Chapter Four
Towards a Greater Destiny
Transformation and Supramental Manifestation

The vision of Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri goes beyond Space, Time and Creation, and anticipates a new creation. Creation is not a finished act: it is a continuous process, an ever-growing phenomenon, an unfinished play of the Divine. In the context of creation, man is unique, since conscious evolution is possible in man alone. According to Sri Aurobindo, “Man is a spirit veiled in the works of energy, moving to self-recovery, capable of Godhead. He is a soul that is growing through Nature to conscious selfhood; he is a divinity and an external existence, he is an overflowing wave of the God-ocean, an inextinguishable spark of the supreme Fire ... The natural half animal creature that for a while he seems to be is not at all his whole being and is not in any way his real being. His inmost reality is the divine Self, ... and to find that and exceed his outward, apparent, natural self is the greatness of which he alone of terrestrial beings is capable.¹

Sri Aurobindo thus sees man as possessing within him a mass of spiritual capacity that can help him become one with the supramental Gnosis or the full Truth-Consciousness in which there can be no place for the principle of division and ignorance. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity, in which the one who knows merges with the known. It is man’s destiny to grow from nature to ‘Supernature’ or the divine nature of the Sachchidananda. Sri Aurobindo asserts that the earth-life provides man the opportunity to recast himself into a soul-power of the Supreme and that man can move towards his ultimate destiny by a progressive yogic endeavour. Man has to first overcome his lower physical-vital-mental nature and evolve into a spiritual being. The next step is a total transformation of his being by a descent of the Supermind, which is also referred
to as the Divine Gnosis or the full Truth-Consciousness. The supramental being will be led towards God and his mortality shall be 'lifted towards Godhead' transforming his life into the Life Divine.

"The superman shall wake in mortal man
And manifest the hidden demigod
Or grow into the God-Light and God-Force
Revealing the secret deity in the cave."

(11. 1. 1242-1245)

Sri Aurobindo also points out that Nature itself becomes increasingly conscious of its identity with the supreme Spirit through man's spiritual evolution, ultimately resulting in a transformation of the earth-nature.

"When superman is born as Nature's king
His presence shall transfigure Matter's world:
He shall light up Truth's fire in Nature's night,
He shall lay upon the earth 'Truth's greater law."

(11. 1. 1357-1360)

However Sri Aurobindo does not visualize a miraculous transformation of the collective humanity. He points out that not everyone responds to 'the Immense that calls to man to expand the Spirit'. A few who respond and make a conscious effort to evolve into higher consciousness can become 'vehicles of the Eternal's luminous power.'

"These are the high forerunners, the heads of Time,
The great deliverers of earth-bound mind,
The high transfigurers of human clay,
The first-born of a new supernal race.”

(11. l. 1236-1239)

Man is thus on the threshold of a new creation that will reveal his true kinship with the Divine. This will occur when both man and Nature are ready.

“…when the hour of the Divine draws near
The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time
And God be born into the human clay
In forms made ready by your human lives.
Then shall the Truth supreme be given to men.”

(11. l. 1215-1219)

Savitri’s birth, the fulfilment of the boon granted to Aswapati, symbolizes the coming of ‘the hour of the Divine’.

The Triple Transformation:

Sri Aurobindo identifies three phases in the process of transformation of the Spiritual Man into the Supramental Being. The supramental Truth-Consciousness can be established in the individual being only by a triple transformation. Sri Aurobindo observes, “…the gulf between Mind and Supermind has to be bridged, the closed passages opened and roads of ascent and descent created where there is now a void and a silence. This can be done only by the triple transformation. There must first be the psychic change, the conversion of our whole present nature into a soul-instrumentation; on that or along with that there must be the spiritual change, the descent of a higher Light, Knowledge, Power, Force, Bliss, Purity into the whole being, even into the lowest
recesses of the life and body, even into the darkness of our subconscience; last there must supervene the supramental transmutation, there must take place as the crowning movement the ascent into the supermind and the transforming descent of the supramental Consciousness into our entire being and nature.”

The seer-poet of Savitri sings of ‘Mother-Wisdom’ working this miracle with ‘her transforming hands’. He foresees the end of mankind’s ‘long dreadful task’, ‘glad release from their self-chosen doom’ and the arrival of the Man divine on earth.

“He sang of the glory and marvel still to be born,
Of Godhead throwing off at last its veil,
Of bodies made divine and life made bliss,
Immortal sweetness clasping immortal might,
And the delight when every barrier falls,
And the transfiguration and the ecstasy.”

(6. 1. 63-69)

The Psychic Change:

The evolving individual soul is called the psychic being by Sri Aurobindo. It is an evolving entity that passes from life to life gathering the essence of its life experiences and makes that its basis of growth in the evolution of the individual through the ages. The individual Self or Jiva is an immutable part of the Divine, which remains above the manifestation and presides over the individual evolution. It puts forward, as a representative of itself, the psychic being, which stands behind mind, life and body, and supports them. This psychic being or ChaityaPurusha is entirely veiled by the mental-vital-physical consciousness. Psychic change is the process of bringing the psyche to the forefront and making it govern the other parts of the being in thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations and actions to lead towards the Divine. It is the first step in the process of
transformation. Ego and desire are the greatest obstacles for the psychic being to come forward. Sri Aurobindo observes, "Purity, simple sincerity and the capacity of an unegoistic, unmixed, self-offering without pretension or demand are the conditions of an entire opening of the psychic being."\(^3\) *Satîtri* describes Psyche as sitting in 'the mystic cavern of man's heart obedient to a high command.'

> "Time, life and death were passing incidents
> Obstructing with their transient view her sight,
> Her sight that must break through and liberate the god
> Imprisoned in the visionless mortal man."

(7. II. 467-470)

**Spiritualization:**

The psychic transformation, though essentially spiritual in character, would be limited to mind, life and body in its action. The descent of the universal spirit into the whole being is necessary for an effective transformation. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The psychic movement inward to the Self within must be completed by an opening upward to a supreme spiritual status or a higher existence."\(^4\) He points out that the psychic and the spiritual openings with their experiences and consequences can lead away from life or to a Nirvana. However he considers them as steps in the transformation of the nature. The spiritual ascent of the individual to the higher planes is followed by the descent of the higher principles of Superconsciousness into lower nature and their integration. "The spiritual change is the established descent of the peace, light, knowledge, power, bliss from above, the awareness of the self and the Divine and of a higher cosmic consciousness and the change of the whole consciousness to that."\(^5\) When the Spirit charges Matter with its power and man 'wakes into spiritual mind'—
“A high liberty begins and luminous room:
He glimpses eternity, touches the infinite, ...
He feels the universe as his larger self,
Makes Space and Time his opportunity
To join the heights and depths of being in light”

(10. IV. 651-656)

Thus when Spiritualization occurs, a cosmic vision and spiritual sense pervade the whole being.

The Supramental Transmutation:

It is a process by which the spiritualised individual ascends to the supreme Truth-Conscious force or the Supermind which in turn descends into the lower parts of the being effecting an entire transformation of the individual nature to the super nature. The supramentalised being shall become an instrument of the Supreme design and an interpreter of the Divine law; Truth shall lead his life, dictating his thought, speech and act; Divine force and bliss 'shall flow through tissue and cell' transfiguring his entire being.

"A power infallible shall lead the thought,
A seeing puissance govern life and act, ...
The mind shall be God-vision's tabernacle,
The body intuition's instrument,
And life a channel for God's visible power."

(11. I. 1304-1310)

Sri Aurobindo envisages the creation of a gnostic society, an area of Supramental Consciousness, which can be made possible with the emergence of
the Supermind on earth. He foresees a gradual transformation and divinisation of life on earth. This is the aim of his Integral Yoga: "(Our) aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life, and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter ."  

*Savitri* - a record of yogic experience:

*Savitri* encompasses Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as well as his yogic consciousness, experience and knowledge. It may be seen as 'the Golden Bridge' that links the creation to the unmanifest mystery of the Supreme. It mediates between the human personality and the divine Nature. *Savitri* is the 'Inevitable Word' that reflects -

"The Sun from whom we kindle all our suns; 
The Light that leans from the unrealised vasts; 
The Joy that beckons from the impossible; 
The Might of all that never yet came down."

(3. II. 161-164)

As the Mother says, "One needs spiritual experience in order to understand and assimilate *Savitri*. It is not in the mind or through the mind, it is in meditation that *Savitri* is revealed." This caution from the Mother gains greater significance as one ventures into the realms of the Supramental as depicted in *Savitri*. While it is accepted that comprehending *Savitri* in all its fullness is beyond the bounds of those uninitiated into spirituality, it is also believed that anyone who approaches it with an open mind can feel the vibrations it gives out, and catch at least a faint glimpse of the light it casts.
An attempt is made in this chapter to trace the evolution of man from the spiritual being to the supramental being.

The Yoga of Savitri – From the Spiritual to the Supramental:

Sri Aurobindo’s epic provides an insight into the process of ‘triple transformation’ through the yoga of Savitri. While Aswapati’s yoga may be perceived as an ascent of his spirit to the higher planes of consciousness until he obtains Divine grace which can transform earth-life, Savitri’s yoga may be seen as an exploration that leads her deeper into the kingdoms within herself until she finds her Soul-Force and attains Cosmic Consciousness.

Even as Savitri sets out to explore her inner being, a Voice speaks from the ‘secret heights’ to remind her that whatever she is going to achieve is for the good of humanity and the earth:

“For man thou seekst, not for thyself alone.
Only if God assumes the human mind
And puts on mortal ignorance for his cloak
And makes himself the Dwarf with triple stride,
Can he help man to grow into the God.”

(7. III. 19-23)

Hence Savitri, the Divine Grace incarnate who carries within herself the undying flame and eternal splendour of the Divine Mother, accepts human limitations so that she may transform earth-nature.

“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."

(7.1.315-318)

**Exploration of the Inner Self:**

Savitri arrives first at the frontiers of her physical existence and finds herself before an ebony gate that bars the bodily life from the inner worlds. She knocks and presses against the door for entry into the hidden depths, and hears a formidable voice cry from within:

"Back, creature of earth, lest tortured and torn thou die."

(7. III. 44)

Undaunted, Savitri forces her way 'through body to the soul' crossing a perilous border line where 'Life dips into the subconscient dusk.' She enters the chaotic world of the subconscient where one finds -

"A press of uncertain powers and drifting wills;
For all was there but nothing in its place."

(7. III. 71-72)

She proceeds further and enters the sense-world where various forms take shape. Things here are not vague and amorphous; they can be grasped by the senses, yet the soul is not there. Sounds, senses and feelings centre round the ego, creating a 'chaos of disordered impulses' void of light or thought. Fixing her thought on the saviour Name, Savitri walks through this world until she arrives at the world of the physical mind where she confronts a 'giant head of Life, uncontrolled by mind or soul.'
"It claimed the heart's support for its clutch at joy, ... 
Into the wideness of her watching self
It brought a grandiose gust of the Breath of Life."

(7. III. 145-149)

The opposite movements of the Life-force brings about 'flame-ascensions' and 'steep sinkings', tenderess and hate, joys and fears, ecstasy and despair. This is the valley of the false Gleam, the nether realm of Life where all its contraries meet. Savitri is not attracted by this 'wandering Gleam'; she wants to remain its master and not become its agent. She stands unmoved and allows the current of Life-force to pass by:

"Through it all she moved not, plunged not in the vain waves.
Out of the vastness of the silent self
Life's clamour fled; her spirit was mute and free."

(7. III. 253-255)

Then, journeying further through the wide hush, Savitri comes to a world where the Life-force is ordered. An inviolable law is at work that chains her 'strong insurgent heart'. Here she loses the 'majesty of her muse' and the grandeur of her force, for, Reason coeurs her to live 'closed in adamant walls of law'. Savitri advances beyond this realm of small ideals, of closed, conventional, formal meditation and rational religion - the country of the Life-mind.

She then enters the domain of the measured mind, where spirit itself is seen as a form of mind. There, Savitri meets a commanding personality who tries to persuade her to station herself permanently in that world of apparent stability and finality. However Savitri has no intentions of staying in this world of ordered knowledge and fixed beliefs, for she knows that her soul holds the key
to the unfoldment of the earth’s destiny. Resisting the strong pull of the mighty mind, Savitri moves on, for she knows that ‘only those who save themselves can save the others.’ She observes that some who wish to help the suffering humanity turn to the ‘outer world’ looking for external means. She, however, seeks the eternal source that can provide the right solution to life’s riddle.

The ‘messengers who came from her hidden soul’ know her real identity. They address her as ‘the human copy and disguise of God who seeks the deity kept hidden within her’. They point her in the right direction:

“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. III. 491-494)

Following their advice Savitri takes the ‘great winding road’ that dwindles down into a narrow path trodden only by ‘rare pilgrim feet’. She soon feels the nearness of the soul.

The Triple Soul-Forces:

In her journey into the depth of her being, Savitri meets the triple forces of her soul who give her solace, strength, joy, light and peace. The triple soul-forces which are hidden deep within the inner being are symbolically represented by the Mother of Sorrow, the Mother of Might and the Mother of Light, Joy, and Peace. The first of these is the ‘Madonna of suffering’, who is the divine participant in the suffering of all living creatures. It is this ‘Mother of the seven
sorrows' who bears the brunt of world-pain; helps man and the earth to endure the otherwise unbearable agony of existence. She addresses Savitri thus:

"I have borne the calm indifference of Heaven, 
Watched Nature's cruelty to suffering things 
While God passed silent by nor turned to help. 
Yet have I cried not out against his will, ...
I carry the fire that never can be quenched 
And the compassion that supports the suns. 
I am the hope that looks towards my God, ...
I know that one day he shall come at last."

(7. IV. 76-90)

An answering echo rises from below. Savitri hears the voice of a 'tortured Titan' crouched within man's depths, who seems to wallow in his suffering even as he complains against it. He is the Man of Sorrows who feels that he toils without success. He says:

"To enjoy my agony God built the earth, 
My passion he has made his drama's theme"

(7. IV. 99-100)

It is the voice of an angry fatalist, symbolic of the sluggish, tannasic nature of man that resists any radical change of consciousness, protests against the light and is averse to transformation.

"What Nature made me, that I must remain. 
I suffer and toil and weep; I moan and hate."

(7. IV. 157-158)
The spiritual man stands above such negative thought movements. His self is not turned away from the embodiment but presides over its development and oversees the life-movements. Savitri therefore ignores the Man of Sorrows and addresses the Mother of Sorrow:

"Because thou art, men yield not to their doom,  
But ask for happiness and strive with fate;  
Because thou art, the wretched still can hope."

(7. IV. 164-166)

Savitri knows that the Madonna of Suffering possesses only the 'power to solace, not to save'. She is aware of the truth that only a 'drink from the Eternal's cup' can abolish all misery. She promises to return as a 'bringer of strength' who can help humanity.

As Savitri continues her soul-ward journey she meets 'the Mother of Might' who, like 'the Mother of Sorrows' resides in her inner self. She is Durga, the goddess of supreme Power; she is Lakshmi, the mother of cosmic harmony; she is Kali, the destroyer of the 'demon hordes'. She slays the malignant hostile powers and responds to the cry of the oppressed. However she too cannot save all, for -

"The cosmic evil is too deep to unroot,  
The cosmic suffering is too vast to heal."

(7. IV. 267-268)

Yet she is confident of the eventual fulfilment of her mission 'when God comes out to meet the soul of the world.'
Savitri then hears a ‘warped echo’ come from the spaces of the ‘dwarf-Titan’s mind’. It is the cry of ‘the Ego of this great world of desire.’ It represents that part of man, which makes him believe that he has gained mastery over Nature when he is in fact, ‘her conscious automaton and her desire’s dupe’. Although he ‘lives in Time, besieged by Death’, he thinks that the universe is made for his use and enjoyment. The Ego, that was born weak, small and ignorant, brashly declares:

“I have grown greater than Nature, wiser than God ...
There is no miracle I shall not achieve.
What God imperfect left, I will complete.”

(7. IV. 334-347:348)

Savitri’s spiritual being is not governed by the mental Ego. She therefore does not respond to the voice of the Ego but speaks to the ‘Madonna of might, Mother of works and force’:

“Because thou art in him, man hopes and dares;
Because thou art, men’s souls can climb the heavens”

(7. IV. 390-391)

Savitri is not content with the possession of strength, since power is ineffective without wisdom. She moves on, hoping to return one day with the light of wisdom that can hush the cry of Ego and eliminate fear, hatred and weakness.

As Savitri progresses in this spiritual voyage of Self-discovery, she reaches a point where she feels a nearness to the source of her spirit. There she meets the ‘Madonna of light, Mother of joy and peace’. She represents the Light that leads life to immortality, out of the darkness of death. She ‘labours towards the best’,
builds consciousness out of the Inconscient and lifts man’s soul nearer to the Light. She is not wholly successful in her task because humanity clings to its ignorance, grief and littleness. She can save the earth only when ‘earth consents to be saved’.

The voice of the ‘sense-shackled human mind’ intrudes:

“I am the mind of God’s great ignorant world
Ascending to knowledge by the steps he made;
I am the all-discovering Thought of man
I am a god fettered by Matter and sense”

(7. IV. 536-539)

This aspect of the human mind claims that it can explain everything, yet it seems to know nothing. It can only foresee the ‘acts of Matter’s force but not the march of man towards his destiny’. Savitri understands the limitations of the human mind, yet knows that a greater destiny awaits man. Turning to ‘her being of light’ she says:

“Because thou art, the soul draws near to God;
Because thou art, love grows in spite of hate
And knowledge walks unslain in the pit of Night”.

(7. IV. 631-633)

She exhorts the Madonna of light, joy and peace to continue to nurse the spiritual hunger in man and ‘fills his yearning heart with heaven’s fire’. Savitri recognizes that human intellect is a self-enclosing, self-limited phenomenon which allows only ‘a bright shadow of God’ to enter. She knows that only the descent of the
Divine into the human mind can bring about real transformation, and so she promises:

“One day I will return, His hand 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. IV. 647-651)

Having equipped herself with the triple forces of the soul, Savitri is on the threshold of the great Transformation.

**Obstacles to Overcome:**

Through the intruding voices of the Man of Sorrows, the Ego and the ‘sense-shackled human mind’, Sri Aurobindo points out that grief, ego and thoughts can hinder one's progress in the process of spiritual evolution through yoga.

Yoga means union with the Divine. This union is not possible as long as man chooses to limit himself to the confines of an egoistic existence and a separative mind.

“Our smallness saves us from the Infinite.”

(7. IV. 609)
Even if 'intuition's rays' rain down on him,

"The mind of man will think it earth's own glean,
His spirit by spiritual ego sink,
Or his soul dream shut in sainthood's brilliant cell
Where only a bright shadow of God can come.”  (7. IV. 640-643)

Through these words of Savitri, Sri Aurobindo reveals another aspect of the ego - the spiritual man would have overcome the physical ego which insists on referring everything to the claims and desires of the physical existence; he would have also subdued the vital ego which seeks to dominate his life; he would have transcended the mental ego which insists on its own thoughts, ideas and choice. Yet there is a possibility that he might fall prey to the spiritual ego that preens on its superiority over others, the pride of piety and the sense of monopoly of truth. While the physical, vital and mental egos are more or less self-evident, and can be conquered, the spiritual ego is perhaps the most dangerous one because it conceals itself under specious disguises. Moreover it directly contradicts spiritual consciousness, and cuts at the roots of spiritual life by infusing a sense of complacency. The seeker of the spirit should therefore guard against the subtle onslaught of the spiritual ego that might even lure him into perceiving himself as a saint. He is then prone to being caught in a web of assumed saintliness, feeling no need to aspire for a greater realization and identity with the Divine. He is likely to bask in a reflection of God's shadow with no hope of further evolution. Hence it is necessary to break down all the barriers put up by various formations of the ego before one progresses on the path of spirituality.

A seeker who practices yoga as a means of spiritual ascent may find himself flooded by thoughts that seem to arise out of nowhere. They invade his mind and fill it with their deafening noise. He may be intrigued by certain
thought-movements, which are not actively promoted by him. Sri Aurobindo clarifies that such thoughts are not produced by the conscious mind. They issue from the subtler regions of the being where they are hidden and they might surface when they are least expected:

“In our unseen subtle body thought is born
Or there it enters from the cosmic field.”

(7. VI. 255-256)

As the seeker gathers his consciousness and ascends to the higher planes, he gains a control over his thoughts. They no longer intrude. He finds that his Thought soars higher and higher till the bounds of Time and Space are left behind, and Thought communes with the Spirit.

Sorrow is another major hindrance. Sorrow grows on indulgence. The more one entertains sorrow, the more it gathers force and intensity, ultimately taking possession of the whole being. However, in the course of the soul’s development, the individual reaches a point when his Self withdraws its assent, refuses to participate in the agitation and passion of sorrow, and stands aloof, calm, undisturbed. When the Self decides not to entertain grief any more, a new page is turned in the book of life. Grief turns out to be just a superficial phenomenon, an unnatural reaction to the impacts of life. Joy and bliss are natural to the spirit embodied in life. If the individual faces life with a deeper and wider poise, the inherent delight comes through undeformed by the surface perversions of pain and suffering.

Sri Aurobindo illustrates this fact through Savitri who handles the foreknowledge of Satyavan’s death with great equanimity.
"Grief, fear became the food of mighty love ...
Her spirit stretched measureless in strength divine,
An anvil for the blows of Fate and Time:
Or tired of sorrow’s passionate luxury,
Grief's self became calm, dull-eyed, resolute ..."

(7. 1. 296-304)

Such guidelines to the spiritual seeker may be gleaned from each canto of the epic. In fact each step of yoga is described in Savitri, but it is well hidden behind the broader framework. Each line perhaps contains a wealth of knowledge but one must rise to the required level of true consciousness to discover it. A detailed discussion of the process, the difficulties and solutions is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is felt that touching upon some of these aspects of spiritual practice in the context of Savitri's yoga is justified because of the special significance of the character.

Savitri combines in herself the dual aspects of the being – the human and the divine. Her human self undergoes experiences common to all humanity, while her inner witness-self urges her to overcome human limitations and move forward on the path of spiritual progress.

Savitri, the Divine Incarnate, undertakes an earnest spiritual endeavour to ascend to the planes of superconsciousness and bring about a descent of the Divine into her human embodiment so that earth-nature may be transformed.

The Finding of the Soul, the hidden Godhead in man:

Having come into contact with the triple forces of her soul, Savitri moves onwards and enters the 'night of God', a region beyond knowledge and wisdom,
outside the pale of any human light and love. Here she realizes that 'her self was nothing, God alone was all'. She moves through the 'fathomless impersonal Night', the 'formless, voiceless, infinite', and finally approaches the end of her journey. She feels the stirring of a luminous world within. She recognizes in 'her prophetic mind', the 'mystic cavern' in her inner being and 'knew the dwelling of her secret soul'. When she enters 'Truth's last retreat', she finds herself 'amid great figures of gods'—

"Executive figures of the cosmic self
World-symbols of immutable potency."

(7. V. 80-81)

Deep in her consciousness, through an inner identification, she feels herself 'made one with all she saw.' It is a re-affirmation of the truth of her inner existence: she is indeed the energy and being of all the gods.

Savitri then moves into the last and inmost chamber where she sees a figure of supreme effulgence, a form of indefinable splendour, the fount and force of everything,

"A power of which she was a straying Force,
An invisible Beauty, goal of the world's desire,
A sun of which all knowledge is a beam,
A greatness without whom no life could be."

(7. V. 131-134)

Then Savitri feels everything recede into the nameless silence of the pure, formless Self. She passes through 'a tunnel dug in the last rock' and comes out into the radiant domain of the deathless sun. There, in a 'house of flame and
light she suddenly meets her secret soul. Savitri sees that her Self has been a participant in the Divine play:

"The Spirit's conscious representative,
God's delegate in our humanity,
Comrade of the universe, the transcendent's ray."

(7. V. 152-154)

Savitri observes that the mother-being in her is moved by her infinite love for her children and -

"...puts forth a small portion of herself, ...
Into a hidden region of the heart ...
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds"

(7. V. 167-171)

It is this immortal soul within the individual that supports the human scene - the physical, vital and mental life. It identifies with the being, laughs and weeps, suffers and exults, 'takes on itself the anguish and defeat'. It is this hidden godhead that uplifts man to light and glory. It is in the inmost 'chamber of flame and light' that 'the secret deity and its human part' meet:

"They looked upon each other, knew themselves, ...
The calm immortal and the struggling soul.
Then with the magic transformation's speed
They rushed into each other and grew one."

(7. V. 197-201)
The Descent of the Divine:

After finding her soul, Savitri finds herself back in her human and earthly environment. The subtle world withdraws behind a luminous veil of inner sight. Savitri experiences within her the harmonizing oneness of life, mind and soul. She invokes the Supreme Mother to descend into her earthly body and make of it the temple of her Transforming Grace. In response to her call there descends into her heart 'a living image of the original Power'. The very touch of its feet creates a mighty movement that rocks the subtle world and waking up from its coiled sleep, a flaming serpent. It rose 'billowing its coils' and stood erect touching 'her centres with its flaming mouth'.

In the yogic system it is believed that at the base of the spine, lies an energy that is mostly dormant; only a part of it is current in the physical body as life-energy. This latent energy is a concentration of great power and is symbolically represented as a serpent-power lying coiled up - the Kundalini. When this energy is awakened by yogic means or as a result of the natural action of higher Consciousness, it shoots up along the spinal column, touching and awakening on its way, the centres of consciousness - the chakras - that are present in the subtle body. These centres are focii of different energies. They are pictured as lotuses lying with their faces downward. With the descent of the Divine, that awakened the Kundalini, the mighty Power opens these lotuses, which at once turn upwards and release their latent energies.

"As if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep,
They bloomed and laughed surcharged with light and bliss.
Then at the crown it joined the Eternal's space."

(7. V. 228-230)
This power reaches the crown of the head, the thousand petalled Lotus, the
centre of the Superconscience. There the two ends of the being, matter and spirit,
are joined. Matter's nether base is thus united with the Spirit's summits in the
' Eternal's space'. The Supreme Mother, an image of the original Power raises her
hand in a 'saviour gesture' and Savitri undergoes 'high celestial change':

“Powers and divinities burst flaming forth;
Each part of the being trembling with delight
Lay overwhelmed with tides of happiness
And saw her hand in every circumstance
And felt her touch in every limb and cell.”

(7. V. 250-254)

The references to the Kundalini and the chakras open up the possibility of a
more detailed discussion of the yogic process, perhaps even a comparison of
different methods of yoga. Further analysis does not fall into the framework of
this study. It is, however, considered relevant to refer to a clarification made by
Sri Aurobindo. In one of his letters, he points out that "The ascent of the
Kundalini - not its descent, so far as I know - is a recognized phenomenon; there
is one that corresponds in our Yoga, the feeling of the consciousness ascending
from the vital or the physical to meet the higher consciousness. This is not
necessarily through the chakras but is often felt in the whole body. Similarly the
descent of the higher consciousness is not felt necessarily or usually through the
chakras but as occupying the whole...body." It is hoped that this clarification by
Sri Aurobindo may be looked upon as a re-affirmation of his belief in the total
transformation of the being. In the context of the descent of the Divine into
Savitri, mention is made of how the touch of the Divine is felt in the lotus of the
head, the throat, the heart, the navel and the base of the spine. However, the
following lines clearly indicate that the transfiguring Touch is not confined only to those centres but encompasses the whole being:

“...A divine Puissance ...
...streams into us with her unbound force,
Into mortal limbs the Immortal’s rapture and power.
An inner law of beauty shapes our lives;
Our words become the natural speech of Truth,
Each thought is a ripple on a sea of Light.”

Savitri now represents a new stage in the evolution of man:

“In the slow process of the evolving spirit,
In the brief stage between death and birth
A first perfection’s stage is reached at last”

Savitri offers new hope: transformation of the human to the divine is no longer a myth or a figment of imagination; it is real.

“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 concordant between Truth and Life:
A camp of God is pitched in human time.”
Savitri finds her soul, the soul that is both cosmic and supracosmic. She 'passes beyond Time into Eternity,' and living eternally in the consciousness of the supreme Mother, prepares to meet her Fate.

**Savitri - The Supramental in Action:**

Savitri may be regarded as the unfoldment of the secret intent of Nature, to help humanity ascend towards a divine consciousness and immortality. She manifests progressively, in the human consciousness and the earth-consciousness, her spirit-summits. She thus hastens the movement of man and the earth towards the Golden Dawn. With Love and Light as her mighty weapons, she encompasses the dark Night of Inconscience from all sides; and encounters Death with her all-conquering Truth. She is the ever-increasing flame and splendour of the Divine Mother. She is the Supramental in action.

**The Confrontation:**

When Yama captures Satyavan's soul and enters a black wilderness, dreadful and desolate, Savitri follows him, persistent in her 'will to be immortal and divine.' She walks through the house of Void besieged by its illusion, yet fully conscious of her 'transcendent task' and the final denouement. The voice of Death is heard in the 'silent dark immensity' of Night. He speaks disparagingly of Life's unsubstantial claim to immortality. He declares that love is only a by-product of human emotions or lust in disguise; mind, a child of Matter. To him the soul is like 'a brief flower' created by 'the garden Mind' on 'Matter's terrain plot,' which 'perishes with the plant on which it grows.' He dismisses Matter as insubstantial for there is nothing stable about it. He asserts that the world is made of Inconscience and that human existence is but a dream. He tries to
dissuade Savitri from pursuing her ideal, for in his view, the Ideal is a 'malady of the mind', 'a bright delirium of speech and thought'. He urges Savitri to resign herself to the inexorable earthly law, accept Fate and withdraw to her earthly abode.

Savitri remains undeterred by the fatalist philosophy of the lord of Death. She gives a fitting reply:

"O Death, thou speakest Truth but Truth that slays,
I answer to thee with the Truth that saves."

(10. III. 18-19)

Seeking to mask Eternity with Time, Yama presents Truth as a weakling, dependent on physical sense. Savitri's Truth is the great redeemer.

Savitri reminds Yama of how Life and Mind emerged from the black immensities of the Inconscient, and grew to embrace the whole universe. She claims that it is man's privilege to hope for the Divine. The earth at present is 'peopled by imperfect minds and ignorant lives,' but there lurks in man the supreme Godhead whose infinite light and power can help him evolve into a Gnostic being.

"In God concealed the world began to be,
Tardily it travels towards manifest God:
Our imperfection towards perfection toils, ...
The infinite holds the finite in its arms,
Time travels towards revealed eternity."

(10. III. 91-96)
The unfinished, outer world that we see is an embodiment of the Divine 'in
dumb Matter'. There is in man a spirit that 'looks into the Eternal's eyes'.
Stubborn skepticism and sophisticated cynicism cannot 'stamp out the God in
man'. With her unswerving faith, Savitri perceives 'a hidden Bliss at the root of
things.' She also discerns a 'mystic slow transfiguration' at work that goes
unnoticed by the physical mind. Human existence has its beginnings in Matter
but its goal is in the Divine; the human body is the chamber and the shrine of
God. With the union of the human and the Divine in Matter, Death would have
no role to play.

Savitri reveals to Yama her profound experience of union with the Divine,
her mission on earth and the need of Satyavan for its accomplishment.

"Our lives are God's messengers beneath the stars;
To dwell under death's shadow they have come
Tempting God's light to earth for the ignorant race,
His love to fill the hollow in men's hearts,
His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world.
For I, the woman, am the force of God,
He the Eternal's delegate soul in man."

(10. III. 447-453)

Savitri, the Supramental being, is aware that her 'humanity is a mask of
God.' His will is greater than the law of Death; her love is stronger than the
bonds of Fate. She challenges Yama that man will triumph over Death, for she, in
her human self, shall 'trample Death down to reach the immortal heights'. Savitri
is the living body of the Divine Mother, the conscious instrument of the
Almighty and the incarnate Wisdom and Will of the Supreme.
Death cries out from the incredulous Darkness, highlighting the irreconcilable polarity of Matter and Spirit:

"The Real with the unreal cannot mate.
He who would turn to God, must leave the world;
He who would live in the Spirit must give up life;
He who has met the Self, renounces Self."

(10. III. 511-514)

The Lord of Death asserts that the peace of extinction is the sole and safe escape from life’s suffering; death is the last and lasting felicity for the earthly human creature. He tries to convince Savitri to return to the earth and find someone else to love and live together with, for human beings need company. He offers her earthly joys but not Satyavan’s soul. According to him love is like ‘a transient painting on a holiday’s floor’ and life is like ‘a constant stream that never is the same’ and therefore memories only fade away.

Savitri remains firm since she is conscious of the cosmic Spirit within her and confident of the success of her mission. She sees the glimmer of twilight and a deepening half-light flee with pearly wings as if to reach some ‘far ideal Morn’.

In the ‘dream twilight’ of crude reality Savitri’s vision catches a series of quick-moving images of tired, old cities, toiling multitudes in the monotonous hum of sterile thoughts. All of human achievements pass by in a flash as though driven by phantom Time – great cities and civilizations; systems, sciences and arts; kings and kingdoms; mighty ideals, sages, seers and prophets. Each of those that claimed eternity in its own time passes by, its effect like a dream.
Yama once again points out the futility of her ideal, for human nature has no hope of changing in the midst of unchanging Nature. The human mind may envisage a greater destiny but it is sure to remain unfulfilled, since Truth is far beyond the reach of mind. He offers 'immobile peace' as a refuge to Savitri.

Savitri is undeterred by his logic. She refuses to seek refuge in endless peace. The Power, Force and Light of the Superconscient that have descended into her human self unerringly point towards a transformation of humanity. She realizes her oneness not only with the Divine, but also with the whole of the earth and every living being on it. She, the Supramental being, seeks an all-inclusive delight, an all-embracing liberty:

"A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart:
I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
My spirit's liberty I ask for all."

(10. IV. 305-308)

Death cautions Savitri not to breach 'the ancient laws' and exhorts her to 'respect the calm of great established things.' Savitri points out that Great Time in its passing has proved the infinite freedom of the spirit by pressing into existence ever new splendours. There is nothing in Nature that can bind sentient beings to a dull fixity. The law might hold good for inanimate things, perhaps even animals, but it does not apply to human beings.

"Man turns to a nobler walk, a master path.
I trample on thy law with living feet;
For to arise in freedom I was born."

(10. IV. 400-402)
Yama does not know the real identity of Savitri. He does not recognize Savitri's knowledge of the purpose of creation and the reason behind the Transcendent's entry into the mortal's space. He does not understand why she is determined to follow her own course. He concedes that she may have seen the Light and known the Truth, but to him, Truth is enigmatic. While he accepts that man alone strives to exceed himself, he doubts if eternal Truth can live in the hearts of mortal men. He demands that Savitri reveal such Truth in her living self.

Even as Savitri prepares to answer Death, a radiant light illumines her face, 'mortality disappears' and 'her Goddess-Self' reflects in her eyes. She explains that the Supreme is the Impersonal as well as the Infinite Person; immutable and immortal, He watches His will fulfilled by His numberless personalities. It is the unevolved mind that sees them as separate entities and opposites. Being the Absolute, He is the individual, the universal and the Transcendent. The divine has planted a plan and a purpose in the heart of Matter. A hidden Intelligence is therefore at work in the depths of Inconscience.

"A Truth supreme has forced the world to be;
It has wrapped itself in Matter ... 
It rules the world from its sleeping senseless Void ... 
It lends significance to earth's meaningless life."

(10. IV. 614-642)

Savitri then throws light on the spiritual voyage of man, who, journeying through long, meandering ways wakes into spiritual life and glimpses eternity. Only a few that dare to scale the summits can break through the frontiers of the finite and identify themselves with the Infinite. It takes a long history of aspiration and ceaseless striving for the human spirit to leap across the wide
openings of the Illumined Mind to the flame-hills of Intuition and at last enter
the ‘cosmic empire of the Overmind’ where -

“All Time is one body, Space a single look:
There is the Godhead’s universal gaze
And there the boundaries of immortal Mind”

(10. IV. 710-712)

The Triumph:

It is beyond the realms of cosmic thought and far above the cosmic sight
in the realm of the radiant Supermind that the mighty Mother sits holding the
Eternal Child upon her knees - the child that symbolizes the growth of Divinity
on earth. The Mother of Love, Bliss, Light and Truth awaits ‘the day when this
Child shall speak to Fate.’

“There is the image of our future’s hope;
There is the sun for which all darkness waits,
There is the imperishable harmony.”

(10. IV. 731-733)

Savitri is certain that if human souls could ‘see and love and clasp God’s Truth’-

“Its infinite radiance would seize our hearts,
Our being in God’s image be remade
And earthly life become the life divine.”

(10. IV. 802-804)
Death then questions what bridge one can take to cross the wide gulf between the human and the Divine, the earth and the Transcendent. He wonders who could bring the Divine Mother down to the earth to work this seeming miracle. He wishes to know who Savitri really is. He wants to make sure if she possessed God’s force, for Truth by itself, without Power cannot build heavenly values on earth. Savitri sees a change in Death’s being; it seems to her that the world’s Darkness has consented to be Transformed by the Light of the Divine. Savitri then stands transformed into a figure of Infinity with Space for her robe, and Time, an occasion for her omniscient gaze. She reveals the Divine Mother within her human self:

“In a flaming moment of apocalypse
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil.”

(10. IV. 851-852)

Thus changed, Savitri, the Divine incarnate in the human being, ‘waits for the Word to speak’, as ‘Eternity looks into the eyes of Death’ and Darkness sees ‘God’s living Reality.’ The voice of the Divine then bids Death to ‘stand aside and leave the path of incarnate force.’

“The dire universal shadow disappeared
Vanishing into the Void from which it came …
And Satyavan and Savitri were alone …
All waited on the unknown inscrutable Will.”

(10. IV. 965-973)

The Choice:

Savitri’s triumph over Death and her joy at the restoration of Satyavan’s life do not divert her from her purpose of helping the rest of humanity to
transform Life on the earth. Her happy reunion with Satyavan does not tempt her to accept eternal peace and infinite bliss in the everlasting day of the radiant heavens. A heavenly voice tries to persuade her to 'leave the borrowed body' behind, cast off the 'ambiguous myth of earth's desire' and rise to felicity. The godhead of those brilliant celestial realms points out that heaven's light sometimes visits the mind of earth but few respond and open the doors to let the Light in. The larger human mass is content with its common lot.

"... though something in them weeps for glory lost
And greatness murdered, they accept their fall.
To be the common man they think the best,
To live as others live is their delight.
For most are built on Nature's early plan
And owe small debt to a superior plane;
The human average is their level pitch,
A thinking animal's material range."

(11. 1. 662-669)

Savitri does not accept this argument. She is sure that a greater being will arise from man, for, in him dwells the 'Eternal's Idea and dynamic Will'. She rejects solitary bliss and chooses to return to the earth. She prays that she be granted Divine peace, oneness, power and joy, so that she may share them with earth and men. The Divine Word is then spoken:

"My will is thine, what thou hast chosen I choose:
All thou hast asked I give to earth and men.
All shall be written out in destiny's book"

(11. 1. 967-969)
Savitri is now the instrument of the Divine, a channel of His Force at work to uplift earth's fate and lead man to his destiny of the Life Divine.

Savitri, the Supramental being at work:

Savitri's return to the earth points towards a turn in the course of man's evolution. It can henceforth be 'an evolution in the light', "from knowledge to greater knowledge, from consciousness to greater consciousness, from being to greater being." The evolution of the individual human being may be seen as a first step towards the evolution of the human race. This conclusion is based on the premise that, when one is aware of something, more men are likely to be aware of it. Moreover, it is believed that pure and intense love, perfect and potent consciousness can create an expanding energy-field of their own that becomes a growing power in the world. The Supramental being at work on the earth opens up to the rest of mankind, all the possibilities of the divine life. As Sri Aurobindo says, "a divine life on earth need not be a thing apart and exclusive, having nothing to do with the common earthly existence: it will take up human being and human life, transform what can be transformed, spiritualise whatever can be spiritualised, cast its influence on the rest and effectuate either a radical or an uplifting change, bring about a deeper communion between the universal and the individual, invade the ideal with the spiritual truth of which it is a luminous shadow, and help to uplift (humanity) towards a greater and higher existence." This vision of Sri Aurobindo is clearly reflected in Savitri. He sees the Supramental or Gnostic being, as 'an instrument and partner of the Divine Force', 'a manifest of the Imperishable'.

"The supermind shall be his nature's fount,  
The Eternal's truth shall mould his thoughts and acts,  
The Eternal's truth shall be his light and guide."
The Destiny of Man:

Sri Aurobindo foresees 'a divine harmony' pervading the earth, greater expressions of beauty and joy serving as reminders of man's 'high proximity to Truth and God,' and more men turning towards the Spirit's call. The great thinker, seer and poet proclaims with the certainty of faith -

"...man and superman shall be one
And all the earth become a single life.
Even the multitude shall hear the Voice
And turn to commune with the Spirit within
And strive to obey the high spiritual law:
This earth shall stir with impulses sublime,
Humanity awake to deepest self, ...
A heavenlier passion shall upheave men's lives,
Their mind shall share in the ineffable gleam,
Their heart shall feel the ecstasy and the fire.
Earth's bodies shall be conscious of a soul;
Mortality's bondslaves shall unloose their bonds,
Mere men into spiritual beings grow,
And see awake the dumb divinity."  

Thus the earth nurses in her bosom 'a greater dawn' and man awaits his golden destiny of the Divine.
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