I”, the limiting self or separative awareness, aspires to fade in the Unknowable.

The realisation revealed in this poem seems to overwhelm one’s whole being with its force and thrill. The joy of utterance rings throughout the poem. The vividness and intensity of the vision, visual effect and lyrical harmony hold the poet’s inner experience as a living reality.

"The Godhead" captures the "deathless memory" (14) of a revealing and blissful supra-sensory experience of the poet. This relates to the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when the poet was in danger of an accident in Baroda in the first year of his stay there. As Sri Aurobindo was moving on a horse-carriage he was about to face an accident. All on a
sudden a "Being of Light" appeared in him as if with the will to prevent it and control the whole situation. The accident was narrowly averted. The sublime experience came to him abruptly ("suddenly felt" 3) and overwhelmingly ("enveloping me the body of Him" 4). The vision, though concrete, came in a flash and faded after the purpose was served. But the intense thrill and delight it brought remained unforgettable for long years. The Being of Light had its sovereign control over the situation ("held the scene" 7). A realisation of inseparable union with that mighty "One" elevated and expanded the poet’s inner being: "He was I" (10). With clarity and precision he expresses the mystic rapture of the moment:

His hair was mingled with the sun and breeze;

The world was in His heart and He was I:

I housed in me the Everlasting’s peace,

The strength of One whose substance cannot die. (9-12)

Like a romantic poet he speaks of treasuring the thrill of the experience long after "the moment passed" (13). But this thrill not only brings tranquility to mind and consequent creative inspiration as with the romantics. It brings enlightenment that helps one to discover one’s true identity.

"The Stone Goddess" treasures another blissful spiritual experience that reveals the omnipresence of the Divine. Once Sri Aurobindo visited a temple of Kali on the bank of the river Narmada. As he stood in front of the image, unexpectedly he caught the glimpse of a living presence in it. This
sudden glimpse at a living Presence in the sculptured limbs makes the poet aware of the inherent limitation of human understanding through intellect. He is awakened to a new consciousness and feels as if the Godhead looks at him. At that still moment of revelation an illuminating realisation dawns upon him:

The great World-Mother and her mighty will

Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,

Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,

Mute in the desert and the sky and deep. (5-8)

The stone image of Kali is transmuted into the living image of the "great World-Mother" who inhabits the whole universe. The "beauty and mystery" of that living presence can equally pervade a living being and the stone image: "One in the worshipper and the immobile shape" (13). But mind's ignorance keeps the truth veiled. That truth or mystery can be realised through the awakening of our soul: "Hiding until our soul has seen, has heard / The secret of her strange embodiment" (11-12). "The Stone Goddess" thus seizes a vision in a spontaneous poetical effusion. This poem not only reveals the omnipresence and inscrutability of the "great World-Mother," but also inspires us for self-awakening to see the face of Infinity. Most of the sonnets expressing the inner realisations of the poet are like flashlights penetrating the veil of ignorance or imperfect perception by intelligence.

"Adwaita" presents another inner experience that reveals the mystery of yet another facade of Infinity:
Around me was a formless solitude:
All had become one strange Unnamable,
An unborn sole Reality world-nude,
Topless and fathomless, for ever still. (5-8)

Silence, the ultimate and sole reality that persists even at the end of "earth's vain romance" (4) is deeply experienced by the poet. Brimming over with the ecstasy of this mysterious experience he discloses it in an assertive note:

A Silence that was Being's only word,
The unknown beginning and the voiceless end
Abolishing all things moment-seen or heard,
On an incommunicable summit reigned. (9-12)

The blissful experience of silent Brahman--"a lonely Calm and void unchanging Peace" (13)--fills his inner being as he stands on Takht-i-Suleman (a hill), significantly enough, along with Shankaracharya's tiny temple "facing Infinity from Time's edge" (3). It is a poem that seems to rise from soul's silence.

"Now I have borne" describes a realisation that unveils man's identity in a transmuted-self when the "presence" and "light" of Eternity suffuse him and the separative consciousness evaporates. He feels in each cell the Divine's "fire embrace" (13). The disclosure is astounding to the ordinary mind and yet inspiring. His "vision's sacred oriflamme" (6) burns throughout the sonnet so that it seems to be a communication from the "silence of the Infinite" (8). In the bliss of realisation the poet proclaims:
Now I have borne Thy presence and Thy light,
Eternity assumes me and I am
A vastness of tranquillity and flame,
My heart a deep Atlantic of delight.
My life is a moving moment of Thy might."  (1-5)

The transmutation is total affecting his whole being--body, mind, heart. Transcending the circle of mortality the self of the poet grows to be "a vastness of tranquillity and flame." His body is transmuted into "a jar of radiant peace" (9) and his mind "a voiceless breadth" (11) of the Divine. A deep silence and a vast luminosity overpower him. He feels the Divine's "fire embrace" (13) and becomes an instrument to carry His essence--"a brazier of the seven ecstasies" 14). The image of ultimate union and surrender takes a palpable shape in this poem.

"Cosmic Consciousness" is the enlightening record of another spiritual experience of the poet. He experiences the growth and expansion of his inner being and realises an underlying and inseparable unity with the entire creation:

I have wrapped the wide world in my wider self
And Time and Space my spirit's seeing are.
I am the god and demon, ghost and elf,
I am the wind's speed and the blazing star. (1-4)

As a result of this realisation he feels as if all the oppositions find shelter in his wider self:
I am the struggle and the eternal rest;  
The world's joy thrilling runs through me, I bear  
The sorrow of millions in my lonely breast. (6-8)

But this oneness with the rest of the Creation fails to erect any bondage or to prevent the flight of the spirit to his "imperishable home" (12). His expanded inner self rather becomes a link between the beyond and here: "I pass beyond Time and life on measureless wings, / Yet still am one with born and unborn things" (13-14). By transcending the limitations of life he discovers the ultimate unity.

These sonnets are the external expression of the inner self of the poet. In ultimate analysis they are the songs of man's real identity. They awaken man to his infinite possibility and reveal to him his veiled mystery and glory. Thus these poems are the flames of wisdom revealing the path to self-discovery.

"The Bliss of Brahman" arrests an intense moment of self-losing in the bliss of Brahman or "God's delight" (2). It is as if the poet's inner being flows out in the form of delightful words: "I am swallowed in a foam-white sea of bliss" (1) or "I am drunken with the glory of the Lord" (9). This experience leads to the discovery of soul's splendour:

"I am a cup of His felicities,  
A thunderblast of His golden ecstasy's might,  
A fire of joy upon creation's height;  
I am His rapture's wonderful abyss. (5-8)"
More revelations follow in the process of transformation of the self ridden with avidyā:

My mind is cloven by His radiant sword,
My heart by His beatific touch is torn,
My life is a meteor-dust of His flaming Grace."

(12-14)

With the lines of the poem, one feels, roll the waves of rapture of the poet's inner being which has attained identity with the "curving wave of God's delight" (2). A spontaneous expression of the poet's inner experience, the poem acquires a beauty as if with "His beatific touch" (13).

"The Cosmic Spirit" transpires the poet's realisation of identity with the universe. The poet who is already "a thunderblast of His golden ecstasy's might" ("The Bliss of Brahman" 6) shatters the bounds of body-mind complex and grows immeasurable and illimitable. This and other spiritual realisations of the poet are soul's flame-tracks joining his "depths to His eternal height" ("Light" 14). From the awareness of that eternal height flows the spontaneous, confident and revealing utterance:

I have broken the limits of embodied mind
And am no more the figure of a soul.
The burning galaxies are in me outlined;
The universe is my stupendous whole. (5-8)

This growth beyond the perceivable limits does not merely facilitate an escape to the summit of bliss, but leads to an intimate and indivisible
identity with the creation. This identity requires him to bear the burden and bliss of the earth: "I am earth’s agony and her throbs of bliss" (10). Transcendence here is not the means of liberation. It rather results in the growth of a cosmic spirit ("I share all creatures’ sorrow and content" [11] or "I bear each act and thought and mood" [13]).

The felicitous lines of "The Golden Light" seize the seer poet’s vision of the divine descent and consequent transformation and ascent. The golden light is suggestive of the divine light and grace. The first line of each stanza acts as a refrain and suggests the descent of divine grace to participate actively in the process of creation to affect transformation. The divine light descends to suffuse the imperfect nature with its splendour and glory. It flows gradually into the poet’s brain, throat, heart and feet and thus permeates his whole being. The result is an enlightening transformation: "And the grey rooms of mind sun-touched became" (2), "and all my speech is now a tune divine" (6) and "now has it grown a temple where Thou art" (11). Thus the whole being of the yogi-poet, glowing in divine splendour, becomes the Divine’s instrument. But the consummation of the process of transformation comes with the poet’s ecstatic proclamation: "My earth is now Thy play field and Thy seat" (14). The divine light touches the abyss to fill the abyss with its bliss and enlightenment. The poet’s spiritual realisation is intimately communicated to the reader through a rapturous lyrical flow combined with vividness and force and the intensity of the vision.
The poems grouped under the title *Poems in New Metres* owe their significance not only to varied metrical experiments showing the poet's technical dexterity and intimate understanding of English rhythm and stress pattern, but also to the fact that these poems are mantra-like utterances in a meditative mood and are touched by "overhead" inspiration. Spiritual experiences of the poet which defy intellect and logic find expression through "symbol words and rhythms" that come with a "compulsive force" (Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo* 611). These poems carry communications from the poet's soul to the interested reader's (sahrdaya's) soul. They express the thrill of the poet's spiritual joy adequately. The poet's creative joy overcomes "human difficulties," ie the interference of the intellect and imagination, in the creative process. He links the creative joy of the poet with the creative joy of the universal Soul. He presents the idea lucidly:

"A divine Ananda, ²⁰ a delight interpretative, creative, revealing, formative,—one might almost say, an inverse reflection of the joy which the universal Soul felt in its great release of energy when it rang out into the rhythmic forms of the universe the spiritual truth, the large interpretative idea, the life, the power, the emotion of things packed into an original

²⁰ "Ananda, in the language of Indian spiritual experience, is the essential delight which the infinite feels in itself and in its creation. By the infinite Self's Ananda all exists, for the Self's Ananda all was made" (Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry* 11 fn).
creative vision,—such spiritual joy is that which the soul of the poet feels and which, when he can conquer the human difficulties of his task, he succeeds in pouring also into all those who are prepared to receive it." (Aurobindo 9: 10)

In the context of such poetry, metrical experiments are not merely the prosodist's experiments. The search for technique here becomes the search for a fit medium for expressing new experiences. Sri Aurobindo explained in a letter: "The search for technique is simply the search for the best and most appropriate form for expressing what has to be said and once it is found, the inspiration can flow quite naturally and fluently into it" (Aurobindo 9: 392-93).

In "Musa Spiritus" the poet prays to the "word concealed in the upper fire" (1) to descend "into the gulfs of our nature" (5) not only to bring to his ear "the cry of the seraph stars" (23) and to his naked eye "the forms of the Gods" (24), but also to "break the seals of Matter's sleep" (7). His aspiration is two-dimensional—divinisation of his own life and establishment of divine life on the earth through transformation to be effected by divine intervention and grace. He prays to the spirit of the muse or to the divinely inspired word radiant with its "eagles of Power" (20) to purify and enlighten the human mind fettered by ignorance and falsehood. The word here is perhaps mantra, that efficacious or rhythmic speech which "rises at once from the heart of the seers and from the distant home of the Truth" (Aurobindo 9: 8). This is perhaps the word that opens to us the doors of the
spirit. The "upper fire" mentioned here may be the Vedic Agni that is satya ("Agni is satya" [Aurobindo 10: 571]), Truth-consciousness and that symbolises divine power and divine wisdom. Sri Aurobindo writes:

Agni in the Veda is always presented in the double aspect of force and light. He is the divine power that builds up the worlds, a power which acts always with a perfect knowledge.

Psychologically, then, we may take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it, which is the active or effective power of Truth-consciousness . . . (Aurobindo 10: 61).

The poet's prayer of anguish is inspired by his flaming aspiration as well as his deep love for the earth and its dwellers. The poet's personal prayer widens to be the prayer for the whole. He prays to replace the "uncertain glow" (9) of human mind by "the suns that never die" (22) and to free the mind from "unharmonied thronging thoughts" (10). He prays to awaken the "blind indwelling deity" (16). At the same time he prays to make him fit so that his "heart-beats measure the footsteps of God" (30). Aspiration to make his life a field of the divine and to be one with the divine is vividly expressed in the last two stanzas. One who aspires to bring divine life into the earth should divinise his own life and make his own life "His burning abode" (32). The poet aspires after this transformation and self-expansion through total surrender and merger. So he prays to the divine word:
Weave from my life His poem of days,
   His calm pure dawns and His noons of force.
My acts for the grooves of His chariot-race,
   My thoughts for the tramp of His great steeds' course!

(33-36)

The poem "Jivanmukta" builds an image of the living liberated man according to the Vedantic ideal with a pull towards Aurobindonian ideal. The light of the yogi-poet's own realisation add an authenticity to the poetic utterance. The poet himself discloses: "The subject is the Vedantic ideal of the living liberated man—jivanmukta—though perhaps I have given a pull towards my own ideal which the strict Vedantin would consider illegitimate" (Aurobindo 5: 581). The attainment of the state of jivanmukti is to transcend the effects of time ("from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills" 17) and Fate, the vagaries and smaller motives of mind, sense of separativeness and division, and the limit and bond of the mortal body. It is to travel into the "Eternal's breast" (18) and to be established in the "omniscient Silence" (20) where the process of self-discovery finds its consummation with the ever-luminous, eternal Truth revealed before his "flame-covered all-seeing eye" (6). The poet describes with a sureness as if the distinct vision of a Jivanmukta unrolls before his inner eye:

He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills
   Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,
   Unrolls the form and sign of being,
   Seated above in the omniscient Silence. (17-20)
This experience comes to the soul that has become "Eternity's foothold" (3).

But even if the jivanmukta is beyond the limitations of the mortal body and earthly nature, even if he possesses infinity, eternity and an absolute "immortal rapture" (14), he never shuns the earth of the mortals. For Sri Aurobindo yoga is climbing the ladder of consciousness till the Reality is revealed. But that is not the whole story. From the luminous summit he remains close to the earth below. He never finds fulfilment in his own isolated attainment of everlasting bliss nor does he prefer to fly away from the troubled life here on the earth like the Romantics. Sorrow of the earth rather awakes his aspiration to heal her "ancient sorrow" (27) with "His golden ecstasy's might" ("The Bliss of Brahman" 6). So with deep conviction he outlines in "Jivanmukta" why a living liberated man consents "here to a mortal body" (21):

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the inconscient darkness,

He acts and lives. (25-29)

Descent is a significant part of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga. "Descent" is a poetic record of this subtle spiritual experience. The poet captures the process of the "descent of the Godhead" (7) into his "limbs that are mortal" (8) with such photographic accuracy that poetic outflow and the
process of divine descent seem to be two simultaneous activities. One feels as if the poet instantly records a divine sight and the poem seems to be an irrefutable statement of an experiencer. The poem convinces with its vividness, impresses with its lucidity, intensity, and directness and inspires with its power of revelation. The very first stanza presents the thrill of descent. The inner experience is described distinctly:

All my cells thrill swept by a surge of splendour,
Soul and body stir with a mighty rapture
Light and still more light like an ocean billows
Over me, round me. (1-4)

As the poem moves ahead the impact of the descent intensifies. It shatters the limited world of the mind and tames and transforms its whims and vagaries. As a result of the descent "a glory of power eternal" (10) flows into him and enlightens him to visualise deeper realities: "Mind and heart grow one with the cosmic wideness; / Stilled are earth's murmurs" (11-12). Gradually the veil of seeming realities disappears. The impressions on mind are removed in the radiance of transforming light. As the poet experiences the leap of knowledge his inspired pen quivers with creative zeal and his inner vision takes a visible shape:

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions,
Blaze in my spirit. (13-16)
As his "soul and body stir with a mighty rapture" (2), "earth's murmurs" (12) are stilled and knowledge leaps into him. He becomes a channel to carry God's glory. He hears God's voice: "Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway" (18). The consummation comes with the realisation of an irrevocable "single oneness" (21) and of the eternal clasp of "light and might and bliss and immortal wisdom":

All the world is changed to a single oneness;
Souls undying, infinite forces, meeting,
Join in God-dance weaving a seamless Nature,
Rhythm of the Deathless.
Mind and heart and body, one harp of being,
Cry that anthem, finding the notes eternal,—
Light and might and bliss and immortal wisdom
Clasping for ever. (21-28)

"The Bird of Fire" composed under the spell of an overhead inspiration captures a vision. The poem strikes our chords of perception with its power-charged incantatory lines that express the complex symbolism with clarity and intensity. The vision flashes vividly. The poet draws a shimmering visual picture of his vision in this poem. Sri Aurobindo's poetic power to communicate a spiritual vision is evident in this poem. For a vivid transcription of his vision the poet employs suggestive richness, intense and unique symbolism, profundity and splendour of words and sufficient sight and sound effects.
The poem consists of four stanzas and they reveal different aspects of the power and character of the bird. The first stanza describes the flame-bird's flight in the vast expanse of the spiritual heaven and its return to the heart of the poet with the riches and splendour of the higher planes. The opening lines expose a complex movement and initiate a subtle and highly intricate structure of imagery. The bird of flame soars with its throbbing and glimmering wings over the sunfire curve and moves ahead adventurously "to the haze of the west" (2). As it moves ahead it slides into "a messenger sail" (3) and the vast sky stretches like the endless sapphire-coloured expanse of a "soundless wayless buring sea" (4). Further, the word "soundless" brings forth the idea of all pervading eternal silence indicative of the deep hush of the silent Brahman. We thus see in this poem metaphors of disperate natures "juxtaposed and crowded," and "then welded to produce the effect of a rich and subtle texture" (Khanna, Mother India, Oct. 1957: 6).

The poem transports us to a reality belonging to other planes of being than the physical. Perhaps the blue sky and the sea symbolise infinite divine consciousness and the bird of fire with its lustrous wings stands for aspiring individual soul. The bird of fire not only symbolises the aspiring seeker, but also embodies the fulfilment of his aspiration. The fire referred to in this poem is a spiritual force that the radiant soul of the yogi emits, that consumes and cleanses all impurities of heart and mind and brings Divine love and knowledge to the seeker's heart. The bird, with its "gold-white
wings” suggesting purity, flies towards the blue sky or the Infinite perhaps to seek fulfilment in the realisation of the Divine glory and attainment of Divine grace. The bird’s pinion-beat is "a-throb" (1) because it is not merely a carrier of the message, but is "the throbbing power of the intense flame that rose out of the blazing soul of the yogi" (ibid 5). Highlighting the significance of the fire in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga Khanna writes:

In the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo it is a common experience that the intense call of the soul rises upward from the heart-centre like a luminous fire with arms outstretched to embrace the Divine in an utter union. Flame after flame shoots up and then vanishes into the vastness of the spiritual sky. The sadhaka feels an intense yearning to meet the Divine and expects an immediate response to his aspiration. The purity and intensity of the fire generates a certitude that the Grace is sure to lean down to him— it cannot resist such a sincere call because it has itself planted that in the heart’s cavern" (ibid 5).

In this way fire, the symbol of intense aspiration, links the Sadhak’s soul and the Divine and facilitates fulfilment by bringing down Divine Grace. G.H. Langley has interpreted bird of fire as "the divine consciousness immanent in every man and tending to impel him upwards towards the light" (30). To untie the knot the poet himself writes:

The Bird of Fire is the living vehicle of the gold fire of the Divine Light and the white fire of the Divine Tapas and the
Bird of fire thus is projected as the active force of the Divine and it has an all-embracing connotation pertaining to different aspects of the Divine’s manifestation.

The third and the fourth lines present the picture of the return of the bird. The bird of fire or the throbbing flame soars into the Divine Light and reaches the Eternal and returns with the splendour of the higher planes into the heart of the yogi-poet through "a blue-flicker air" (6) reminiscent of divine quality.

In the second stanza we find the poet addressing the bird as angel. To elucidate the idea Sri Aurobindo himself writes:

"Angel" is addressed to the Bird. It is the Bird who went out to reach the Timeless Divine and comes late (while the sadhaka and the world have been long struggling and waiting in vain) with the gift. The bird is not mere aspiration; it reaches the Eternal and brings back to the material world that which is beyond mind and life. (qtd. in Mother India Oct. 1957: 7)

The waiting or aspiring Sadhak is not anxious for his own Moksha. He awaits the Bird to bring some boon from the Timeless which can assuage the suffering of the earth. The bird is expected to bring "a spirit silent and free or / His crimson passion of love divine" (11-12). The next two lines present rich imagery:
White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy.

Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in Time from his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine? (13-16)

The bird of fire brings Divine Love to the earth. The Divine Love is described as "rose-red wine" contained in a "white-ray-jar" which perhaps stands for the pure heart of the yogi engrossed in tapas. The crimson colour suggesting Divine Love also indicates the power and force of that love. The rose-red wine of Divine Love is drawn from the brimming vats of ecstasy and is made by the pressing of the "sudden and violent feet" of the Divine Dancer.

As the lines glide ahead they seem to have oozed out from the "vats of ecstasy." As we move along with the lines we intensely feel that the poet's vision of hidden realities transforms the poem into a visual picture of revelation. That is why, perhaps, the poet himself remarks regarding such poetry: "One can only see." Though he drops some hints about the significance of these symbols and visions he simultaneously remarks that this type of analysis is "to mentalise too much and mentalising always takes most of the life out of spiritual things" (qtd. in Sethna's Sri Aurobindo 367).

The poem attempts to seize the vision of different planes and mystic regions and hidden realities. Hence our attempt to appreciate or interpret the revelations in mental terms, i.e. according to the established habits of mental or intellectual perception, make the poem not easily accessible.
Consequently its strangeness strikes us most. The poet’s purpose to make this poem a "spiritual expression" presented in its "native atmosphere and setting" contributes a lot to its strangeness. Commenting on the strangeness of the poem, Sethna writes:

But to appreciate the revelation, one must keep in mind that Sri Aurobindo is treading the domain of the superhuman, the ultra-natural, and his aim is not to humanise and naturalise them altogether. Indeed poetry of a fine order is possible to a completely humanised and naturalised mysticism as in the lyrics of the Vaishnav devotees, yet such verse is not the sole genre nor the acme of spiritual expression. A thing that is not of earth becomes more authentic and vivid if viewed in its own native atmosphere and setting than if tamed to the needs of the outer eye and the established habits of the poetic imagination. Sri Aurobindo, however, does not indulge in fantasy: a fidelity to mystical fact constitutes his "strangeness." (Sri Aurobindo 52)

The bird’s return with "His crimson passion of love divine" does not indicate the end of aspiration. It rather establishes an intimate link between the waiting Sadhak and the Silent Brahman or the "eternal Silence" that paves the way for transformation. "White-rose-altar" (17) may indicate intensification of tapas as silent Brahman is not the ultimate goal. In the third stanza the bird appears still more radiantly as a symbol of rising aspiration.
The breast of the bird is "rich and red" like the "blood of a soul" (21) having indomitable aspiration and divine passion to reach the Infinite braving the "hard crag-teeth world" (22). The red suggesting the blood indicates the tapas or strivings or a restless passion of human soul aspiring to reach the Infinite. Another complex imagery is contained in the last line of the third stanza: "A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase / of moon-edged night and rising day" (23-24). Elucidating the imagery Khanria writes:

The bird is first a ruby which in its turn blazes as a flame kindled on an altar. It is also a flower and then the altar changes into a vase and this altar-vase decked with the moon-sun jewels is silver-gold. Thus the bird of fire as the rising aspiration is a flame and as the congealed concentration of love, a ruby, and, for its spontaneity and delicate beauty, a rose. (Mother India, Oct. 1957: 6-7)

In the fourth stanza the tone of the poet shows an uncommon vigour. An animated passion to soar into the supreme mystery "breaking the barriers of mind / and life" (29-30) burns through the lines. The "Flame" is the "offering-flower" (25) on behalf of "the finite’s gods to the Infinite" (26) and it reflects the finite’s divine passion to expand and merge in the Infinite. It is a miraculous and marvel bird beyond intellectual perception. Its wings that suggest its action and tapas burn with the light of divine wisdom and its eyes "that look beyond all space" (28) is not hindered by ego and ignorance. With
one determined endeavour ("one strange leap of thy mystic stress" 29) it can
break all the barriers and limitations born of ego and arrive at the luminous
home of the Eternal and the Ultimate penetrating the eternal Silence and the
mystery of Divine Love.

One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind
and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight;
Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face. (29-32)

Thus passing through individual pictures and images ultimately we
realise a harmonious whole and a profound fullness satisfying our inner
awareness. The images do not yield to the grasp of our intellectual
understanding completely, yet they never puzzle us and never lead us to
vagueness. The mystic’s strangeness is evident in the imagery and symbols
throughout the poem. It is because a symbol, as the poet understands, is the
form on one plane that represents a truth of another. To him everything is
a symbol of some higher reality. The higher reality may not reveal itself
fully to us. This is especially so in case of the art of a mystic or a spiritual
seeker or a yogi who wonders in the higher planes of consciousness. But this
creates a suggestive richness instead of vagueness.

"Thought the Paraclete" catches a revealing glimpse of mind’s
adventure in the higher planes of consciousness. It is thus a picturization of
a journey from ego to Self, from the "deep twilights of the world-abyss" to
the "Sun-realms of supernal seeing" (13), from inconscience to
superconscience, from limited and partial knowledge to the all revealing
Truth. Philosophy here becomes mute. Iyengar appropriately writes:

The poem gives us, not the philosophical justification for the
soul’s ascent to the Godhead on the wings of thought, but
rather brings out in one dazzling wave of rhythmic sound the
beauty and the glory and the ecstasy of the fact of ascent and
triumph and splendid transformation." (The Advent April

However, the philosophical background of the poem leads us to the
essence of the poem

The yogi-poet’s thought is transmuted into a limitless consciousness.
The poet feels to have reached his journey's end, ie at the point of self-
discovery when "Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune" (22). The
vision and the seer, the experience and the experiencer grow one. Offering
an interpretative picture of the flight of the thought Sri Aurobindo writes:

As thought rises in the scale, it ceases to be intellectual,
becomes illumined, then intuitive, then overmental and finally
disappears seeking the last Beyond. The poem does not express
any philosophical thought, however; it is simply a perception
of a certain movement, that is all. (qtd. in Sethna, Sri
Aurobindo 364)

The consummation of this upward flight finds distinct and authentic
expression:
Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,
Climbing high far ethers eternal-sunned,
Thought the great-winged wanderer paraclete
Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune.

Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune. (18-22)

The title of the poem holds the suggestive key to the spiritual experience of upward flight into the "vasts of God" (5). Thought distinguishes man from other creatures and glorifies him. Thought here, perhaps, connotes the eternal aspiration that flickers deep within the human breast and attempts to soar into the realms of ultimate reality. Thought here is, as interpreted by S. Krishna Sarma, the "total faculty of perception, cogitation and discrimination—Consciousness or Chit" (11).

Significantly enough the poet presents the thought as "the great-winged wanderer paraclete." The word "Paraclete" is richly suggestive. It denotes "'one who intercedes on behalf of another; an advocate', from the Greek root meaning 'called to help'" (qtd. in Sarma 11). In Christian theology paraclete refers to the Holy Ghost, the mediator between the man and the divine. Attempting a more vivid explanation of the term Gerard Manley Hopkins writes: "A paraclete is one who comforts, who cheers, who encourages, who persuades, who exhorts, who stirs up, who urges forward, who calls on . . ." (qtd. in The Advent April 1977: 62). Thus paraclete stands for an intercessor, an inspirer and a mediator. Thought the paraclete is a mediating force that inspires and urges the consciousness to come out
of avidyā and inconscience and to shoot into the "ethers eternal-sunned" to
effect self-discovery, to attain eternal bliss and ultimate Truth. Sri Aurobindo
visualises thought as the mediator. Offering an interpretation of the idea
contained in the poem he writes:

> Thought is not the giver of Knowledge but the 'mediator'
between the Inconscient and the Superconscient. It compels the
world born from the Inconscient to reach for a Knowledge
other than the instinctive vital or merely empirical, for the
knowledge that itself exceeds thought; it calls for that
superconscient Knowledge and prepares the consciousness here
to receive it. It rises itself the higher realms and even in
disappearing into the supramental and Ananda levels is
transformed into something that will bring down their powers
into the silent self which its cessation leaves behind it." (qtd.
in Sethna, *Sri Aurobindo* 364-65)

If one keenly observes the poetic movement, the imagery and the
colour-pattern with an eager receptive mood, calm concentration and
awakened imagination one can penetrate into the poem on the poetic level.
The poem opens with a revealing and apt simile that vividly suggests the
idea of ascent. Thereafter one luminous revelation follows another leading
us to the almost incomprehensible summit where self appears transformed,
enlightened, lone, and limitless. This happens as a result of the ascent of
consciousness which is the central theme of the poem. The words "bright
archangel" (1) bring into the mind of the reader the idea of the Holy Ghost, the paraclete and its flight into "spirit immensities" (2). In a similar leap, the thought or the aspiring individual-self soars into the "vasts of God" beyond the vital earth consciousness ("green crests of the seas of life" 3). The initial aspiration for union with the divine is symbolised by the orange skies. The green colour symbolises the "vital force and the light of emotions" (Sarma 12). Perhaps the faint perception of the "spirit immensities" as suggested by the words "dream-caught" (2) prompts the aspiring self to experience the same bliss in full. Thus man, the mental and vital being, plunges in the mystic search for the higher realm of consciousness or bliss inspired by the touch of the spiritual force. The expression "self-lost" (5) emphatically indicates the overwhelming aspiration in the individual self. According to Sri Aurobindo's scheme of ascent, the initiative must come from the individual self. Thus this shift from green to orange and beyond indicates the upward movement to have the touch of a higher consciousness, may be the Higher Mind. The colour-scheme in this poem or in Sri Aurobindo's later poems draw their significance from mystic experiences. The colours do not refer to physical ones, but to mystical colours visualised at various stages of trance or yogic sādhanā.

The upward journey of the thought or consciousness continues uninterrupted ("sleepless" 6). The seeking spirit rises high beyond the limitations of Space and Time. "Gold-red" (7), according to Sri Aurobindo, is the radiance of the supramental in the physical. "Feet that trod" (7)
suggests the relentless endeavour or śādhanā of the seeker as he proceeds towards the goal. The expression "Space and Time's mute vanishing ends" (8) suggests total collapse of vital limitations and the attempt of the Higher Mind to get beyond the categories of Space and Time. Thus the consciousness reaches the level of the Illumined Mind when the conceptual knowledge of unity21 transmutes into a vision of living reality. As the self ascends upwards gradually towards the radiance of supramental light, it grows radiant like the all-seeing all-daring hermit who is a pilgrim of eternity and who can venture into regions beyond time and space ("bourneless ways" 10). There the awareness of the world vanishes totally ("world-bare summits" 11). The hippogriff is a "fabulous creature resembling a griffin but having the body and hind part of a horse" (Webster's Dictionary 673). It is half-horse and half-eagle. Horse is a Vedic symbol of life-force. Thus the hippogriff, combining in it the gallop of the horse and the flight of the bird, suggests, with double emphasis, the upward movement of man's questing soul to the "sun-realms of supernal seeing."

"Pale-blue" (9) is symbolically the colour of higher consciousness or that of "the higher ranges of mind up to Intuition" (qtd. in Iyengar, The Advent, April 1977: 69 fn). By the time the Thought touches the Intuitive level he is the hippogriff, "pale-blue-lined" (9) and the hermit, the lustrous mystic-

21 Higher mind is "a luminous thought-mind, a mind of Spirit-born conceptual knowledge" (Aurobindo 19: 939).
seer. At this stage the seeming disharmonies of the world disappear: "the deep twilights of the world-abyss / Failed below" (12-13). The harmony associated with the higher consciousness exerts its impact. "The harmony from above," writes Iyengar to make the idea clear, "would seem to have calmed the troubled waters below, so that it is clear that the descent of the higher consciousness has taken place concurrently with the ascent of the lower one" (ibid 69).

As the "deep-twilights" (12), ie half-light or the power of lower-thought "failed below" (13), the outbreak of the light of Intuition follows and inspires the aspiring soul to rise towards the "sun-realms of supernal seeing." Supernal seeing suggests the "all-pervading consciousness of the Divine" (Sarma 15). "Crimson-white" (14) is the "reflection of the Supramental Light" (ibid 70 fn). "Pauseless bliss" (14) suggests incessant descending movement of the higher nature towards the lower to raise the latter to higher consciousness. As the self journeys to the "sun-realms of supernal seeing" it experiences "oceans of pauseless bliss" (14) bearing the reflection of Supramental Light. Yet it is not at rest even at this level of consciousness [overmental level]. Its "vague heart-yearning" (15) indicates the lack of ultimate fulfilment and luminous self-knowledge. Even the power of the overmind, as Sri Aurobindo points out, is a power of the lower hemisphere and hence it is not above division and multiplicity. He writes that although "its basis is a cosmic unity, its action is an action of division and interaction, an action taking its stand on the play of the multiplicity"
(Aurobindo 19: 952-53). Thus overmind is not the final goal of the aspiring soul. As a result follows the aspiring self's last and mighty leap towards the "unconned / Secrets white-fire-veiled of the last Beyond" (16-17) and the "high far ethers eternal-sunned" (19). While climbing the high far ethers illumined by the eternal sun the upsoaring soul experiences stunning rapture as it moves across the regions of "power-swept silences" (18). Self's journey to this final stage of progress, ie the eternal-sunned ethers of supramental gnosis or the "last Beyond," is perhaps possible only through the chant of mantra ("slow-singing" of the "flame-word rune" [21]), the "mantra of total emancipation and transfiguration" (Iyengar, The Advent, April 1977: 70).

According to Sri Aurobindo, the "flame-word-rune" is "the Word of the Higher Inspiration, Intuition, Revelation, which is the highest attainment of Thought" (qtd. ibid: 70 fn). "Disappeared" suggests, as explained by Sarma, "a kind of mystic merger and the loss of the self in the Bliss of the Gnosis, even like a river disappearing into the Ocean" (17).

Once the Thought or self is in touch with the supramental light the luminous path to the ultimate Bliss opens. The self is no more the ego; it is the Cosmic Self, free and illimitable. It merges with the Infinite Self and is the Infinite Self. It is lone--the One in every truth, universal and free from duality ("all is abolished but the mute Alone" ["Nirvana"]). It is nude--bared of all the sheaths of Ignorance, all the attributes and features of ego. The ego vanishes completely. Limitations crumble finally. It grows immune to the pull of Inconscience.
The intuitive and revelatory poems of this phase are mostly vivid and intimate spiritual perceptions in the way the Upanishads are. The synthesizing vision these poems contain is rooted in transcendent states of consciousness explored by the yogi. These poems succeed in "carrying up the power of speech to the direct expression of a higher reach of experience than the intellectual or vital." Poetry here expresses the experience, the vision, the ideas of "the higher and wider soul" in man and by making them "real to our life-soul as well as present to our intellect, it opens to us by word the doors of the Spirit" (Aurobindo 9: 13). The poet now becomes a channel to communicate the divine truth, beauty and joy. His poems become songs of existence, unity and harmony. The poet completely opens himself to overhead sources of inspiration. By this time he has reached the overmind plane. The reasoning mind sees things in division. Surface appearance distorts truth. As the yogi-poet transcends the reasoning mind and looks beyond surface appearance his poetry reveals the inmost truth of being. His poetry mediates between the spirit and life. Sri Aurobindo, the critic, clearly expresses this idea when he says that this mediation "between the truth of the spirit and the truth of life will be one of the chief functions of the poetry of the future" (ibid 205).

But this is not the end of his journey. While the yogi in him discovers the unexplored mysteries of existence and strives for highest spiritual attainment, the poet in him expresses the yogi's spiritual discoveries and realisation in the rhythmic words. The yogi-poet wants that the poetic word
should acquire more revealing force and strives to "discover the highest power of the inspired word, the Mantra" (Aurobindo 9: 222). We get an inkling of this effort in the poems of direct vision, like "Bird of Fire," "Rose of God " and "Thought the Paraclete." He intends poetry to draw sustenance from the Overmind "from which all creative inspiration comes" (ibid 207). He aspires to achieve this in Savitri. Giving hints about the stupendous task to be done by the poetic word Sri Aurobindo writes:

The voice of the poet will reveal to us by the inspired rhythmic word the God who is the Self of all things and beings, the Life of the universe, the Divinity in man, and he will express all the emotion and delight of the endeavour of the human soul to discover the touch and joy of that Divinity within him in whom he feels the mighty founts of his own being and life and effort and his fullness and unity with all cosmic experience and with Nature and with all creatures." (ibid 251-52)

Poetry will thus lay the foundation of life divine on earth. This is his goal in Savitri. He wants that poetry will assume an all-inclusive expansiveness and vastness so that it can find, besides phenomenal reality, "other realities and their powers on man and take all the planes of existence for its empire" (Aurobindo 9: 203). He wants that poetry will make "a larger field of being" (ibid 232) more real to man's experience. With this aspiration the poet embarks upon a rare poetic adventure, ie Savitri.