Chapter 6

The Consummation

Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol is an inspired poetic revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision based on his spiritual realisations. His long and absorbing yogic sadhana and spiritual quest culminate in a spiritual discovery that reveals to him the possibility latent in man, presently confined in the prison of ego and consequently crippled by death. At the peak of his spiritual attainments he comprehends the bliss and power of supramental light that can transform life on earth. So he visualises for humanity an integral transformation to be effected through self-discovery. Savitri is a poetic testament to this spiritual journey to "a new world, a new power of consciousness, a new destiny" (Iyengar, Dawn to Greater Dawn 13). Thousands of years back Rishi Valmiki’s love for the suffering beings, as his pity for the bereaved Kraunchi evinces, inspired his imagination and the outcome was the Rāmāyana. Here again a yogi, Rishi and seer-poet’s deep love for humanity imprisoned in ego and ignorance stirs his imagination and he undertakes a stupendous poetic adventure and the result is Savitri.

Savitri is a stupendous poetic adventure not only in size but also in purpose and dimension. It visualises "the end of Death, the death of Ignorance" (11.1.1346). Savitri’s mission is "to raise the world to God in deathless Light" (11.1.762) and "to change the earthly life to life divine"
The epic seizes the poet's vision of man's spiritual evolution, i.e. the evolution of human consciousness beyond the bondage and limitation of material consciousness to its original status of Divine Consciousness.

While expressing the poet's vision Savitri does not reduce to be a fantasy or an intellectual and philosophical formulation. It rather remains a record, an exact record as the poet contends, of a concrete visualisation and a palpable spiritual experience. When the first section of Savitri was published in 1946 it aroused some criticism to the effect that it was inferior poetry and inferior philosophy. But Sri Aurobindo pointed out that the critics had missed entirely the purpose of his work. In a letter written in response to a criticism on Savitri he says:

I have not anywhere in Savitri written anything for the sake of mere picturesqueness or merely to produce a rhetorical effect; what I am trying to do everywhere in the poem is to express exactly something seen, something felt or experienced. . . . Savitri is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences. (Aurobindo 29:794)

Sri Aurobindo thus firmly asserts that Savitri is a poetic expression of his spiritual experiences rather than of philosophical abstractions. He further adds that he goes on changing the expression until he receives "the absolutely right inspiration and the right transcription of it" (Aurobindo 29:794).
In addition the act of composition of *Savitri* was a novel and unusual experimentation as it was written from the poet’s own yogic consciousness. It was an act of divine inspiration that flowed out of the yogi’s communion with higher sources of inspiration. It was an act of surrender the poet being a perfect instrument to transcribe the voice of higher inspiration. The poet himself asserted that he regarded *Savitri* as "a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one’s own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative" (Aurobindo 29: 727-28). Through the act of composition of *Savitri* the poet rather mobilised a spiritual force and remained in close touch with it.

*Savitri* kept growing in Sri Aurobindo's mind since his pre-yogic days. The theme underwent progressive transformation in harmony with his spiritual growth till it took its present shape. Soon after his return from England Sri Aurobindo, the patriot and scholar, was attracted towards India’s mythology and history. He picked up episodes from these sources to present them in the context of his choice relevant to the present challenge. Confrontation with death in different ways and situations is a theme that continued to stir his mind. In *Urvasie* Pururavus conquered mortality by winning the grace of the Mighty Mother and abandoned the earth to gain Urvasie. Ruru, in *Love and Death*, brought back his beloved Priyumvada to this pleasant earth from the jaws of death by bartering away the fruitful years of his life. In *Baji Prabhout*, Baji embraced death heroically and victoriously under the spell of a divine inspiration and in the delight of
divine vision. But such confrontations failed to convince the poet and to fulfill his spiritual aspiration. These were for personal or temporary gain. Conquest over death and attainment of immortality, that has been man’s aspiration since the dawn of his awakening still remained unattained. In this context the episode of Savitri came to the poet’s mind and continued to grip him all along his poetic career. With the intensification of his yoga fresh and revealing spiritual realisation followed. With each stage of his yogic ascension, the theme of Savitri grew in dimension and spiritual significance. The poet himself affirms that he used the epic "as a means of ascension." He further adds: "I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level" (Aurobindo 29: 727). In Urvasie and Love and Death the victory of love was asserted. But for this victory the help of the outside agencies was sought. In Savitri Love’s conquest over Death is achieved through growth of the Self. This process of the growth of the Self is, indeed, the process of the growth of Savitri.

Love in Savitri transcends all individual considerations and acquires a cosmic dimension. Love that rather becomes the embodiment of the divine Grace stands as a saviour force of the entire humanity and brings an end to its seeming opposition to death, the force of nescience and mortality. "It is in Savitri that Love divine comes", writes Purani, "as the embodiment of the Supreme Grace to deliver the soul of man out of the clutches of Death" (Savitri 44).

In the process of growth Savitri underwent many revisions, recasts and ultimately some parts were altogether rewritten. The poet himself writes:
I made some eight or ten recasts of it [Savitri] originally under the old insufficient inspiration. Afterwards I am altogether rewriting it, concentrating on the first book and working on it over and over again with the hope that every line may be of a perfect perfection. . . ." (Aurobindo 29: 728)

Attempt to present the legend of Savitri in the form of a narrative poem in English began at Baroda along with similar attempts using other mythological episodes. In the beginning it was written under insufficient inspiration. As the poet advanced in his spiritual journey and ascended higher levels of consciousness the legend gained fresh significance. The poet made successive revisions trying to "lift the general level higher and higher towards a possible Overmind poetry" (Aurobindo 29: 729). Originally it was planned as a narrative poem in two parts with four books in part 1 and three books and an epilogue in part 2. Part 1 was named "Earth" and part 2 "Beyond." But the epic in its present shape has three parts with twelve books divided into 48 cantos and an epilogue extending into nearly 24,000 lines. After initial composition at Baroda it was almost left aside as politics and yoga engaged the poet. After his withdrawal from politics he occasionally retouched different parts of the poem, especially the opening books in the seclusion of Pondicherry. This may be the second stage of the development of Savitri. To bring to light the process of evolution of Savitri from the first Baroda version through several revisions or recasts from different mental and overhead levels the poet writes:
The poem was originally written from a lower level, a mixture perhaps of the inner mind, psychic, poetic intelligence, sublimised vital, afterwards with the Higher Mind, often illumined and intuitivised, intervening." (Aurobindo 29: 729)

The poet failed to pay attention to Savitri when he remained absorbed in writing for the Arya. Then occurred the momentous event of the descent of the Overmind. The descent of this Higher Consciousness did not only mean a giant leap ahead by the yogi in the upward spiritual journey, it also kept open a great future possibility, ie the descent of the Supermind. This significant incident was followed by his withdrawal into almost complete seclusion. During this period the poet took up Savitri to remould it or almost to rewrite it under an Overmind influence. The poet asserts that "as it now stands there is a general Overmind influence" (Aurobindo 29: 729). He continued to work on Savitri till a few weeks before he passed away. The evolution of this epic is a demonstration of the process of the spiritual growth of the yogi.

Sri Aurobindo chose the legend of Savitri from the "Vana Parva" of the Mahābhārata as the theme of Savitri. With the touch of his yogic vision the legend seems to be reborn. It ceases to be a mere legend and becomes a spiritual symbol. It embodies his vision that marks the peak of all his spiritual realisation. The poet himself describes Savitri to be his main work. His literary endeavour finds consummation in Savitri. The poet's own indication that this poetic adventure is one "in a rudderless boat upon the
vastness of the Infinite'" (qtd. in Iyengar, *Dawn to Greater Dawn* 17) throws light on the vastness of the scheme of the poem. He writes in a letter that *Savitri* covers "most subjects of philosophical thought and vision and many aspects of spiritual experience" (Aurobindo 29: 732). In another letter he again writes that it tries to express "a total and many-sided vision and experience of all the planes of being and their action upon each other" (Aurobindo 29: 738). It becomes clear that the simple and brief legend contained in 700 neatly composed lines cannot house in its frame the cosmic drama embodying Sri Aurobindo's vision of the Spirit. Quite naturally and inevitably the yogi's spiritual vision, experiences and realisation suffuse the legend and transform it into an epic of multi-dimensional spiritual symbol.

Why does Sri Aurobindo choose this legend? The legend of *Savitri* shows the glory of conjugal love and fidelity and the triumph of wifely chastity. There are many legends dealing with such chastity, love, and fidelity in Indian mythology. The chastity of Sita is a living legend till today. A paragon of womanly virtues she presents an image of ungrudging surrender to the will of her husband. Besides resisting the enticing approach and evil designs of the demon king Ravan she does not have to face a challenging situation that requires her to awaken in herself a fighter's spirit. She is an ideal Hindu woman, but not a saviour force. While abandoned in the forest a weeping Sita finds the support of a guru and guardian in no less a personality than sage Valmiki. In the same "Vana Parva" there is the story of Nala with the long suffering heroine Damayanti.
The story of Dushyanta and Shakuntala is also from the *Mahābhārata*. But Damayanti and Shakuntala are rather overpowered by fate than capable of overpowering fate. Shakuntala presents an uncommon example of fidelity and forbearance in spite of all the humiliations heaped upon her. Her life is a saga of silent suffering and waiting. Damayanti left alone in the forest in an utterly helpless condition accepts suffering as her fate. On the other hand, the story of Savitri stands on quite different foundations. "Man here is master of his fate;" writes Nandakumar, "Women is sakti, the redeemer, the transvaluer of values, the subduer of destiny" (295). In her indomitable will-power and soul-power, strength and potentiality of character and depth of wisdom Savitri stands apart as a woman that can act as the saviour force. Perhaps these distinctive features of Savitri's personality attract the poet to this legend. "The power of a woman's silent love" (Aurobindo 3: 155) also appeals him. Of course there are other probable reasons. The potentialities of the characters, the hidden significance of the actions in the legend, such as, Aswapathy's austerities, Savitri's confrontation with Death, and the resurrection of Satyavan and the possibility that the legend keeps open before humanity might have fitted in with the vision of the poet. In addition the symbolic significance behind the names of characters opens a new world of challenges and struggles, aspirations and fulfilments. Unveiling the symbolism behind the names and the legend Sri Aurobindo writes:

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

Indian literature is familiar with symbolic mode of expression. The Veda is a treasury of symbols which open the windows to the deeper realities of existence. Sun, Fire, Dawn, Ocean, Bird are some of the important symbols from the Veda which are converted into "physical symbols of the supra-physical" (Aurobindo 9: 42). Indian spiritual poetry
attempts to express the inner vision of the seer-poets. The symbolic mode of expression suits it most. In the Bhagavata the gopis (cowgirls) symbolise the human consciousness yearning for the Divine. In the Mahābhārata the battle of Kurukshetra symbolises the eternal battle that goes on in the human mind between the forces of good and evil. The Rāmāyana is also the symbolic expression of sage Valmiki’s vision. Sri Aurobindo, who belongs to the line of the spiritual poets, prefers to express his vision in symbolic shape in Savitri.

Sri Aurobindo’s symbols mainly emanate from the Vedas, the Upanishads and Indian mythologies. But his spiritual experience add new and deeper meanings to these symbols. As a result a world of higher realities, which constitute the world of the poet’s vision, emerges. This world is, as Leavis writes about Yeats’s “dream-world”, “something more than private, personal, and literary” (31). It owes its validity to the poet’s perception of a deeper Truth and is linked with man’s spiritual aspiration, ie aspiration for self-discovery. W.B.Yeats also draws his symbols from the folklore and mythology of his country, besides other sources such as magic, occult discipline, philosophy, metaphysics and objects of personal association. But his symbols thrive on the strength of his intellectual conviction, deep emotion and evocative power. Sri Aurobindo’s symbols draw their sustenance and significance from his spiritual experience and enlightenment. Trying to explain what a symbol is Sri Aurobindo says, as mentioned earlier, that it is the form on one plane that represents a truth of another. "For
instance", he writes, "a flag is the symbol of a nation. . . . This body of ours is a symbol of our real being and everything is a symbol of some higher reality" (Aurobindo 23: 954). Thus symbol involves a vision ie seeing the inmost truth or higher reality of a thing or an experience. Only then can the poet convey the experience through the symbol. A symbol does not merely represent the experience but conveys the experience. Of course, a poet can develop an intellectual symbol where the image of symbol represents the experience, dose not embody it. But when Sri Aurobindo uses the bird of fire as a symbol the bird embodies the thrill of the experience. Symbols born out of deeper and clear visions convey the experience without distortion.

Sri Aurobindo considers that vision is the characteristic power of the poet. Rimbaud, the French symbolist poet, also holds that the poet is essentially a voyant, a seer, a visionary. The voyant perceives such images that enable him "to express supernatural truths symbolically through the objects known to men" (Cruickshank 140). Mallarmé holds that poetry is the expression of "the mysterious sense of the aspects of existence" (qtd. in Wimsatt and Brooks 593). The French symbolist poets like Mallarmé, Baudelaire and Rimbaud try to create a sort of correspondence between the ideal world or inner reality and the everyday world. But the basis of their perception of this new reality remains an experiment and is not above conflicting conceptions. Rimbaud even writes that "the poet makes himself voyant by a long, vast, reasoned derangement of all the senses" (qtd. ibid 594). But for Sri Aurobindo this inner reality becomes a living Truth as his
vision is based on his spiritual experiences and realisation. Describing the function of symbol in expression Sri Aurobindo writes in a letter:

A symbol expresses not the play of abstract things or ideas put into imaged form but a living Truth or inward vision or experience of things, so inward, so subtle, so little belonging to the domain of intellectual abstraction, and precision that it cannot be brought out except through symbolic images, the more these images have a living truth of their own which corresponds intimately to the living truth they symbolise, suggests the very vibration of the experience itself, the greater becomes the art of the symbolic expression. When the symbol is a representative sign or figure and nothing more, then the symbolic approaches nearer to an intellectual method.

(qtd. in Purani, Savitri 11-12)

In Savitri the poet performs this twin task—discovering the living truth of their own hidden in the symbolic images and establishing an intimate correspondence between these images and the living truth they symbolise.

With the power of symbolic expression the poet transforms the legend of Savitri into an epic of soul’s adventure. He himself tells Savitri a legend and a symbol. It is, as M.P. Pandit says, "a legend about something that has taken place in the history of man and a symbol of what is going on and of what is going to be" (3). In the Mahābhārata Rishi Markandeya relates this legend to Yudhisthira to console him. It has also an intrinsic purpose of
establishing a healthy social tradition and ideal conjugal relationship by 
highlighting an ideal wife's devotion for her husband and the power of 
womanly virtue and love. But *Savitri* transcends the socio-religious and 
cultural aspects. It reveals the glory of the Self. It records a spiritual 
adventure describing in the process the poet's own spiritual odyssey. It 
narrates the story of the conquest of death thereby indicating the next step 
of evolutionary leap. It elaborates the story of "Earth, Love and Doom" 
(1.1.316)—the power of Love embodying Divine Grace conquers Doom and 
paves the way for transforming the earthly life into life-divine. The yoga of 
Aswapathy and the inner journey of Savitri do not aim at individual 
liberation. They are concerned with the fate of man, i.e., discovery of his 
identity and his relation with the cosmos. *Savitri* is, Nolinikanta Gupta 
remarks, "the cosmic Answer to the cosmic Question" (*Mandir Annual 
1985: 99*). The questions relate to existence and its mystery—the meaning 
and purpose of this universe, its origin and its end, and the purpose of man's 
existence. These are the questions that had agitated the mind of Nachiketas 
and Swetaketu. Sri Aurobindo delves into such mysteries in *Savitri*. So he 
adds many new dimensions to the legend. Pandit elaborates the various 
themes that *Savitri* brings into its ambit:

In *Savitri* he recaptures the fundamentals of all religions, 
philosophies, yogic practices. He describes the cosmogony of 
the universe: from *bhu*—earth—*bhuvah*, *swah*, *mahas*, *sat*, *chit* 
and *ananda*—the seven planes of existence, the various grades
of consciousness. He describes in vivid detail and unveils the occult geography of the universe. That is perhaps the largest part of the epic. And then he narrates how man has grown up from the pure physical man concerned with his creature comforts, how slowly he develops into the rajasic man and from the rajasic man into the sattwic man. He discusses the various parts of the mind, why life is maimed, why death enters at all into this cosmic scheme, why if ananda is the base, ananda the sustenance and ananda is the goal, do we feel so much of suffering, so much of pain. He also discusses the problem of free-will and determinism, what is Karma, what are the gods. The gods that we speak and read of in the Puranas, are they all myths? What is the truth behind the traditions of ardhanārīshvara, or Durga or Lakshmi or Saraswati? Are they all mental constructions? What are the chakras, what about the lotuses of which the Tantra speaks? Are they again just matters of faith or can they be experienced? He takes the whole life in one embrace. (5-6)

The "whole life" is presented in Savitri in an epic form. It is not a philosophical treatise; it is a work of art. Art speaks more philosophy than a philosophical treatise. It is the finest expression of Sri Aurobindo’s creative imagination. As a consummate artist he presents the poem in a dramatic way. With the shocking announcements ("This was the day when Satyanvan
must die" [1.1.341] or "Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her" [6.1.585]), flashbacks, encounter that changes the shape of destiny (encounter with Death), and amazing and mysterious inner journeys it remains dramatic throughout. The poem is, remarks Ghose, "a dramatic myth set against a cosmic background" (Sri Aurobindo: Poet 53). The exterior action mostly melts into inner action. The field of action shifts from this visible world of sense-perception to the inner realms of soul’s realisation. In Milton’s Paradise Lost we also feel the absence of a pure story element. The story of temptation and consequent fall is almost covered by the poet’s ideas and conceptions of heaven, hell, man and the universe which "his imagination had constructed out of his intellectual beliefs and reviewed in the vision of his soul . . ." (Aurobindo 9: 83). Milton didn’t intend to dramatise the story of fall in its exterior. Rather he presents "the mystery of the individual will in eternal opposition to the Divine will " (Purani, Savitri 27). He uses the story of fall merely as the basis as Sri Aurobindo uses the legend of Savitri and develops on it a magnificent dramatic myth. The story also forms the basis for the elaboration of his philosophic ideas. Thus both Paradise Lost and Savitri do not thrive on the strength of exterior action, but on the strength of ideas and conceptions and that of spiritual realisation and experiences respectively.

To accommodate his vision and realisation Sri Aurobindo transforms some events into deep and long spiritual explorations. In the process the
characters and events acquire a new symbolic significance. There are two journeys in the epic, one of the father and the other of the daughter, heading towards self-discovery. The father's, ie Aswapathy's eighteen years of austerities performed in the legend with the sole intention of begetting offspring has been completely changed into a spiritual journey that symbolises man's quest for Truth. Aswapathy, a virtuous and ideal king, becomes a representative of the race and aspires to transform human life into life-divine with the help of Divine Grace. The daughter's journey, ie Savitri's tri-rātra vow or austerities for three days, is given a deep subjective orientation and changed into a profound inner quest culminating in self-discovery that brings knowledge and power. The religious vow becomes a subtle spiritual battle for self-awakening. Savitri grows conscious of her divinity and immortality. At the same time she does not forget her human role and role for humanity. She does not remain a mere princess but grows to be the incarnation of love embodying Divine Grace born to share man's burden of suffering and ignorance and to free humanity from this burden. In the legend she faces Yama with the power of her purity and chastity. In the epic she awakes to her soul-power. In the legend her conversation with Yama is "religio-ethical" (Purani, Savitri 7) in manner. She pleads with Yama who is not only the god of Death but also the god of Dharma. But in the epic, the soul-power and knowledge and the manifest divinity face Yama, the force of death, darkness and ignorance. Thus this confrontation is transformed into a psychological and spiritual battle meant
to bring about a decisive turn in human evolution. Other episodes like the
meeting of Savitri and Satyavan and Narad’s fateful announcement have
been treated as important incidents in the cosmic drama bearing hidden
significance.

Savitri opens with the symbol dawn and we find Savitri face to face
with the crucial problem, ie the death of Satyavan. The poet moves to the
centre of the action. But sequentially the action of this epic begins with the
yoga of Aswapathy. He bears the world’s desire in his bosom and moves the
divine to bless him with the boon, ie the birth of Savitri, "an incarnation of
the Divine Mother" (Aurobindo 29: 729). In between lies a long spiritual
adventure. The legend assigns the virtuous and noble king of Madra a simple
role. With a heavy heart the childless king plunges into a long and arduous
spiritual austerity extending over long eighteen years. The outcome is a boon
from goddess Savitri. A daughter with goddess-like beauty and splendour is
born bringing delight to a father’s arid heart. Time runs ahead bringing
womanhood to Savitri and social tradition demands marriage. But the
splendour of her personality keeps the prospective suitors away. Under this
uncommon circumstance Aswapathy asks her to shoulder the responsibility
of choosing a husband. Thus Aswapathy is viewed in the legend as a
sensitive father seeking a child with all his heart’s accumulated yearning and
as a father wise and understanding enough to allow the daughter to travel
across the country in quest of a suitable match. In Sri Aurobindo’s vision
this quest becomes the beginning of Savitri’s quest for her veiled divinity.
A judicious father, a righteous, dutiful and loving king and a man adhering to spiritual disciplines Aswapathy emerges essentially a good man. Hence his prayer for the offspring is not solely motivated by his desire for continuance of his lineage. He also wants continuance of righteousness. In this connection John Collins writes in his essay "Savitri--Poetic Expression of Spiritual Experience":

The issue here is one of the most persistent in all religious literature; that is, the question raised by a good man when it appears that his righteousness will come to naught. If the fruits of one's righteousness do not somehow extend beyond the finite life of the individual, then righteousness is empty in the face of death. In this case the position that the righteous man will always be vindicated is supported by the eventual response of the goddess Savitri. . . ." (McDermott, ed.24)

Thus from religious and moral point of view Aswapathy's prayer is justified. But Sri Aurobindo looks deeper and makes a significant shift. He makes it a spiritual issue and Aswapathy an aspiring soul. The good and righteous man is metamorphosed into a highly evolved spiritual being and a seer-king. His role is transformed into that of a representative of the human race bearing man's aspiration to be free from the shackles of death and ignorance. The individual becomes a symbol. Healing of a childless man's sorrow is transformed into the healing of the world's pain. Prayer for the fulfilment of personal desire changes into prayer for the transformation
of man. Aswapathy’s purpose changes vastly. He intends to break "the iron Law" (3.4.430) and change "Nature’s doom" (3.4.431) by effecting the descent of "Spirit’s power" (3.4.431). Sri Aurobindo visualises the symbolic significance of Aswapathy’s austerity and makes it a yoga of cosmic significance. He makes Aswapathy a fit instrument of higher consciousness. This inner journey is a saga of self-opening to higher Power, of the growth of the individual into the impersonality of the Self. In this way, the yogi-poet changes the legend into the epic that dramatises the Divine’s descent for "effecting a momentous forward spurt in consciousness" (Iyengar, Dawn to Greater Dawn 38). Sri Aurobindo briefly indicates the process of development in Aswapathy’s yoga in a letter:

Aswapathy’s Yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as the individual and this is described as the Yoga of the King. Next, he makes the ascent as a typical representative of the race to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness and this is described in the Second Book: but this too is as yet only an individual victory. Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realisation and new creation. That is described in the Book of the Divine Mother. (Aurobindo 29: 773-74)

The details of Aswapathy’s sadhana or inner travel cover almost half of the epic—22 out of 48 cantos starting from the third canto of book one to
the end of book three. The first part of his sadhana, ie his own spiritual fulfilment begins with his self-opening and self-expansion. Divine knowledge streams into him swiftly because he is an uncommon personality. Though immersed in his kingly affairs he keeps mighty memories of his source from where he is separated:

His was a spirit that stooped from larger spheres
Into our province of ephemeral sight,
A colonist from immortality. (1.3.9-11)

To explain the idea Pandit writes that he is "not someone who is obliged to be born by his past Karma," but he is 'one who has come by choice to colonise for God this field of death"(11). He is the appropriate medium for the manifestation of divine knowledge. Because of the inner fitness the process of self-opening is easy and quick in him. At the same time his aspiration is also intense which arouses response from above. The opening added by surrender works wonder in spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo, the yogi, insists on total surrender for spiritual transformation. Aswapathy could surrender himself completely to the inner call or the will of the Divine. As the title of the canto three of book one, ie "The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release", indicates it describes soul's liberation which is a step towards divine life. Purani succinctly points out that the whole poem becomes "the song per excellence of man's growth on earth from the inconscient through the vital and the mental stages to the realms of the Spirit, the realms of the Divine" (Savitri 151). The beginning of the yoga of Aswapathy marks the beginning towards this consummation.
Aswapathy's Yoga aims at achieving freedom from ignorance and from the bondage of body, life and mind. The yogi aspires to grow beyond Ego and to be established in the infinity of Self. As he goes on expanding himself and feels the "Presence" behind the veil of ignorance, Divine power begins to flow into him turning this "frail mud-engine to heaven-use" (1.3.103). Ego sense evaporates. The prison-walls of ignorance constructed by Nature crumble. He grows to be a seer and sees "the secret face that is our own" (1.3.229). He feels the cosmos within him. All contradictions and dualities cease. In this new state of awareness the universe becomes "a living movement of the body of God" (1.3.741). Aswapathy becomes a witness-self, omniscient and impersonal. Now his soul's mission is to raise mankind to a higher level by drawing energies that transmute an age:

Apart he lived in his mind's solitude,
A demigod shaping the lives of men:
One soul's ambition lifted up the race;
A Power worked, but none knew whence it came.
The universal strengths were linked with his;
Filling earth's smallness with their boundless breadths,
He drew the energies that transmute an age. (1.3.812-18)

In the first stage of his yoga Aswapathy attains his soul's release through inner awakening and Truth-vision. The seer looks into the truth of things or to quote Wordsworth, "into the life of things" ("Tintern Abbey" 49) from a higher state of awareness.
Aswapathy's yoga continues. He attempts to unravel the mysteries of existence to find the key to what could join Spirit and Matter. Canto four narrates the epic climb of human soul to the Eternal. Man can grasp the Reality and feel the presence of the Omniscient Spirit in him ("A living image seated in the heart" [1.4.106]) by withdrawing from the outer consciousness and by opening himself to an inner consciousness. Some power from higher planes can descend into human consciousness to lift him to a higher state in answer to his intense aspiration.

Aswapathy, the witness-soul, witnesses the play of the Supreme, i.e., the Transcendental Divine, in the dual aspect of Purusha and Prakriti--Self and Nature. But behind this manifest duality the moulding force of the Divine works. He is the dance and the dancer, the painter and the painting, the seer and the vision, the Being and the Becoming--"There are Two who are One and play in many worlds" (1.4.549). Purusha consents to be veiled in ignorance and allows Prakriti to go her way--"His breast he offers for her cosmic dance" (1.4.621). Aswapathy comes to know that the cosmos is actually the handiwork of the Supreme. The Supreme, however, embraces human imperfections to awaken us to the divine nature. We the children of God have the potentiality in us to be like Him: "We are sons of God and must be even as he: / His human portion, we must grow divine" (1.4.776-77).

Our total identification with Nature keeps us engrossed in its play and it continues as long as the Purusha, the Self in us lies dormant. The moment
we attain the Purusha-consciousness as the witness, the process of liberation of our consciousness begins. Man labours incessantly till he attains the Light or the "morns of God" dawn upon him:

And never can the mighty traveller rest  
And never can the mystic voyage cease,  
Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul  
And the morns of God have overtaken his night. (1.4.940-43)

The secret knowledge prepares Aswapathy to ascend further towards the source like "a ray returning to its parent sun" (1.5.201). He is now wiser, mellower and surer: "He read from within the text of the without" (1.5.77).

Having cut the cord of mind that ties him to the earth he ascends to the planes beyond mind. He sees the Omniscience supreme throned in the Void. His heart brims over with aspiration to re-fashion the world on the base of Reality. Retreating into an inner silence he experiences a self-expansion beyond the measure of mind. He feels an inflow of currents of light, force and bliss into his being. He remains an unmoved witness and observes the resistance of the inconscient Nature. Nature resists as it is not ready for the shock of a radical change. As his being rises to pathless height it experiences the descent of higher power into it, definitely a response from above:

A strong Descent leaped down! A Might, a Flame,  
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs. (1.5.345-48)

This Power and Light penetrate deep into his being. Consequently he becomes a changed being. His soul is "torn out from its mortality" (1.5.359). His individual self expands as wide as the cosmos. After this overwhelming transformation every mystery in the working of the cosmos is open to him. Vistas of possibilities open to his seer-sight. Earth's ills will cease. Mind will act as a mediator divinity and will bring an end to the governance of ignorance. The occult worlds are revealed to Aswapathy in ascending and descending order, ie from the peak of Eternity into the abyss of Time and again back from Time into Eternity. This occult world is not governed by Space and Time of our comprehension, rather it governs from behind this phenomenal world of the senses. Now Aswapathy starts his journey up this stairway of occult worlds and dashes into another space and Time.

The first part of Aswapathy's adventure in yoga, shows two movements, ie "Soul's release" and "Spirit's freedom and greatness"--"one a psycho-spiritual transformation and the other a greater spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power" (Aurobindo 29: 773). The "secret knowledge" is the consequence of the first movement as well as the preparation for the second yogic movement. In the first stage of his yoga Aswapathy becomes aware of different levels of consciousness and through self-expansion identifies himself with the cosmos. He realises that his true
being, ie his inner Self, is not limited to his egoistic individuality. He discovers the possibility of surpassing the limit of the manifest universe and of bringing down the light of a higher plane to enlighten the earth-consciousness.

Henceforward Aswapathy acts as the representative of the race. His travel along the world stair is a tale of rising aspiration and varied experiences that widens his perception of the mystery of creation. The description of the occult world by the poet is so systematically elaborate and tangibly vivid that it seems to be the account of the living memories of an onlooker or an experiencer. Iyengar appropriately describes this uncommon presentation of the poet’s yogic experience as "a poetic encyclopaedia of occult knowledge and experience" (Dawn to Greater Dawn 45).

Aswapathy comes into the realm of Spirit’s infinity. As he moves on, an immense world-pile "erect like a mountain chariot of the Gods" (2.1.105) is revealed to his intuitive sight. Travelling beyond the earth-zone of gross-matter he enters the zone of subtle material existence where "dwell earth-nature’s shining origins" (2.2.19). This is an idealised world where the pattern of things on the earth are found in an "idealised perfection" (Pandit 18). But this world of limited perfection lacks aspiration for the beyond. Then he moves to the world of life—the plane of vital being, the prānamaya loka. Life principle here finds abundant rapturous expression and enjoys full play. But he finds a gap between the nature of his life and the joy of this plane and so he fails to participate in that joy. He passes on to the domain
of the lower life-world. This lower aspect of life does not despair him; rather he senses a hidden purpose in this movement, ie the release of "the glory of God in Nature's mud" (2.4.228). Yet this world is "an unhappy comer in eternity" (2.5.3). He sees in this empire of little life lower vital beings like imps, goblins, and genii who create confusion and disturbance on the earth. As he travels through this chaotic lower vital world where highest possibilities of life are denied, the flame of his soul becomes his sole guide and path-finder.

He travels into the kingdom of the higher vital. Life here presents a greater promise and is full of zest, love, beauty and delight. But it lacks the real Truth-consciousness and real perfection. Life tries to embrace and express the Divine, but fails: "The chant of Life has lost its divine note" (2.6.732). Aswapathy attempts to discover the cause of failure of this higher vital world. To his intuitive gaze is revealed the mouth of the black pit of Ignorance and he feels intuitively that below is "the fount of the world's lasting pain" (2.7.15). He decides to go below to find out the cause of this failure.

He descends into the dark void, ie the hell of life where Ego is the lord with falsehood his queen. They replace God and Truth. This region is full of ominous beings "whose very gaze was a calamity" (2.7.136). No ideal and no spiritual aspiration is to be traced here. Shielded by divine name he surveys this gloomy region of danger and deception where life finds its utmost degradation. The denizens showing subhuman tendencies are
delighted in perversity. They are enjoying in misery. Passing through this hellish experience he arrives at the door of subconscient and sees the Cosmic Being who is at the base of universe and who, though in trance, is carrying out a cosmic will. Then he witnesses the appearance of a secret Hand that touches the point of error, pain and evil and there is a total change. Suffering and pain is transformed into joy. He realises that it is the act of Divine Grace. Darkness vanishes like a dream. Discord ceases. Matter and Spirit mingle.

From the life-negating gloomy region Aswapathy soars into the opposite extreme and approaches the felicitous heavens of the life-gods where "rapt dreaming cities of the Gandharva kings" (2.9.48) lie. This is a region of light, delight, love and peace where "Immortality captured Time and carried Life" (2.9.158). He enters the kingdom of the Little Mind where reason is the guide and analytical working is the rule. The three agents of mind, ie habit, desire and reason are revealed to him. He proceeds further into the kingdom of the Greater Mind where Thought aided by "a Vision beyond thought" (2.11.22) rules. Here is the plane of consciousness which acts as a transmitting channel of higher power to the human mind. Then the traveller comes into the Ideal world, ie the heavens of Ideal where he finds the "lovely kingdoms of the deathless Rose" (2.12.28). Behind our exterior experience of this ignorant and suffering world, this realm of Rose "blooms for ever at the feed of God" (2.12.37). This deathless Rose is, explains Pandit, "the symbol of divine love: the love of the soul for God and the love
of God for the soul" (23). When that love blooms in the human heart life gets transformed: "The world is turned into a temple ground / And all discloses the unknown Beloved" (2.12.41-42). There is harmony between Nature and Spirit, world and temple ground or "the rose-garden and chapel" (Drew 159) and "life yields to the divinity within" (2.12.44). Such idea of harmony is discernible in the poetic vision of Eliot when he visualises that "all shall be well" ("Little Gidding" 255) and that "the fire and the rose are one" (ibid 259). But his "rose" symbolises nature and when fire and rose become one "nature becomes a symbol of a spiritual truth which transcends it" (Drew 122). In this region, Aswapathy also finds the mighty kingdoms of the deathless Flame that aspire to "reach the Being's absolutes" (2.12.94).

But Aswapathy does not halt in this region as "all there was an intense but partial light (2.12.156). Contradiction does not cease to exist. Each ideal considers itself to be the absolute truth. The traveller moves ahead and comes to the Self of Mind, a region where "Silence listened to the cosmic Voice" (2.13.2) and thoughts and emotions are silenced. But this is not the summit. So the traveller aspires to go beyond. As he looks ahead he perceives an opening--"a tunnel of the depths of God" (2.14.8). Guided by a mysterious sound he enters a bodiless realm where there is "the silent soul of all the world" (2.14.68). It is a plane of "sheer soul-stuff" (2.14.101). A spiritual sense pervades the whole region. It is the home of souls, the psychic world, where the souls are immersed in "intematal trance"
(2.14.149) and prepare for the journey of the next life. As the traveller, now a soul-conscious power, explores the region he beholds the immortal figure of the Two-in-One--ardhanāriswara, the Cosmic Father-Mother, absorbed in "deep creative joy" (2.14.220). He also becomes aware of a veiled presence behind them, that of the Divine mother, the Supreme Creatrix of the world. Aswapathy’s spirit is made a vessel of her force. Moved by an irresistibly passionate will he outstretches to her "his folded hands of prayer" (2.14.240). In a graceful response the Divine Mother reveals to him the mystic outline of her face. Her light and bliss, power and sweetness overpower him as if he is drunk with "a deep golden spiritual wine" (2.14.253). In total surrender he falls down at her feet "unconscious, prone" (2.14.258).

He wakes up to discover himself in the kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge where "no untruth can come" (2.15.140) and where "all are different and all is one" (2.15.141). Here he attains the knowledge by which the knower is known. Doors of knowledge are opened to him. He explores the regions of Transcendental Truth. He is enlightened by "an all-embracing knowledge" (2.15.177). He is beyond the limitations of mind and the baffling dividing game of Time. Creation’s head and base come under his all-knowing gaze. Although the ultimate Mystery is not fully revealed "almost the Unknowable disclosed its rim" (2.15.125). In this realm of truth life takes a different hue. Life becomes a journey of the spirit:
Sight was a flame-throw from identity;
Life was a marvellous journey of the spirit,
Feeling a wave from the universal Bliss. (2.15.158-60)

It is as if he is reborn in the kingdom of the "Spirit's power and light" (2.15.161). Henceforward "he thought and felt in all, his gaze had power,
/ He communed with the Incommunicable" (2.15.169-70). In the process of the growth of the Self he is wrapped in the overwhelming light of knowledge and

He scanned the secrets of the Overmind,
He bore the rapture of the Oversoul.

. . . . . . . . . . . .

He linked creation to the Eternal's sphere,
His finite parts approached their absolutes,
His actions framed the movements of the Gods,
His will took up the reins of cosmic Force. (2.15.180-81,184-87)

This brings us to the end of "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds" that details Aswapathy's spiritual odyssey. But this journey through the unknown realms, though a journey to light and self-discovery, has its limitations in the fact that it is a personal attainment or triumph. In the third book, namely, "The Book of the Divine Mother" his yoga takes a new turn.

It is the third stage of his yoga. With all his knowledge and spiritual experiences he looks at the imperfections of the earth below. He aspires no
longer for himself. All the passion and seeking of his soul extinguish. He does not long to be immersed in the unshared immortal bliss. He aspires for a universal realisation and new creation.

His yoga brings him light and truth. But imperfections still characterise life on earth. Some presence that adds to the glory of life seems missing. But then, in the silence of his heart he feels an intimate and unnameable Being that lures, but is beyond grasp. Aswapathy won’t accept defeat. He now starts the third yogic climb to the realm above in quest of the ultimate Power. He attains a realisation when he is required to shed off his humanness and earthly-identity and to identify himself with that unnameable. The separate self evaporates. All names and forms disappear. Everything seems to be a projection from the "Unknowable": "From It all sprang, in It is called to cease" (3.1.112). A lone Reality, a formless Form remains to the exclusion of everything.

There was no second, it had no partner or peer;
Only itself was real to itself.

A Being formless, featureless and mute
That knew itself by its own timeless self,
Aware for ever in its motionless depths,
Uncreating, uncreated and unborn,
The One by whom all live, who lives by none,
An immeasurable luminous secrecy
Guarded by the veils of the Unmanifest,
Above the changing cosmic interlude
Abode supreme, immutably the same,
A silent Cause occult, impenetrable,—
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone. (3.1.138-39,144-54).

Now Aswapathy is beyond all terrestrial trappings and human imperfections. He is submerged in "the boundless silence of the Self" (3.2.16). The world seems unreal. But this escape into a "glad divine abyss" (3.2.17) or a nirvanic bliss is not his mission. This is not the ultimate victory. He is the representative of mankind, the forerunner of man’s divine future. This bliss is only the point of "everlasting No" (3.2.26) from where he is to seek "the Lover’s everlasting Yes" (3.2.28). Negation of the world is not the ultimate aim of the Divine: "A huge extinction is not God’s last word" (3.2.63). Rather an "absolute Power" (3.2.66) sleeps in this absolute silence. When awakened, it can make the world "a vessel of Spirit’s force" (3.2.69). To seek this power is Aswapathy’s mission.

As Aswapathy stands on "being’s naked edge" (3.2.73), all the passion and seeking of his soul extinguished, a "being of wisdom, power and delight" appears. It is the vision of the Divine Mother:

A being of wisdom, power and delight,

Even as a mother draws her child to her arms,
Took to her breast Nature and world and soul.
The Mother of all godheads and all strengths
Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme.

She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God. (3.2.84-86, 117-18, 156-58)

This vision overpowers Aswapathy—"Once seen, his heart acknowledged only her" (3.2.183). His spirit feels renewed. He visualises a possibility of divine fulfilment on earth with the grace of this power: "All here shall be one day her sweetness's home" (3.2.169). As a representative of the humanity he cannot forget the flawed human condition on earth. So he asks for earth and men "her light, her bliss" (3.2.200). But this lofty goal to "fill the finite with the Infinite" (3.2.211) is beyond the attainment of human effort alone. So he surrenders himself completely to the Mother and intensely yearns to bring down her power:

Only he longed to draw her presence and power
Into his heart and mind and breathing frame;
Only he yearned to call for ever down
Her healing touch of love and truth and joy
Into the darkness of the suffering world.

His soul was freed and given to her alone. (3.2.216-20)

To bring down this transforming grace Aswapathy sits in prayer absorbed in soul's silence:
Intense, one-pointed, monumental, lone,
Patient he sat like an incarnate hope
Motionless on a pedestal of prayer. (3.3.7-9)

Here also he feels the resistance of Inconscience. He has not shunned his link and kinship with the world and Inconscience, because his goal is to transform all. Now his surrender is total. The result is that he experiences "a last and mightiest transformation" (3.3.54). His finite being grows vast and spreads "to embrace the universe" (3.3.57). He embodies the world's strivings and hopes. Transcending all human limitations, Aswapathy, the forerunner of the world's divine possibility, stands "fulfilled on the world's highest line" (3.3.96). Rapt in "shoreless trance" (3.3.118) he catches the vision of world-transformation:

There was no sob of suffering anywhere;
Experience ran from point to point of joy:
Bliss was the pure undying truth of things.
All Nature was a conscious front of God. (3.3.273-76)

He catches a glimpse of "a hierarchy of lucent planes / Enfeoffed to this highest kingdom of God-state" (3.3.317-18). This vision reveals the fruition of the traveller's ultimate aspiration.

Simultaneously Aswapathy finds two negations. One, "a world that knows not its inhabiting Self" (3.3.452), ie the materialist denying the Spirit; the second, "a spirit ignorant of the world it made" (3.3.454), ie the ascetic rejecting the world. These negations prevent the final union of matter and spirit. But ultimate victory is not theirs. Dispelling their confusion
A new creation from the old shall rise,
A Knowledge inarticulate find speech,
Beauty suppressed burst into paradise bloom,
Pleasure and pain dive into absolute bliss.
A tongueless oracle shall speak at last,
The Superconscient conscious grows on earth,
The Eternal's wonders join the dance of Time. (3.3.479-485)

Now, to Aswapathy, Self and Eternity alone are real. Yet he remembers the cry of the subconscient world, its hopes and aspirations. He still bears the burden of the world's desire. This sharing of the striving and aspiration of an "errant Power" (3.3.522) makes him conscious of his two beings, one "wide and free above" (3.3.524) and the other "struggling, bound, intense, its portion here" (3.3.525). Thus he is the witness to the divine splendour above, he also prays from below. His second self is in the midst of the world like "a lamp in the night" (3.3.530) and looks up to the heights. The spark of divinity in him seeks nothing less than universal transformation. His whole being consents to the "slow deliberate Power / Which tolerates the world's error and its grief" (3.3.556-57). Refusing to yield to the denials he sends his "voiceless prayer" (3.3.569) to the Unknown or the Divine Mother and awaits the responding Voice "that comes through the still self from the Supreme" (3.3.573).

Aswapathy's prayer is responded: "A boundless Heart was near his longing heart" (3.4.8). An overpowering delight floods over him. A mighty
face, "flame-pure, ethereal-tressed" (3.4.28) appears. He hears her "absolute and wise" (3.4.36) voice in his heart's chamber. He is the chosen one to receive the divine voice. The voice restrains him from further aspiration, asks him to leave alone the Inconscient's world and to leave the all-seeing Power to work out its plan:

"What thou hast won is thine, but ask no more.

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Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight.

Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.

Hence,

Leave the all-seeing Power to hew its way:

In thy single vast achievement reign apart

Helping the world with thy great lonely days." (3.4.40, 52-6)

The voice exhorts Aswapathy not to hasten the pace of evolution. Man is yet to acquire adequate power to change the cosmic dream, ie the course of nature. Death remains unconquered. He is yet to rise above contradictions, division and duality. He claims freedom, but needs bondage. He requires darkness so that he can perceive some light. He is not yet the fit instrument to attain the highest spiritual knowledge and perfection. He still yields to Inconscience. Of course, God is his guide. So ultimate failure is not his fate: "... pure perfection and a shadowless bliss / Are this afflicted creature's mighty fate" (3.4.230-31). But now, mankind is not ready for the Divine descent. So the divine Power asks Aswapathy: "Help
still humanity's blind and suffering life: / Obey thy spirit's wide omnipotent urge" (3.4.238-39). The Voice further consoles him:

"My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.
Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart,
Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.
Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand;
Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.
Above blind fate and the antagonist powers
Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;
To its omnipotence leave thy work's result.
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour." (3.4.251-59)

But Aswapathy pleads imploringly:

"How shall I rest content with mortal days
And the dull measure of terrestrial things,
I who have seen behind the cosmic mask
The glory and the beauty of thy face?
Hard is the doom to which thou bindst thy sons!
How long shall our spirits battle with the Night
And bear defeat and the brute yoke of Death,
We who are vessels of a deathless Force
And builders of the godhead of the race?" (3.4.266-74)

His impassioned plea and entreaty to win the Grace of the Divine Mother continues. He points out the futility of human strivings: "All we
All breaks and all renews and is the same. / All human labour ends up in frustration. The earth has waited too long for perfection. Aswapathy urges the Mother of the universe to incarnate and to bring about the much awaited transformation:

"Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
Mission to earth some living form of thee.
One moment fill with thy eternity,
Let thy infinity in one body live,
All-knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
All-Love throb single in one human heart.
Immortal, treading the earth with mortal feet
All heaven's beauty crowd in earthly limbs!
Omnipotence, girdle with the power of God
Movements and moments of a mortal will,
Pack with the eternal might one human hour
And with one gesture change all future time.
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate." (3.4.408-21)

Even as he articulates his soul's prayer for the descent of the Divine, the forces of Inconscience offer their resistance. But the Supreme Mother responds and grants him the boon:

"O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature’s doom by the lone Spirit’s power.

A seed shall be sown in Death’s tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will." (3.4.429-31, 49-52).

The voice is withdrawn. Aswapathy wins the boon. The Divine promises to bring about the transformation of man and the world. Aswapathy returns to the familiar ways of the world, but with a difference. His "mighty rounds" (3.4.508) now aim at the spiritual perfection of man because the vision and the boon sustain him.

Aswapathy’s spiritual journey thus epitomises an aspiring man’s many-sided spiritual possibilities. It sends out irresistible invitation to look within and to discover one’s true identity. It awakens the ego-bound frail being to the fact that he has in him the dormant potentiality to be free from the limitations of ego. Aswapathy’s yoga enlightens man as to his place in the cosmos. When imprisoned by ego he is a separate entity, small and insignificant. Once he soars above the prison-walls of ego he is as vast as the cosmos and one and identical with it. This yoga hints that man can tap the source of supreme bliss, power and knowledge. He can make himself a perfect medium for the manifestation of divine glory. He can bring down the divine grace to transform himself and the world. But Aswapathy’s spiritual
journey finds its most significant attainment when he resists the temptation, ie the divine temptation of unlimited, undivided, supreme bliss. Adam faces a temptation that pulls downwards. But Aswapathy finds himself face to face with a temptation the yogis aspire after, ie Moksha. Moreover, it is an offer from the Divine. Aswapathy rejects it to gain the promise of the Divine to descend and to transform the inconscient earth and to pave the way for a new creation. His aspiration surpasses that of the spiritual Sadhaks through the ages.

The boon is won and Savitri is born. We receive Savitri with the foreknowledge that she is born in accordance with the Divine Will in response to the prayer of the yogi-king. She is born to transform and save the world, ie to fulfil Divine’s mission. She comes with the dream of a greater future for man. She is, seen from another angle, the child born of the accumulated spiritual attainments of the yogi-poet. She embodies Divine grace and supramental light. She also symbolises the power of love. She is both human and divine. In her present stature she is human, though extraordinary and in reality she is divine, though divinity in her is veiled. Sri Aurobindo thus endearingly and whole-heartedly develops Savitri into a multifaceted symbolic character.

With Savitri’s birth the battleline is drawn—battle with death and inconscience. Aswapathy triumphs over this force of gloom and negation. How to defeat this force from the earth is beyond him. So he prays the Divine Mother for help. Consequently Savitri is born to join battle with death.
The father prays as the representative of the race. The daughter fights both as a manifested divine power and as a representative of the race. Savitri depicts this battle. Here the battle, unlike the battle of Mahābhārata between the forces of evil and righteousness, is raised to a spiritual level. It is an inner spiritual battle that aims at shaping a new future for man. Savitri’s yoga which results in the discovery of her inner power and true identity so that she can fight with Death effectively, seems to be preordained and fulfils a divine plan. Satyavan, the human consciousness trapped into death and ignorance, becomes the cause. His death necessitates the battle, his resurrection indicates the way to life-divine.

It seems that Savitri’s life flows on its fated track. We see her as the princess of Madra born in spring when "all Nature was at beauty’s festival" (4.1.139). It is as if she is born in answer to "earth’s yearning and her cry for bliss" (4.1.141). Her presence adds a novelty to her surroundings. Her sweetness attracts everyone. She is admired and loved by everybody. She excels in different fields of learning and self-culture. Her human behaviour fails to cover her divine splendour. Thus grows Savitri, outwardly a delightful child and inwardly the mighty spirit.

One morning while sitting in deep contemplation Aswapathy hears a voice from the heights of his being. The voice questions him: "'How long will you tread the circling tracks of mind / Around your little self and petty things?'' (4.3.38-9). At the same time a hint is dropped: "'A greater destiny waits you in your front'" (4.3.48). As the voice ceases Savitri comes there
like an answer to the hint. Aswapathy penetrates its meaning and sees her with his inner vision. He sees through her "the great and unknown spirit born his child" (4.3.164). He addresses her as "traveller of eternity" (4.3.174) and tells her: "Depart where love and destiny call your charm" (4.3.194). This may be interpreted as her soul's opportunity. Aswapathy further tells: "Thy soul has strength and needs no other guide / Than One who burns within thy bosom's powers" (4.3.198-99). This is a definite indication of the inner power of Savitri as it is uttered by no less a seer and yogi than Aswapathy. Savitri receives and understands her father's message and leaves alone in quest of the "one predestined face" (4.4.315). She travels the spacious world by her carven chariot guided by her soul. She travels through different soils, scenes and climes; comes in touch with different clans and tribes; visits palaces and hermitages. She passes through the silence of the fields and the mountains and the multitudinous chants and chirps of the forests. She feels a mysterious communion with them. Almost a year passes. The fated moment of meeting with her mate drags near. One day she is led to a "highland world of free and green delight" (5.1.11). In the midst of nature's abundance and felicity Savitri meets Satyavan who appears "erect and lofty like a spear of God" (5.2.40). He stands before her with all his splendour and glory:

His look was a wide daybreak of the gods,
His head was a youthful Rishi's touched with light,
His body was a lover's and a king's.
In the magnificent dawning of his force
Built like a moving statue of delight
He illumined the border of the forest page.  (5.2.46-51)

Savitri surveys the delightful scene of the woodland and the presence of Satyavan therein with her surface mind and is about to move ahead. But their union is perhaps predestined and inevitable. So "... the god touched in time her conscious soul. / Her vision settled, caught and all was changed" (5.2.110-111). She looks at him with heart’s passion and sees in him "the genius of the spot" (5.2.115). This is a partial sight, no doubt. But as "her soul flung wide its doors to this new sun" (5.2.136) deeper recognition follows:

Then trembling with the mystic shock her heart
Moved in her breast and cried out like a bird
Who hears his mate upon a neighbouring bough. (5.2.142-44)

The chariot stops abruptly like an arrested wind. Satyavan’s reciprocation is equally deeper. He too opens his soul’s doors. He feels drawn towards her:

Mastered by the honey of a strange flower-mouth,
Drawn to soul-spaces opening round a brow,
He turned to the vision like a sea to the moon
And suffered a dream of beauty and of change,
Discovered the aureole round a mortal’s head,
Adored a new divinity in things.
His self-bound nature foundered as in fire;
His life was taken into another’s life. (5.2.151-58)

Both come closer. Gaze meets close gaze. Both start recognizing each other intimately and deeply. Her inner vision recovers in him all her past. He discerns in her eyes his future’s gaze. They are eternal companions destined to be united again. The memory of the soul dispels all mist and facilitates the union that holds in it the promise of a new Time:

By the revealing greatness of a look,
Form-smitten the spirit’s memory woke in sense.
The mist was torn that lay between two lives;
Her heart unveiled and his to find her turned;
Attracted as in heaven star by star,
They wondered at each other and rejoiced
And wove affinity in a silent gaze.
A moment passed that was eternity’s ray,
An hour began, the matrix of new Time. (5.2.257-65)

The union of Satyavan and Savitri is thus not the result of the prompting of the mind, but of the urge of the soul. The urge of the soul sublimates all passions and emotions and brings about a deep recognition and a spiritual union that transcends the terrestrial and transitory. The purity and deep passion of this love-episode brings to one’s memory the love-scenes in Kalidasa’s Sakuntala and Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. But what distinguishes the present episode is the depth of recognition that comes
through the "soul's doors", its cosmic significance, and the active participation of the Divine Will in it.

As they descend from their soul's height there follows a wider range of recognition—"intellectual, emotional and factual" (Gokak 27). Both listen to each other with rapt attention and in intense delight. Satyavan even feels the World-Mother in Savitri who has come to make his inner life full. He appeals her to descend from the car and to be his life's companion: "By my delight and thy own joy compelled / Enter my life, thy chamber and thy shrine (5.3.312-13). Savitri consents eagerly and sweetly utters the words of her soul: "'I know that thou and only thou art he'" (5.3.327). What follows is expressed in the language of poetic delight and sublimity in a moment of intense expressive joy:

Then flitting like pale brilliant moths her hands
Took from the sylvan verge's sunlit arms
A load of their jewel faces' clustering swarms,
Companions of the spring-time and the breeze.
A candid garland set with simple forms
Her rapid fingers taught a flower song,
The stanzaed movement of a marriage hymn.
Profound in perfume and immersed in hue
They mixed their yearning's coloured signs and made
The bloom of their purity and passion one.
The sacrament of joy in treasuring palms
She brought, flower-symbol of her offered life. (5.3.338-49)
The garland suggests a bond of love. It is a symbol of sweet union. She lays it on the bosom of Satyavan. Her self-offering is total. This self-giving is the highest mark of love:

She bowed and touched his feet with worshipping hands;
She made her life his world for him to tread
And made her body the room of his delight,
Her beating heart a remembrancer of bliss. (5.3.357-60)

His acceptance is equally total, deep and ecstatic:

He bent to her and took into his own
Their married yearning joined like folded hopes;

An inexhaustible joy made his alone,
He gathered all Savitri into his clasp. (5.3.361-62, 365-66).

The poet's creative joy and inspiration make the final moment of union an eternal one by lifting it to the Upanishadic height and adding to it deep spiritual significance:

In a wide moment of two souls that meet
She felt her being flow into him as in waves
A river pours into a mighty sea.
As when a soul is merging into God
To live in Him for ever and know His joy,
Her consciousness was a wave of him alone
And all her separate self was lost in his. (5.3.371-77)
Though the scene is intensely romantic, it simultaneously hints at the summit of spiritual attainment, ie the nirvanic bliss of union. It is not only a moment of self-losing for Savitri, but also equally a moment of self-fulfilment for Satyavan:

He was aware of her enveloping him
And let her penetrate his very soul,
As is a world by the world’s spirit filled,
As the mortal wakes into Eternity;
As the finite opens to the Infinite. (5.3.382-86)

The sensuality of union is completely transcended. The lover’s clasp becomes a soul-clasp. The joy of their union becomes as deep and sublime as the bliss of trance. They are lost in their "long ecstasy’s trance" (5.3.388). Time stands still. That moment of union hides in it the seed of a great future. Savitri and Satyavan's return to "a new self and a new world" (5.3.389) drops a hint of an impending transformation that will lead to a new creation.

Nature also takes part in this event. Morning’s halo threads are used by Fate to tie the marriage knot. Sun is their marriage-fire. The wind mutters the sacred mantra. Fate plays its silent role as if this marriage is divinely ordained and is solemnised to carry out a divine plan. This fateful event acquires a cosmic significance and is linked with the eternal mystery of creation when the poet gives the following hint:

The wedding of the eternal Lord and Spouse
Took place again on earth in human forms:
In a new act of the drama of the world
The united Two began a greater age. (5.3.397-400)

It is thus a multi-dimensional marriage—a human marriage, a spiritual or soul marriage, a cosmic marriage. This marriage far transcends the marriage between the ideal man and woman as it is viewed in the legend. It is the union of, as John Collins points out, "eternal cosmic forces which create and sustain the life of the cosmos" (33).

Satyavan shows to Savitri her "heart's future home" (5.3.413), the beautiful hermitage adorned with flowering creepers and lost in the depth of its own solitude. A jubilant Savitri promises Satyavan to return soon and starts for her father's home. The picture of her "soul's temple and home" (5.3.443) remains her heart's constant scene all along.

As Savitri enters the palace she finds herself in the presence of the heavenly sage Narad. In answer to her father she reveals the name of her soul's choice. Aswapathy looks within and sees with his inner sight that a shadow floats above the name Satyavan and that shadow is chased by a stupendous light. He takes the hint and approves his daughter's choice. But all glee is marred by Narad's shocking proclamation:

"Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her;
This day returning Sathyavan must die," (6.1.585-86)

The queen is deeply shocked. She pleads with Savitri to choose once again. But Savitri remains unmoved. Calm and firm comes her reply as if it wells out from the depth of her being:
"Once my heart chose and chooses not again.

I am stronger than death and greater than my fate;
My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me
Helpless against my immortality.
Fate’s law may change, but not my spirit’s will." (6.1.609, 624-27)

Narad intercedes. He rather reveals: "'In her the conscious Will took human shape: / She only can save herself and save the world’" (6.2.874-75).

He exhorts the queen:

"O queen, stand back from that stupendous scene,
Come not between her and her hour of Fate.

Think not to intercede with the hidden Will,
Intrude not twixt her spirit and its force
But leave her to her mighty self and Fate." (6.2.876-77, 890-92)

The next day Savitri joins Satyavan. The stage is set for the final encounter:

She must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time
And reach an apex of world-destiny
Where all is won or all is lost for man. (6.2.858-60)

The journey towards a new creation based on self-discovery thus takes a definite turn.
The silent hermitage bathes in the joy of her presence. Every common act is steeped in her love. She shines as an unexcelled example of an ideal wife and daughter-in-law. In spite of happy smiles of life a secret grief caused by the foreknowledge of Satyavan’s impending doom grips her. She knows that each passing day drags him near the destined hour. But she keeps her "grief's heavy sky shut in her heart" (7.1.308). This is how her human heart works. An emanation from the Divine, Savitri now acts in her earthly consciousness.

We can pick occasions when divine glory shines in her. Her reply to her mother is not the language of human Savitri:

"My will is part of the eternal will,

For I know now why my spirit came on earth
And who I am and who he is I love." (6.1.717, 749-50)

We also catch a glimpse of her divinity when Narad reveals that in her "the conscious Will took human shape" (6.2.874) or when the poet reveals:

In all her acts a strange divinity shone:
Into a simplest movement she could bring
A oneness with earth’s glowing role of light,
A lifting up of common acts by love. (7.1.203-06)

There are many such occasions. But she forgets her real self temporarily because of the imperfections and ignorance of the world and the
limitations of human mind. The poet reveals this self-chosen limitation in Savitri:

A still self hid behind but gave no light:
No voice came down from the forgotten heights;
Only in the privacy of its brooding pain
Her human heart spoke to the body’s fate. (7.1.309-12)

Now Savitri needs to discover her hidden self or the divine light within.

One night Savitri is sitting beside her sleeping husband overcome by grief. Helplessly she watches the silent tread of Time towards the fated moment of doom. Suddenly she hears a call from her being’s summit: "'Arise, O soul, and vanquish Time and Death'" (7.2.27). She expresses her helplessness. Immediately the voice asks her revealing questions:

"And what shall thy soul say when it wakes and knows
The work was left undone for which it came ?

Is this then the report that I must make,
My head bowed with shame before the Eternal’s seat,--
His power he kindled in thy body has failed,
His labourer returns, her task undone ?" (7.2.57-58,72-75)

Savitri feels awakened. She asks the Voice for guidance and command. The Voice quickly responds:
"Remember why thou cam'st:
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
Open God's door, enter into his trance.
His vast Truth wake within and know and see." (7.2.86-87, 90,93)

This is the moment of the beginning of Savitri's yoga of self-awakening: "She looked into herself and sought for her soul" (7.2.112). To wake up her Reality is the goal of Savitri's yoga. Aswapathy is the aspiring man. So his yoga involves a process of release from ignorance and ego and gradual rise to superconscience, to the highest knowledge or Reality. His is a yoga of ascent. It is a spiritual journey from ignorance to knowledge, from ego to Self. But Savitri is not a part of inconscience or ignorance. She descends from the Divine to transform the life of man and to lift man to his divine glory. So in her case a veil of temporary forgetfulness hides her true being. Her task is to lift the veil. In both cases, however, the discovery of one's Self or divinity is the goal. In case of Aswapathy, it is a rise to divinity. In case of Savitri, it is waking to her divinity. Aswapathy's yoga results in the realisation of and identification with the highest Truth. Savitri's yoga paves the way for cosmic transformation and turns the possibility of divine life a near-reality or an attainable reality.
She divines her "secret and mysterious soul" (7.3.35) in the heart of her subtle being. Crossing the portal that hides our inner life from the "body's mind" (7.3.37) her being enters the inner worlds. The serpent that guards the entrance, ie the ebony gate, allows her to go. She passes into a subconscient world where everything is vague and disorderly. Then she enters a world of sense where things start taking shape. But confusion prevails here. Feelings here centre round ego. The sense-instincts cause an ecstatic anarchy. In this region she sees "a chaos of disordered impulses / In which no light can come, no joy, no peace" (7.3.112-13). As she crosses this region she fixes her thought on the "saviour Name" (7.3.120). But a greater danger confronts her. She approaches a belt where life is "ungoverned by mind or soul, subconscient, vast" (7.3.131). Life rushes here like turbulent waves and passionately demands "God's submission to chainless Force" (7.3.142). It is the meeting ground of contraries. Truth is blind here and "Ignorance is Wisdom's patron" (7.3.220). Savitri's silent self remains unmoved and unaffected by these "vain waves" (7.3.252) of life. Journeying forward she comes to a space where life force is chained by mind and "reason's balanced reign" (7.3.273) prevails. Ideas are confined in system. Religion becomes a rational convention. Life is dry, chained and narrow here. She moves beyond this region and reaches a "quiet country of fixed mind" (7.3.358) where "soul was not there nor spirit, but mind alone;/ Mind claimed to be the spirit and the soul" (7.3.361-62). Mind reigns supreme here. A commanding voice asks Savitri to refrain from further
search and to live here in peace. He asserts that this is the home of "cosmic certainty" (7.3.380). Truth and God's harmony are to be found here and, above all, "this is the end there is no beyond" (7.3.389). But Savitri understands the supreme reign of "limiting, cold, precise" (7.3.399) intellect. She refuses to be satisfied with this "ordered knowledge of apparent things" (7.3.412). It is an uncertain and ambiguous world in her view. She discloses that her goal is to seek her soul. The beings of that plane express wonder at her mission and think that it is a vain endeavour. To them, Mind is the parent of the soul and it is the sole creator of the world. But a steadfast Savitri moves ahead and meets a brilliant crowd: gods, goddesses and sages. That glorious crowd is on its way to help mankind. Savitri longs to join them, but restrains herself. She realises that she has no power to help, for "only who save themselves can others save" (7.3.465). So she earnestly asks them to reveal the way to the "deep mansion" (7.3.475) of her secret soul. One among the crowd replies:

"Follow the world's winding highway to its source.

There in the silence few have ever reached,

Thou shalt see the Fire burning on the bare stone

And the deep cavern of thy secret soul." (7.3.490-93)

Emerging from the dark worlds Savitri walks along the great winding road and comes where it changes into a narrow path. In the deep silence that prevails there she feels "the silent nearness of the soul" (7.3.500). Thereafter she meets three embodied soul-forces one after another, namely, the Mother
of Sorrows, the Mother of Might and the Mother of Light, each manifesting different powers or aspects of the Divine. Each of these soul-forces is presented with a dissenting Voice. The Mothers behave as disciplined sentries of the Divine where as the Voices display a rebellious spirit.

Savitri encounters a woman in a "pale lustrous robe" (7.4.4). Her eyes are "dim with the ancient stain of tears" (7.4.19). She is the Mother of the seven sorrows, a spirit who shares and absorbs the pangs of suffering of all living beings because of her enormous love and compassion. She identifies herself as "woman, nurse and slave and beaten beast" (7.4.32). Because of her all creatures endure their pain. But she cannot save them as she has no power to save: "God gave me love, he gave me not his force" (7.4.51). She suffers but never complains. Rather she has a burning hope that God will come to her at last. She claims to be the secret soul of Savitri.

As her voice ceases another wrathful voice, that of a "tortured Titan" (7.4.96) takes up the refrain. The voice resembles the roar of an angry beast--the beast that "crouching growls within man's depths" (7.4.95). He identifies himself as the "Man of Sorrows" (7.4.97). Unlike the words of the Mother of Sorrows his words are charged with anger, hatred and bitter complaints. Probably he symbolises the ego of man that complains about and protests against the suffering of man. He complains bitterly: "'To enjoy my agony God built the earth'" (7.4.99). In a disgust he narrates his plight:

"I am the seeker who can never find,
I am the fighter who can never win,
I am the runner who never touched his goal." (7.4.108-10)
Confused and disillusioned he raises the question: "'What profit have I of my human soul?" (7.4.113). In spite of all this fret and fume he confirms and accepts his lower state: "'I was made for evil, evil is my lot'" (7.4.153) and "'what Nature made me, that I must remain'" (7.4.156). Thus he seals the possibility of transformation and makes his heart barren devoid of aspiration. His pity for man’s suffering remains ineffective as it is unaided by any noble power or propensity. Hatred and indignation cannot bring an end to human suffering.

Savitri hears this cynical voice of opposition. But her unyielding will is fixed on its goal. She understands that the Mother of Sorrow can console, but cannot save. So she goes forward giving her an assurance: "'One day I will return, a bringer of strength'" (7.4.167). Consequently misery will disappear from earth and "'there shall be peace and joy for ever more'" (7.4.176).

As Savitri advances she experiences a pleasant change in the whole atmosphere: "All beautiful grew, subtle and high and strange" (7.4.181). She meets a woman filled with courage and heavenly strength and who is "armed with the trident and the thunderbolt, / Her feet upon a couchant lion's back" (7.4.184-85). She is the Mother of Might. Firmly she claims: "'O Savitri, I am thy secret soul'" (7.4.212). She continues to elaborate her glory and might with an unflagging enthusiasm:

"I am Durga, goddess of the proud and strong,
And Laksmi, queen of the fair and fortunate;"
I wear the face of Kali when I kill,

I am charged by God to do his mighty work." (7.4.235-37,39)

In contrast to the Mother of Sorrows who suffers and moans, the Mother of Might brims over with power and force. But she understands the difficulty in the task of healing earth’s ills and admits: "‘The cosmic evil is too deep to unroot: / The cosmic suffering is too vast to heal’" (7.4.266-67). Yet she does not give up faith. She hopes for success because God’s seal is on her task. She expectantly awaits the moment "‘when God comes out to meet the soul of the world’" (7.4.276).

As she stops, there rises the voice of the dwarf-Titan. It is the assertive cry of the "Ego of this great world of desire" (7.4.283). The voice is charged with asuric arrogance and self-assertion. It symbolises the blindly arrogant and self-justifying spirit of science and technology. He claims that the universe is made for his use. He aspires after the throne of heaven. Unhesitatingly he goes on beating his own drum:

"I have grown greater than Nature, wiser than God.

Mould from one primal plasm protean forms,

I shall know mystic truths, seize occult powers.

No wish I harbour unfulfilled shaft die:
Omnipotence and omniscience shall be mine." (7.4.333, 340, 376, 382-83)

Savitri hears everything unperturbed. Soothingly she tells the Mother of Might that she is not the secret soul of her quest. Savitri points out her imperfections: "'Thou hast given men strength, wisdom thou couldst not give'" (7.4.395). As love without power is ineffective, power without wisdom is blind and destructive. Savitri assures her:

"One day I will return, a bringer of light,
Then I will give to thee the mirror of God;
Thou shalt see self and world as by him they are seen
Reflected in the bright pool of thy soul." (7.4.396-99)

Hatred and fear will vanish in the illuminating light of wisdom. Ego will be mute and silent. Finally "'all shall be might and bliss and happy force'" (7.4.405).

As Savitri's spirit ascends upwards she comes to a high and happy space where the surrounding is sweet with an intimate divine touch. There she meets the Mother of Light who

... sat in clear and crystal light:
Heaven had unveiled its lustre in her eyes,
Her feet were moonbeams, her face was a bright sun,
Her smile could persuade a dead lacerated heart
To live again and feel the hands of calm. (7.4.419-23)

She also claims to be Savitri's secret soul. She explains that she has come down to heal earth's pangs and to reveal to her the figures of gods.
She claims to be the priestess of all the finer and nobler aspects of life—high ideals, peace, charity, knowledge and power. She endeavours to "'lift man's soul nearer the Light'" (7.4.479). But she complains that she has not been successful because human mind clings to its ignorance.

As she finishes, a voice from the ignorant nether plane rises. The voice symbolises "the sense-shackled human mind" (7.4.496) or the mental man who sees only the cosmic surfaces. He is a veritable image of imperfections, limitations, futility and ignorance: "His knowledge scans bright pebbles on the shore / Of the huge ocean of his ignorance" (7.4.531-32). Yet he brazenly highlights his own achievements. He claims that he has understood the workings of heavenly bodies, unravelled the process of evolution, seized the cosmic energies for his use and has discovered invisible atoms. So he proudly proclaims: "All Matter is a book I have perused" (7.4.569). Still a sense of imperfection goads him. He finds to his dismay that the cause of things is not yet clearly known: "'when all has been explained nothing is known'" (7.4.577). The inmost truth still eludes him. Doubt and contradiction mar his lofty achievements. Only "reasoned guess" (7.4.589) guides his hypothesis. Caught in the labyrinth of his own mental exercises he does not hesitate to decry soul and to turn his face away from divinity:

"Human I am, human let me remain
    Till in the Inconscient I fall dumb and sleep.
A high insanity, a chimera is this,
To think that God lives hidden in the clay
And that eternal Truth can dwell in Time,
And call to her to save our self and world.
How can man grow immortal and divine
Transmuting the very stuff of which he is made?” (7.4.615-22)

Thus he denies any higher possibility for man. Mind without the light of the soul rather stands as a barrier to upward spiritual journey.

Savitri patiently hears the thesis and antithesis. Calmly she admits that the Mother of Light is a portion of her soul. But she is not the whole Light, ie all of her secret-self. She admits her positive contributions to draw the soul closer to God. But she also unveils her limitations. The Mother of Light cannot free man completely from intellectual and spiritual ego and cannot lead him to attain the ultimate light. Before she passes onwards she assures her:

"One day I shall return, His hands in mine,
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,
Then shall the divine family be born.
There shall be light and peace in all the worlds.” (7.4.646-50)

The triple soul-forces, ie the three Mothers, are embodied manifestations of God’s partial glory. They keep themselves open to God’s grace and have firm faith in the fact that the Divine will descend into lower mentality to facilitate an inner transformation. On the contrary, the three
voices symbolise different manifestations of separative-ego or ego-centric man in opposition to Divine glory and grace. They may represent the distorted or perverted mind and reason. Theirs are the voices of accusation, opposition and challenge. Through self-glorification, limited and prejudiced vision they remain surrounded by ignorance and exhibit an asuric propensity to seal the gate to the Divine. But only through the descent of the Divine into man's life and the ascent of man into the light of the Divine the marriage between life and spirit can materialise.

Savitri's quest for her secret soul continues. In spiritual journey the final revelation does not come in haste. This moment of bliss and enlightenment precedes a lot of tests and trials. Even Savitri, a manifestation of the Divine, is not an exception. Her inner journey now brings her to a dark region, ie "a night of God" (7.5.2). She experiences a moment of complete emptiness and void, a moment of innocence and holy ignorance. It is a moment of self-losing in the unknowable:

In a simple purity of emptiness
Her mind knelt down before the unknowable.
All was abolished save her naked self
And the prostrate yearning of her surrendered heart. (7.5.14-17)

The battalion forming the separate self--the thinking mind, the striving heart, all ideas and knowledge, all strength and all desires including spiritual aspiration--sink into nothingness: "Her self was nothing, God alone was all"
Yet the goal, ie God, eludes her comprehension: "Yet God she knew not but only knew he was" (7.5.25).

This darkens is profound and sacred. It is rather a prelude to the dawn of revelation. It hides in its mist the splendour of enlightenment: "This dark knew dumbly, immensely the Unknown" (7.5.30). Silently Savitri moves on in a state of emptiness. Time now assumes a vaster dimension. It becomes eternal and endless. She comes to a vast space filled with an everlasting bliss. The emptiness of the "impersonal Night" (7.5.35) now changes into dawn: "A rose of splendour on a tree of dreams, / The face of Dawn out of mooned twilight grew" (7.5. 45-46). The day comes robed in "immortal lustre" (7.5.49). Savitri approaches Truth's last retreat. She comes to the mystic cavern which is the dwelling of her secret soul. Through its rock-doors bearing intricate symbolical carved designs she enters a hall adorned with stone figures of different gods and goddesses. They seem "conscious in stone" (7.5.78). The figures treasure in them the cosmic history of man's evolution and the mystery and meaning of gods. In spirit's vision she sees the living presence of the triune being in these figures. As she passes through room after room in that mysterious place, she feels within herself an oneness with every thing she sees. By a mysterious inner awakening she realises herself to be the "Beloved of the Supreme" (7.5.119). In the last chamber she meets a Power, the aksara purusa, which is beyond definition. Now she proceeds through a tunnel dug in the "last rock" (7.5.137). The last rock suggests the last stage of her spirit's inner journey before she meets her
secret soul and also the last trace of separativity before she merges into it. Passing through the tunnel she comes to a place where shines "a deathless sun" (7.5.138). Then crossing a wall of doorless fire she enters a house "all made of flame and light" (7.5.139). There Savitri finds her secret soul, a being "immortal in transience" (7.5.142), i.e. the Jīvātman or the "eternal true being" of which she is the human counterpart. This being is

The Spirit's conscious representative,

God's delegate in our humanity,

Comrade of the universe, the Transcendent's ray. (7.5.151-53)

This being or Jīvātman is one with the universal Being. It is a projection of the Transcendent. In the individual life or in the human personality which is subject to birth and death and change, Jīvātman or this secret soul is represented by the psychic being. In other words the psychic being is a projected part of this secret soul in the individual life:

She [secret soul] puts forth a small portion of herself,

A being no bigger than the thumb of man

Into a hidden region of the heart

To face the pang and to forget the bliss,

To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds

And labour mid the labour of the stars. (7.5.166-71)

The psychic being is identified with and veiled by mind, life and body and supports them in nature's play. Yet it is the "unwounded and immortal self" (7.5.177). This subliminal psychic entity brings us strength, love,
wisdom and refined essence of being. This is the godhead in us that lifts us to divinity. This "toiling spirit" (7.5.194) of Savitri, ie her human portion of divinity or the psychic being meets and recognises her secret deity, ie the Jivatman or the eternal true being and merges into it. The human Savitri is transformed and becomes one with the divine Savitri:

Here in this chamber of flame and light they met;
They looked upon each other, knew themselves,
The secret deity and its human part,
The calm immortal and the struggling soul.
Then with a magic transformation's speed
They rushed into each other and grew one. (7.5.195-200)

In an attempt to explain this experience Pandit writes "when our embodied soul grows in consciousness, and reaches its optimum, it fuses with what is called the Over-soul, the Jivatman or the central being . . .(56).

Sri Aurobindo clearly mentions in his writings that Atman [Brahman, Paramātman] is "pure indivisible Being", transcendent or universal. It is "timeless, spaceless and free" and its existence is "light and bliss" (Aurobindo 12: 87). When it "individualises and becomes a central being" (Aurobindo 22: 267), it is then the Jivatman--"the Spirit's conscious representative, / God's delegate in our humanity" ((7.5.151-52). Thus Jivatman is "one of the Divine Many" (Aurobindo 22: 387), a portion of the Divine and is indistinguishable from the Atman. To amplify the idea Sri Aurobindo writes:
An elaborate description of the Jivatma would be: "the multiple Divine manifested here as the individualised self or spirit of the created being." The Jivatma in its essence does not change or evolve, its essence stands above the personal evolution; within the evolution itself it is represented by the evolving psychic being which supports all the rest of the nature. (Aurobindo 22: 266)

Jivātman is thus self-existent above the manifested being. It is unchangeable, unaffected by birth and death. We become aware of it with the coming of higher self-knowledge. It is the "eternal true being of the individual" (Aurobindo 22: 283). On the other hand, the psychic being takes part in the process of evolution. It is rather the "Jivatman entering into birth" (Aurobindo 22: 276). It stands "behind the heart supporting the mind, life and body" (Aurobindo 24: 1092). For further elaboration Sri Aurobindo writes:

The psychic being is especially the soul of the individual evolving in the manifestation the individual Prakriti and taking part in the evolution. It is that spark of the Divine Fire that grows behind the mind, vital and physical as the psychic being until it is able to transform the Prakriti of Ignorance into Prakriti of knowledge." (Aurobindo 22: 291).

This moment of transformation ("magic transformation") is the moment of merger of Savitri's struggling soul or psychic being with the
divine soul or the Jivatman. This spiritual transformation has taken place deep within her inner being.

After this experience of identity with her secret soul Savitri wakes up again to the earthly reality. But this time she has her newly attained enlightenment and power:

But now the half-opened lotus bud of her heart
Had bloomed and stood disclosed to the earthly ray;
In an image shone revealed her secret soul. (7.5.206-08)

Now she invokes the Divine Mother to make her body Her abode. Her prayer is instantly responded—"a face, a form came down into her heart" (7.5.217). The descent of the Divine Mother abruptly causes a "mighty movement" (7.5.220) in Savitri’s inner being. The touch or pressure of the divine Power awakens the Kundalini\(^{22}\) in her: "a flaming serpent rose released from sleep (7.5.223). This force goes up touching the centres of her inner being, and effects a great awakening:

\(^{22}\)The Kundalini "is the Yogic force asleep in the Muladhara and covered up in the other centres by the ordinary consciousness. When it is liberated, it rises up to join the Brahmic (Divine) consciousness above passing through the centres on its way" (Doshi 11).

The centres or chakras are seven in number. "All these centres are in the middle of the body; they are supposed to be attached to the spinal cord; but in fact all these things are in the subtle body, sūksma deha, though one has the feeling of their activities as if in the physical body when the consciousness is awake." (Aurobindo 22: 365).
They [the centres] bloomed and laughed surcharged with light and bliss;
Then at the crown it joined the Eternal's space.
In the flower of the head, in the flower of Matter's base,
In each divine stronghold and Nature-knot
It held together the mystic stream which joins
The viewless summits with the unseen depths. (7.5.228-33).

The thousand-petalled lotus on the top of the head [sahasradala or sahasrāra], the centre between the eye-brows [ājñācakra], the throat centre [visuddha]—all experience "a glad uplift" (7.5.261). Under this overwhelming impact every act of Savitri becomes "an act of God" 97.5.276). The heart centre [hṛt-padma or ānāhata], the navel centre [nābhipadma], the abdominal centre [svādhishṭāna or manipūra] and the nether centre or the physical down to the subconscious [mūlādhāra] where "once the Serpent slept" (7.5.289) also come to be ruled by Savitri's "sovereign deathless soul "(7.5.293). Thus the entire human part of Savitri attains a harmony and surrenders to the the great World-Mother.

Savitri's attainments lead to the conclusion that once we establish identity with our secret soul and Nature's veil is removed "a Light comes down into the Ignorance" (7.5.305). As a result

The mind becomes a mastered instrument
And life a hue and figure of the soul.
All happy grows towards knowledge and towards bliss.
A divine Puissance then takes Nature's place. (7.5.307-10)
Our body and mind, acts and aspirations come under the sway of the Divine power. The Divine's rapture and power flow into our mortal limbs. Life is moulded by an inner law of beauty. Divinity expresses itself more prominently. "Our words become the natural speech of Truth, / Each thought is a ripple on a sea of Light" (7.5.317-18). Our acts are in harmony with the rule of a "supernal Right" (7.5.322). All untrue or unlovely moods leave us totally. A cry of victory rises within us:

"O soul, my soul, we have created Heaven,
Within we have found the kingdom here of God,
His fortress built in a loud ignorant world.
Our life is entrenched between two rivers of Light,
We have turned space into a gulf of peace
And made the body a capital of bliss." (7.5.327-32)

Savitri's attainment of perfection holds the same promise for the evolving spirit and opens the possibility of divine life:

A first perfection's stage is reached at last;
Out of the wood and stone of our nature's stuff
A temple is shaped where the high gods could live.
Even if the struggling world is left outside
One man's perfection still can save the world.
There is won a new proximity to the skies,
A first betrothal of the Earth to Heaven,
A deep concordat between Truth and Life:
A camp of God is pitched in human time. (7.5.336-44)
Now Savitri is aware of her aim. The silent impact of her inner perfection is felt around her. Satyavan is, in her view, no more a being fated to die. He is rather a promise for a great future. They are tied together "inseparable like the earth and sky" (7.6.62). Yet her inner struggle is not over. Once while she is sitting in deep joy an unexpected chilling experience overpowers her. A "formless Dread with shapeless endless wings" (7.6.74) seems to fill the universe. A sudden extinction seems to overtake the joy of life. This grim, joyless figure addresses her in unspoken words. Savitri hears the unuttered thought in her own depths. He asserts:

I have created all, all I devour;
I am Death and the dark terrible Mother of life,
I am Kali black and naked in the world,
I am Maya and the universe is my cheat
I lay waste human happiness with my breath
And slay the will to live, the joy to be
That all may pass back into nothingness
And only abide the eternal and absolute.

For only the blank Eternal can be true. (7.6.116-24)

Savitri feels the burden of a barren silence and finds that her kingdom of delight disappears. This negating Voice or the voice of Night provokes a greater Voice, ie the voice of Light that counters the evil designs of the former and comes to the rescue of Savitri. It advises Savitri not to yield. She is not born for any personal attainment, but to "aid a blind and suffering mortal race" (7.6.170). The voice of Light admonishes her:
"O Soul, bare not thy kingdom to the foe;

But not for self alone the self is won:
Content abide not with one conquered realm;
Adventure all to make the whole world thine,
To break into greater kingdoms turn thy force.

He who would save the world must share its pain.
If he knows not grief, how shall he find grief's cure?

His soul must be wider than the universe
And feel eternity as its very stuff,

Thou shalt be one with God's bare reality

Cast off thy mind, step back from form and name.
Annual thyself that only God may be." (7.6.146, 153-56, 178-79, 189-90, 210,219-20)

As mind is cast off Savitri plunges into soul's privacy and becomes a detached and calm witness of "her own interior scene" (7.6.227) and the "unceasing tread and passage of her thoughts" (7.6.230). She witnesses the play of Nature and birth place of thought. While witnessing the various origins of thought she rises above its law and experiences a deep tranquillity
and quietude within. Some thoughts from cosmic nature still sail into her solitude. Gradually these thoughts also fail to touch her mind’s coast and

Then all grew still, nothing moved any more:

Immobile, self-rapt, timeless, solitary

A silent spirit pervaded silent Space. (7.6.459-61)

In this absolute stillness and intolerable hush she glimpses an all-negating Void:

In that absolute stillness bare and formidable

There was glimpsed an all-negating Void supreme

That claimed its mystic Nihil’s sovereign right

To cancel Nature and deny the soul. (7.6.462-65)

The world appears unreal. There is no form, no thought, and no emotion. There is no response from within to outside touches of Nature. Her body acts like a machine without participating in the action. The world seems like "a cosmic film of scenes and images" (7.6.519). Everything is devoid of the power of life and the light of the soul. Everything is unsubstantial and self-annulled. But behind this fading scene she perceives the "One" who alone is real. It is beyond Time, name and form. It is like an omnipresent reality. As she perceives this One, a "formless liberation" (7.6.592) comes on her: "She was no more a Person in a world, / She had escaped into infinity" (7.6.595-96). But this does not lead to total annihilation; "only some last annulment now remained" (7.6.612). Savitri is open to two different possibilities. Her radiant being can come back out of
the Void and show "to the souls of men their deep identity" (7.6.636). On the other hand she may choose to rest in God's eternal bliss. But these possibilities now seem remote because a fathomless blank covers everything:

In infinite Nothingness was the ultimate sign
Or else the Real was the Unknowable.
A lonely Absolute negated all:
It effaced the ignorant world from its solitude
And drowned the soul in its everlasting peace. (7.6.642-46)

To the outside world Savitri is her usual self. Her acts follow the old familiar way. But inwardly she is different. She neither wills nor thinks, but acts like an automaton impelled by an unknown power. She sits with Satyavan, but her mind remains moveless. When she speaks her words exude beauty and wisdom. It is as if her words come from a distant Vast. It seems that a dual power, the inconscient Nature and the superconscient Mystery, acts in her.

One day she is sitting by the sleeping Satyavan. A Voice rises within her. This voice, though not hers, speaks from her own heart, from the depths within. An overwhelming transformation follows:

As it spoke all changed within her and without;
All was, all lived; she felt all being one;
The world of unreality ceased to be. (7.7.132-34)

Everything shows a Truth now in which negation finds no place. The Indecipherable, Transcendent Reality which is at the basis of all creation is
no more "the omnipotent Nihil" (7.6.623) or "a cipher of vastness in unreal Nought" (7.7.152). Rather

It was her self, it was the self of all,
It was the reality of existing things,
It was the consciousness of all that lived
And felt and saw; it was Timelessness and Time,
It was the Bliss of formlessness and form.
It was all Love and the one Beloved's arms,
It was sight and thought in one all-seeing Mind,
It was joy of being on the peaks of God. (7.7.155-62)

Savitri passes "beyond Time into eternity" (7.7.163). With this newfound vast liberation she becomes one with the Infinite. This oneness with the Infinite or the cosmic Self does not annihilate her individuality. In this oneness she is rather "the creator and the lord of all":

An individual, one with cosmic self
In the heart of the Transcendent's miracle
And the secret of World-personality
Was the creator and the lord of all.
Mind was a single innumerable look
Upon himself and all that he became,
Life was his drama and the Vast a stage,
The universe was his body, God its soul. (7.7.177-84)

Illuminating revelations come into her inner sight. She acquires a new identity:
Her spirit saw the world as living God;
It saw the One and knew that all was He.

She was a single being, yet all things;
The world was her spirit's wide circumference,
The thoughts of others were her intimates,
Their feelings close to her universal heart,
Their bodies her many bodies kin-to her;
She was no more herself but all the world.

Nowhere she dwelt, her spirit was everywhere,
The distant constellations wheeled round her;

What seemed herself was an image of the Whole. (7.7.187-88, 204-09, 213-14, 223)

Thus Savitri not only finds her secret soul, but also attains oneness with the cosmic Self. She is beyond Time and Space, yet she acts in Time and Space. She participates in the subconscious life, yet she belongs to the superconscious. She has effected a total transformation in her own being through the power of her yoga. Radiant with superconscious light and filled with the power of Infinity she now prepares to confront her Fate and the power of Death. She is the precursor of supramental transformation.

In the legend Savitri confronts death without knowing the outcome. Her power is her chastity, devotion and silent love. She is not above
uncertainty and apprehension. But in the poem she is awakened to her divinity and is one with her true eternal being. She confronts death with her soul-power that can defeat death. The moment of her union with the secret-self is the moment of her victory. In the legend death is not defeated, but deferred. In the poem death is vanquished through the exposure of its real nature. After regaining the life of Priyumvada, Ruru returns to the earth with her as they are attached to its joy and beauty. But after the resurrection of Satyavan, Savitri returns to the earth with him to make it a house of the Spirit through an all-round transformation. For Sri Aurobindo the earth is the central stage. The poet of the earth aspires to rid it of death and mortality. He visualises that this will be achieved by an aspiring humanity that becomes the fit instrument of the Divine by opening itself to It and is prepared for the descent of the Divine into earthly life.

Aswapathy’s yoga and consequent ascent transcending ego-bound individuality reveals aspiring man’s hidden possibilities. Savitri is the power that inspires man to strive for the fulfilment of these possibilities and gives them a cosmic basis. If Aswapathy epitomises Sri Aurobindo’s yogic flight Savitri embodies his ultimate vision of life. Aswapathy’s yoga leads to self-discovery. Savitri is established in soul’s radiance and glory through identity. Aswapathy’s tapasyā marks the journey from ego to Self. Savitri is the embodied light of the Self. Thus both the characters mark the endeavour and the goal, the aspiration and the vision respectively. Both draw sustenance from the poet’s spiritual experiences and realisation. The poet portrays them
in the process of an inspired poetic expression of his spiritual experiences and vision. He reveals his aspirations, endeavours, and experiences through these characters. Both these characters are presented as the architects giving shape to the poet's ultimate vision. They become, in the process of their growth, synonymous with the poet's spiritual journey and attainments. They make us see the inner man that the poet is and the real being that we are. Savitri marks the consummation of the poet's inner journey, both poetic and spiritual. The poet finds fulfilment in the fulfilment of the yogi and the inner man, ie in the actualization of supramental transformation:

"Thus shall the earth open to divinity
And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
And meet the deity in common things.
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine."  (11.1.1426-32).