Chapter V

Aswapati’s Quest for Perfection
Aswapati is the king of his own kingdom, searching earnestly for the impregnated kingdom. He forgoes the luxurious life on the earth with the desire of bringing utopian life here. Aswapati’s quest for perfection occupies major part of the epic. While describing who Aswapati is and what his destined work is, the poet says he is:

One in the front of the immemorial quest,
Protagonist of the mysterious play
In which the Unknown pursues himself through forms…..
A thinker and toiler in the ideal’s air,
Brought down to earth’s dumb need her radiant power.

In other words, what Sri Aurobindo is trying to say is that not only Savitri, but in some sense Aswapati was also an avatar. The description of Aswapati’s yoga begins with Book One, Canto Three and extends to the end of Book Three, making 22 Cantos in all. More than 300 pages are devoted to the yoga of Aswapati by the poet. So one can see how important Aswapati’s yoga is to this enterprise. This individual quest of one person for perfection is significant in many ways for all. Firstly, Aswapati is not an ordinary seeker of the Truth. He is the seer-king, representative of aspiring humanity. So his individual quest is an example for other seekers of the Truth. His experiences in this occult-spiritual endeavor are representative for all. Secondly, his quest is not only for the individual perfection, but for the
perfection of all. His quest is for the creative principle which is powerful enough to put an end to all human frustrations, discontent and ills. Thirdly, it is unanimously agreed by important scholars of Savitri like Mangesh Nadkarni, RY. Deshpande and many others that, the detailed descriptions of various spiritual experiences of Aswapati at different planes of consciousness in the epic are in reality, the expressions of the real life Yogic experiences of Sri Aurobindo himself. Thus the part of Aswapati’s quest in the epic contains Sri Aurobindo’s authentic spiritual autobiography.

Aswapati’s Tapsya has a straight definite purpose as well as the symbolic significance behind it. The advent of Savitri is to be preceded by preparing the needed occult- spiritual support to bear the weight and majesty of her grace. Aswapati does intense Yoga-Sadhana in the Earth consciousness. He discerns the ‘wide world- failure’s cause’ and offers his prayer to the supreme Goddess to mission down a living form of her. It is here that things have to happen and these can happen only through her. The purpose of the Yoga-Sadhana of Aswapati is therefore to prepare the necessary base, to provide the resplendent support for executive action of the omnipotent Goddess.

Aswapati’s quest for perfection through his yoga has three phases as characterized by Sri Aurobindo himself in a letter:
Aswapati’s yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual fulfillment as the individual and this is described in 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 realization and new creation. This is described in the Book of the Divine Mother.²

The Yoga of the Soul’s Release from Ignorance

Aswapati is a spirit who has come especially from special world to colonize this world with truth and perfection. His quest begins with the awareness of ignorance as a ruling factor in the earthly world and the following unhappiness and harm in human life as a consequence of it. He feels the urgent need to change this darker scene which has become the habitual part of human life. He also comes to know that the present fallen state of man is neither his born status nor his ultimate destiny. It is the result of the forgetfulness of man who has forgotten his original divine qualities and source. Aswapati is sure that man has inborn potentialities to uplift his present fallen consciousness to the level of divinity. His yoga begins with the description of that.

This bodily appearance is not all;
The form deceives, the person is a mask;
Hid deep in man celestial powers can dwell.³
Once Aswapati realizes that he is not the bodily appearance, that there is something in him called the spark of the divine, that there is something called the soul or the psychic being, he widens his being and goes beyond his ego and loses his kinship with mortality and his mind begins to expand. The cosmic worker now begins to work on him and, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, turned his mud-engine to heaven-use. Human limitations do not stop him anymore. Latent powers awake in him. He becomes a seer, a shining guest of time. He enters a world of still consciousness and experiences peace that passes all understanding. He now begins to see that this world is only a small result of stupendous force. He attains various spiritual siddhis in course of his sadhana.

**The Secret Knowledge**

Aswapati now realizes that the world is not what it seems on the surface. It is not a brute mechanic accident, but a miracle evolving gradually toward its full blossoming. He understands that this whole creation is actually the play between Purusha and Prakriti on different planes. Aswapati also realizes the way the Divine always comes down to guide this world.
Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne…
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal’s power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.

Then Aswapati rises beyond the bounds of nature. He could now see behind the appearances of nature and also see how the divinity works under the hard conditions of adversities and ignorance. He has now a great aspiration to bring the world of glory he has already seen down on earth. He now also begins to understand the logic of the infinite. As he begins his ascent to a great spiritual height he becomes aware of a might of currents of light, power and delight that descends in him.

As thus it rose, to meet him bare and pure
A strong descent leaped down……………

‘Descent’ is important and favourite phrase in Aswapati’s yoga. Ascent and descent are opposite words in general sense but in Aswapati’s quest for perfection, they are complementary to each other. According to Sri Aurobindo, ascent is the human aspiration for the truth and descent is the divine response to that quest. So descent of knowledge and power becomes possible when ascent is honest and devoted. This process takes place in Aswapati’s quest for perfection.
The secret knowledge of the system of spiritual development and how divinity plays its role simultaneously in the process of uplifting human consciousness towards the eternity is attained by Aswapati during his own quest.

**The Traveller of the Worlds**

According to Sri Aurobindo the worlds through which Aswapati travels during his quest are made up of substances i.e. Subtle Matter, Vital, Mental and Spiritual, all of which are subtler than gross matter and therefore are visible only to the supra-physical senses. Aswapati, the seeker of the integral truth cannot find this truth and the means of manifesting it in the gross material reality of this world. He therefore looks for it in all other worlds. Thus Aswapati’s odyssey through the various worlds of consciousness reflects Sri Aurobindo’s understanding of man’s evolutionary progress.

The poet is not interested in an abstract characterization of these worlds; he gives a description of Aswapati’s experiences in these worlds. Each of these worlds holds for Aswapati an important truth which he has to absorb within himself before he can understand Truth in its integrality. At the same time the inadequacies of each of these worlds, which push
Aswapati to press further a field are also described as concrete and vivid experiences. Aswapati’s experiences become more important as Sri Aurobindo says in one of his letters:

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. ⁶

The Kingdom of Subtle Matter

This world is not as easily accessible as the world of gross matter, since it requires a certain purification of consciousness to enter it. It is a world which contains the pure archetypes behind the physical phenomena. Aswapati is able to experience in this world activities and beings which are beyond the scope of the physical senses.

Earth’s great dull barrier is removed a while,
The inconsciente seal is lifted from our eyes
And we grow vessels of creative might.⁷

Aswapati realizes that the world of subtle matter touches our lives when we have profound experience of beauty, which often fills us with a sense of mystery.
The enthusiasm of a divine surprise
Pervades our life, a mystic stir is felt.
A joyful anguish trembles in our limbs;
A dream of beauty dances through the heart….⁸

The purpose is to push us beyond the limits of the gross physical and have a
glimpse of the subtle world, its beauty and mystery.

Another path to the subtle world lies through Hatha yoga. It takes us
there as the link between pure matter and pure spirit. Its attraction is its
promise to free soul from the prison of the material embodiment.

Matter and soul in conscious union meet
Like lovers in a lonely secret place….⁹

Another great pitfall of the kingdom of the subtle matter is its beauty
and simplicity themselves. There is perfect harmony among forms there.
There is no conflict, no death either; for each form is eternal. There is no
struggle, no frustration in this world.

All is a miracle of symmetric charm,
A fantasy of perfect line and rule.¹⁰

If Aswapati’s aim was an escape from the predicament that life on this
earth has, this would have been an ideal world for him. But he is not seeking
any one-sided perfection like the perfection of form. He is seeking an
integral perfection of form in union with matter. So this is a stage on
Aswapati’s journey, not the final destination. This world looks to him therefore a sterile material paradise and he therefore abandons this world to seek his destiny “beyond in larger Space”.

**The Vital Worlds**

Having found the Kingdom of Matter unsatisfactory, Aswapati now enters the vital world, the kingdom of life. This is a very complex world described in seven cantos by the poet. They are devoted to Aswapati’s experiences of the different regions of this kingdom. All of these are not easily accessible to our normal consciousness. We are normally conscious of life where it is found in union with or even dominated by matter.

But there is a region where life exists in its own right, autonomously. Aswapati being a Yogi has access to this region as well. Even beyond that there is a region of life which is guided by mental ideals. And there are also regions still higher than that to which even Aswapati has no access.

**The Glory and Fall of Life**

The most remarkable thing noticed by Aswapati as he enters the world of life is its power, its inexhaustible creativity and variety. Life
seems to expand in all directions and, since there is no control or
guidance to this outburst, creation is followed by destruction, since in
the absence of any vision, it is difficult to distinguish between the two.

A scene was planned for all her numberless moods
Where each could be the law and way of life….¹¹

The law of life here comprises birth, growth, decay and death. With an
endless and blind appetite the life-principle explores all possibilities,
regardless of consequences. Change and danger, pain and defeat, are the
playfellows of this regions. Here people sit and ‘hear each other groan’;
dolorous their converse, transient their joy; pure felicity for ever eludes.

There is clearly a veil or gulf between appearance and the reality,
between ‘earth-fact’ and ‘dream-truth’. Once this veil pierced, this
gulf crossed, - which must happen sooner or later, - the dream would
become fact and reality would arrive.

Heaven’s joys might have been earth’s if earth were pure.¹²

The ‘inscrutable Supermind’ would help ‘the hazardous
experimenting Mind’ in its endeavours to end the Nescience and reach
up to the Truth. All will then be possible. But in the meantime life is
tied to the circuit of deception and failure. Life is almost in love with
‘amorous Death’ and Sleep imitates the lost peace. Man despairs of
chastening and harmonizing the chaos of his personality. Such is the
picture of the fallen state of life.

Aswapati can also see the glory of the paradise unfolding before
him:

There were summit glories inconceivable,
Autonomies of wisdom’s still-rule…..\(^\text{13}\)

Thus the play of life has emerged from the sleep of matter’s
inconscience. Mind has sprouted dualities, doubt and with it sorrow and
joy. Life as it came from Heaven to colonise the earth had suffered a
profound change, and all her sweetness has turned into ‘a maimed desire’,
and terrestrial existence, exemplifying the ‘Fall of Life’.

Aswapati notices that the two states of life, that of glory and other
of fall, seem to be forever divided. The former is not even aware of the
suffering of the fallen state and has no means of communicating with it.
There is one point at which these two worlds seem to meet, and that point
is human life. Man alone is conscious of the fallen condition and is also
aware of the lost splendour and can do something to regain it.
The Kingdoms and Godheads of ‘Little Life’

This is the world of life where it is a narrow power protected by ignorance. The one and only concern of life here is to survive and to struggle against death. Little life is ridden with fear and feels quite powerless in the midst of its complex environment. Its one need is to surround itself with possible and accessible security and protection. Hence the sense of adventure which is native to life in its state of glory is absent here. This anxiety also manifests as the desire to control and dominate the surroundings.

It turns in us to finite loves and lusts,
The will to conquer and have, to seize and keep,
A yearning to possess and be possessed,
To enjoy and be enjoyed, to feel, to live.¹⁴

The ‘little life’ has some valuable truth for the seeker of integral truth. Life has brought a sense of purpose and direction to matter’s action. With life came desires which increases in meaningful ways. The constant prodding of it gives rise to progress in life. It gives us the will to challenge apparently insurmountable odds, and Aswapati finds this aspect of desire valuable even in his spiritual quest.
A working of habit or a sense of law,
A steady repetition in the flux,
Yet its roots of will ever the same;
These passions are the stuff of which we are made.\textsuperscript{15}

But the path of desire must be followed with caution. Without proper
direction the path may lead to destruction by making us the unknowing
pray of evil forces,

Here too the darkened primitive heart obeys
The veiled suggestions of a hidden Mind
That dogs out knowledge with misleading light
And stands between us and the Truth that saves.\textsuperscript{16}

The ‘little life’ is in fact the leading perspective on life of a vast majority
of people to whom Sri Aurobindo has called ‘economic barbarians’. The
most dominant characteristic of such a person is his passion for economic
success, and his insatiable desire to possess and control everything within
his reach. For him there is no meaning to anything beyond its economic
value. Those who have this view of life may be able to enjoy life for a
time but their attempt to build security by the accumulation of wealth and
economic power will inevitably result in failure, frustration and pain.
Little life’s perspective on life is too narrow to provide a key to the
understanding of man.
It knew itself a creature of the mud;
It asked no larger law, no loftier air;
It had no inward look, no upward gaze.
A backward scholar on logic's rickety bench….

Little life has no conception of the possibility of higher
development of transcendence. It tends to devote all its energies to
perpetuate life in its external state. It has no notion of either
transcendence or transformation.

Time has he none to turn his eyes within
And look for his lost self and his dead soul….
All tunes to a low scale and conscious pitch.
His knowledge dwells in the house of Ignorance.

Thus finding the realms of ‘little life’ unacceptable, Aswapati
moves into the kingdoms of greater life.

**The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life**

This is the realm which is bound to matter but which does not
regard itself forever subject to it. Here life senses that its roots are in the
eternal and that it does not have to remain entrapped by death forever.
This vision gives it courage and hope.
The greater life feels that it has not come about as a result of an accident and that it has a great future because the Divine from within supports and guides its activities. This attitude of hopefulness and insight into its future impels it to transcend the present human condition and aspire for a state which is free from pain, struggle and death.

A strange enthusiasm has moved its heart;
It hungers for heights, it passions for the supreme.
It hunts for perfect word, the perfect shape,
It leaps to the summit thought, the summit light.19

The greater life reveals more than any other level the meeting of the opposite in life. Life is necessarily bound with matter and therefore with ignorance and death. This is the source of agony in life. But it is also bound with mind and with the vision of the greatness of the spirit, and so it has its sublime side as well. Thus life is torn between these two pulls. For the seeker of the integral truth it becomes necessary to experience and understand the extremes of the world. So Aswapati at this point takes a plunge into the Night and the World of Falsehood.

The Descent into Night; The World of Falsehood

These are horrible worlds in which chaos reigns supreme. There is no mercy or compassion in these worlds where all the forces and beings are hostile to life, truth and beauty.
It was the gate of a false Infinite,
An eternity of disastrous absolutes,
An immense negation of spiritual things.\textsuperscript{20}

Gradually Aswapati realizes that however contrary to our world, these worlds have their own truth and justification, and unless we understand them and experiences, they cannot be transformed. In its own world this vital world of darkness is sovereign.

None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell.\textsuperscript{21}

Even in the heart of this darkness, Aswapati finds a place where all conflict is resolved into an infinite emptiness. This is a sort of inverted paradise whose attractions are also very captivating. With great effort, Aswapati extricates himself from being lost in this experience.

All vanished suddenly like a thought expunged;
His spirit became an empty listening gulf….\textsuperscript{22}

Aswapati’s patience and courage paid off as he reached the very bottom of this world of falsehood. There he suddenly came upon the spring of Divinity.

He saw in Night the Eternal’s shadowy veil…..
In destruction felt creation’s hasty pace,
Knew loss as the price of a celestial gain
And hell as a shortcut to heaven’s gates.\textsuperscript{23}
Aswapati descended into the lowest level of life, and experienced the truth of that hell as well.

**The Paradise of the Life-Gods**

Now Aswapati climbs into an almost opposite realm filled with life’s ecstasies. This is a bright world in which all that life needs is provided for abundantly. Here too there is no struggle.

All things were perfect there that flower in Time;
Beauty was there creation’s native mould,
Peace was a thrilled voluptuous purity.²⁴

Like some of the worlds Aswapati has experienced earlier, this world also captivates him and he feels persuaded to give up his struggle and rest here. Since this world is based on partial truth, Aswapati finds it unsatisfactory. It is a world of truth and light, but protected from the reality that opposes it. This world may be an appropriate resting place for someone who seeks an escape from the dualities of life, but it is a pointless world for someone who is seeking an integral fulfillment.

This too must now be overpassed and left,....²⁵
The Mental Worlds

Since what distinguishes man in the animal world is a fuller evolution of mind, Aswapati explores next the mental dimensions of man, its strengths and inadequacies. As in the vital world, here too he sees the glory and the fall of mind. In its higher realms, mind is free from subjection to matter and life. It is sovereign at that level and enjoys mental bliss unmixed with any error or ignorance.

Where knowledge is the leader of the act
And matter is of thinking substance made…²⁶

But mind has also undergone a fall in order to bring consciousness and mental truth to the lower realms. In descending it has lost its greatness and autonomy. It is this fallen state of mind that is of great importance to Aswapati. Here he experiences two distinct levels: one, the lower mind which has no awareness of its glorious origin and sees itself as the product and servant of matter and life, and then there is the greater mind of the mid-region where it is aware of its origin and keeps hoping to regain it. He begins with the little mind.
Here he sees mind in its three aspects, the physical, the vital and the rational mind. Each of these has its own truths and limitations. Physical mind is very limited in scope but it has been of particular value in the evolution of man. It has tried to bring stability and order to man’s physical world. It has given a direction to man’s life and is the source of man’s need for moral code and religious ritual. But in its passion for security and stability it abhors all innovation and creativity. It abhors change as an audacious sin and is distrustful of each new discovery. Thus it is greatly limited in its scope and capacity for truth.

First, smallest of the three, but strong of limb,
A low-brow with a square and heavy jowl,
A pigmy Thought needing to live in bounds
For ever stooped to hammer fact and form... 27

The poet associates it to a watch-dog who is suspicious of all intruders from the invisible, ‘as at a foe who would break up its home’, and forever wants to be found in ‘its kennel of objective certitude’.

Next is the vital mind. It is a rash intelligence and has a passion for all that is new. It throws caution to the wind. It constantly urges man to
dare and go beyond what is already known. But it has no sense of
direction, no judgement of its own, and can lead man to the edge of
ultimate truth as easily as it can lead him into the regions of total
ignorance.

A rash Intelligence leaped down lion-maned
From the great mystic Flame that rings the worlds
And with its dire edge eats at being’s heart.\(^{28}\)

Next is the realm of the rational mind. Its primary goal is to create
order and structure. It too likes to grapple with the unknown but with a
sense of direction. It has the special capacity to stand back and look at
things and activities objectively, without getting involved in them. It
brings a method to the scrutiny of things and events which it thinks is
infallible, namely, that of reason and logic. It admits that there are many
things about man’s life which it does not understand, but even with
regard to those which it does understand, it claims to be man’s most
reliable mentor.

She carves with Thought’s keen edge in rigid lines
Like rails for the World-Magician's power to run,
Her sciences precise and absolute...\(^{29}\)
Reason by itself is neutral. Its art seems to be its only wisdom and its methodology its only strength. But its leaps do not bring any flashes of absolute power or heavenly certitude.

A million faces wear her knowledge here
And every face is turbaned with a doubt.  

Its conclusions are an endless march without a goal, and there is no summit on which it can stand and see in a single glance the Infinite whole.

Thus Reason’s toil is an inconclusive exercise. It accepts every brief and pleads its case.

It is at best an eternal advocate but often fancies itself as the judge. Time cancels all its judgements in appeal. Furthermore, it is restricted in its operations to external phenomenon and the relationships within it. When confronted with the inner meaning of the phenomenon it is totally helpless. It is no more than a “bullock yoked in the cart of proven fact” and can at best drag its huge knowledge-bales to utility’s immense bazaar.
To its view this creation appears to be no more than a complicated and meaningless system of ordered fateful and unfailing chance. Thus it creates a rational world without a mind.

It has no mover, no maker, no idea:
Its vast self-action toils without a cause…….\(^{31}\)

Reason does realise its own inadequacies and inability to find the absolute truth about this created world. Reason sees itself as no more than ‘a freak of Matter's law.’ Thus Aswapati does recognise the great value of reason as well as its capacity to mislead man, particularly when it steps into areas which fall outside its power to analyse and understand. Reason helps best when called upon to separate what is rational from what is irrational. Thus he concludes that “An inconclusive play is Reason’s toil.”\(^{32}\)

The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind

At this point Aswapati crosses the boundaries of normal human mind which does not exhaust the range of mental consciousness. There is the greater mind which is free from the flaws of the little mind. The greater mind is the unfallen mind and is open to the glories of the ideal mind.
The ideal mind is from where all the great hopes and movements on earth come. Human progress and perfection are prefigured here.

The Spirit's truths take form as living Gods
And each can build a world of its own right.\textsuperscript{33}

Man’s normal mind is not totally alien to this world although it is often closed to its intimations since it is bound to the external form of things. However, in rare moments it is enlivened by communications from greater mind.

Our present feels sometimes their regal touch…….
Our souls can climb into the shining planes,
The breadths from which they came can be our home.\textsuperscript{34}

The greater mind is not dependent on the material manifestation; it works through intuition, insight, illumination and inspiration. This mind often receives truth by becoming silent and calm. It receives truth through flashes of illumination.

Aswapati’s ascent is now through a triple realm of thought. As he enters this realm, Aswapati meets the guardian angels who wait for the heaven-bound soul holding the keys of the Beyond. These great creative
powers are the miracle workers of the Creator. They have built this material world by lending finite shapes to infinite things.

A timeless Spirit was made the slave of the hours;
The Unbound was cast into a prison of birth
To make a world that Mind could grasp and rule.\(^{35}\)

Above this range stood beings of ‘a subtle archangel race’. In their eyes shone a light of liberating knowledge; they knew truth from within. Unseen became visible to their studen’t eyes. They could explain immense Inconscient’s scheme.

This is the world of the inventers like Newton and the Einstein. They try to capture the free rhythms of the infinite Consciousness into the syllogisms of finite thought.

Aswapati in his ascent now enters the realm of the kings of thought. Theirs is an “all-containing Consciousness” and the mind serves there as an agent of a higher power, not as a source. It can clearly see that

The cosmos is no accident in Time;
There is a meaning in each play of Chance,
There is a freedom in each face of Fate.\(^{36}\)
But Aswapati also begins to understand the limitations of the higher mind. Although it receives the higher truth, it has no power to transmit it to the lower parts of man’s being—his little mind, life and gross matter. In fact, these lower members dismiss this truth as mere fancy and flights of imagination. Furthermore, there is an attempt here to capture the highest truth in terms of mental images and conceptions which are insufficient to hold the great Truth. As the Poet says, the powers of the greater mind measure the Illimitable with number’s rods. They try to squeeze termless truths into transparent systems and to make the Timeless accountable to time.

They seek to hedge and park the ungrasped infinitudes and erect absolute walls of thought and speech and make a vacuum to hold the One.

This was the play of the bright gods of Thought.
Attracting into time the timeless Light,
Imprisoning eternity into the hours,…….37

Thus the greater mind too has a tendency to misrepresent the higher realities when it cuts them down to the size of mental concepts. Aswapati realises that:

For Truth is wider, greater than her forms.38
The Paradise of the Mind

At either end of this luminous stair of the mental consciousness Aswapati sees the heavens of the ideal mind. In these heavens he could have ended his long pilgrimage as he could have in the Paradise of the Life Gods. He is now far away from the contaminating touch of matter and life and he has full freedom to savour the realms of mental consciousness and its worlds of bliss. On one side there are the worlds of undying bliss, the kingdoms of the deathless Rose. This is the bliss that flows behind all life, although unsuspected by the suffering world. This world of sweetness and bliss is also present in our mortal life in an inchoate form waiting to come to life and to blossom.

There are the imperishable beatitudes.
A million lotuses swaying on one stem,
World after coloured and ecstatic world
Climbs towards some far unseen epiphany. 39

On the other side of the stair are the great realms of luminous knowledge, ‘the mighty kingdoms of the deathless Flame.’ This flame rises out of the sorrow and darkness of the world, out of the depths where life and thought are entombed and mounts up to heaven. It exerts a pull on the human soul. This is a fire which once kindled can never cease.
Aswapati participates in the glory of these worlds but realises that each of these embodies only a partial truth. He mounts still higher and at the summits of the mental heavens he reaches the Self of Mind.

The Self of Mind

This is the place where ‘the climbing hierarchy of worlds’ paused. At this summit space alone with an enormous ‘Self of Mind’ Aswapati now stood. This is a realm of total withdrawal from the world which has sprung from it:

Omnipotent, immobile and aloof,  
In the world which sprang from it, it took no part:  
It gave no heed to the paeans of victory,  
It was indifferent to its own defeats

This is the vast Silence where meet the seeing Self and the potent Energy to bring forth this creation. Aswapati feels this Silence and its Peace.

Now he seemed to understand and know all. Neither Desire nor any burst of longing could come in his mind. The great perturbed inquirer lost his task. Nothing was left to be asked nor did he want any more. There he could stay because the Self, the Silence was won.
But this is certainly not the world that Aswapati has been seeking. Aswapati finds that this world is not sure even of its foundations. It cannot answer the question whether the creations of the Mind are real or false. Probably mental knowledge itself is an error hidden even from the mind.

This certainly was a world in which he could experience sublime mental peace and bliss free from ignorance, pain, evil and death. This world merely transcended the inadequacies of the mortal world and declared them irrelevant but these inadequacies were not understood and explained here. Nor has this world any concern about carrying its truth and bliss to the lower worlds; it was totally indifferent to the lower worlds of death, evil, pain and suffering. This world did not contain the Truth of Power which he was seeking which, he now realizes, can only be brought down by the Divine Mother.

A greater Spirit than the Self of Mind
Must answer to the questioning of his soul.41

As stated above, Aswapati’s experiences of the spiritual realm do not constitute a major theme of Book II. A description of his spiritual experiences begins on the very second page of Canto 3 of Book I and continues throughout that Canto as well as in Canto 5 of Book I. Again it
is also the theme of much of Book III. Here in the last two Cantos of Book II Aswapati gradually slides into the spiritual realm since there is an overlapping of the kingdoms of the Greater Mind and the Spiritual Kingdom.

**The World-Soul**

Aswapati sees a luminous tunnel in the glowing background of the Mind-Space. It promises to lead him from the unsatisfying world of external consciousness into the depths of the silent Self. Aswapati finds himself in the hidden depths of the world’s deep soul. He passes through this tunnel led by a mysterious sound. The sound seemed first like the yearning conveyed by a lonely flute, then like the rash and fiery note of a cricket, then like the jingling of the anklet bells, and then like the tinkling sound of a moving caravan. A fragrance floated in the quivering air and mystic happiness trembled in his breast. Aswapati now came to a wonderful and formless world.

The silent soul of the entire world was there, a being and a presence. This soul loves spontaneously without expecting to be loved in turn, and transforms all experience into delight, with its hand of joy puts a stop to all weeping. A fire of passion burns in the inner depths, a constant
touch of sweetness links all hearts. Here everything is made of soul. In this spiritual world the soul knows directly, not through thought or conceptualisation. This knowledge is derived without division and without separation from the object of knowledge; it comes by being one with the object through identity.

All there was soul or made of sheer soul-stuff;
A sky of soul covered a deep soul-ground.
All here was known by a spiritual sense....

There was no body because bodies were not needed there; the soul itself was its own deathless form and met at once the touch of other souls, close, blissful, concrete and wonderfully true. There was a lovely landscape, lovely lakes and streams and hills all in soul-space; there were gardens which were a colourful reverie of the soul. A fragrance wandered in a coloured haze.

This is the world to which the beings which had taken form on earth come to have a meaningful rest after they have passed through the long road of heaven and hell. In this trance they muse over their experience of their bygone days and sketch the map of the destiny and adventure of their new life to lead. Aswapati now understands why the same being continues through several births and lives in many shapes.
Imprints through Time upon the earth’s worn page
A growing figure of its secret self,
And learns by experience what the spirit knew,
Till it can see its truth alive and God.⁴³

Aswapati had now come to the centre of creation where all that is
made is unmade once again so that it can be remolded and recast into new
shape and nature. This was the refashioning chamber of the worlds,
where things are planned, reconstituted and sent out for manifestation.
Beyond this world lie the regions of delight and peace, the silent
birthplaces of light, hope and love. His soul now moved on through an
absolute stillness to the source of all things human and divine. There he
saw in their poise of mighty union the figure of the deathless Two-in-One
seated in a trance of creative joy which sustained the world. Behind them
in the morning dusk there stood the One who had brought them from the
Unknowable.

There he beheld in their mighty union’s poise….
A single being in two bodies clasped,
A diarchy of two united souls…⁴⁴
This is the Divine Mother who is the guide of the traveller of the unseen
paths. She stands above all, supporting all, the sole Omnipotent Goddess
of whom the creation is the mysterious mask. Aswapati’s spirit was now
made a vessel of her force and he stretched out to her his folded hands of
prayer. As a gesture one arm of this Supreme Being was raised and she
half-parted the eternal veil. Aswapati saw the mystic outlines of a face. He felt so overwhelmed by the power of her light and bliss, and so overpowered by the sweetness and energy of her power that he fell down at her feet unconscious, prostrate.

**The Kingdom of the Greater Knowledge**

Aswapati came out of the timeless depths into which he had sunk, and he heard once more the slow tread of the hours. He now stands in a realm of Silence, alone beyond the witness self and his universe, waiting to hear the voice that created the worlds. Here he could see all the creative powers in their original plenitude, quiet and fulfilled, even before they create the glorious dream of their universal acts, one could see from here the thousand roads that lead to Eternity and meet the unveiled face of God.

Freed from bondage to death and sleep, he travelled beyond the seas of cosmic consciousness and crossed the ocean of the primal sound; he walked carefully along the narrow bridge of nirvana, near the high borders of eternity.
He had now reached the top of all that can be known; he could see creation’s head, base and beyond; the triple heavens revealed to him their blazing suns, and the obscure depths of Nescience exposed to him its monstrous rule. All except the ultimate mystery was now within the field of his awareness; almost the unknowable revealed to him its rim.

Thoughts rose in him no earthly mind can hold,
Mights played that never coursed through mortal nerves:
He scanned the secrets of the Overmind,
He bore the rapture of the Oversoul.45

This brings us to the end of Aswapati’s journey through the various worlds described in Book II of Savitri.

There are directions in which human mind reaches beyond itself and tends towards self-exceeding. Cantos 11 to 15 of Book II describe these lines of contact between the mind and the higher grades of consciousness of the self-manifesting spirit. Intuition occupies an important place in the action of the higher levels of this mind of Ignorance. There is also the reaching out of mind to exceed the personal ego and see things in a certain impersonality and universality. Then there is the vast field of mystic and spiritual experience and the gates lie wide open to the possibility of extending our consciousness beyond its present
limits. Access to the superior gradations of our conscious existence becomes possible when we break the wall between our external and our subliminal self. What we then discover are the secret parts of ourselves—an inner being, a soul, an inner mind, an inner life which are more powerful and more capable of a manifold knowledge than our surface mind, life and body. It is extension of limitlessness through the limitation of body. Gautam Buddha was asked if he was God the answer was negative but he said, “I am unchanging elemental consciousness behind all the actions and reactions, thinking and feeling and willing. I am the unmoved observer, self liberated from the unending universal flux.”

It’s a body-mind phenomenon, where the inner parts of us are capable of a direct communication with the universal forces and movements. This widening can extend itself so as to bring us in union with the consciousness of the cosmic mind and universal life.

After this, the next step is the discovery of the static and the silent Self which we feel to be our real existence. This may even lead to extinction, a Nirvana both of our active being and of the sense of self into a Reality that is indefinable and inexpressible. Aswapati is now on the threshold of such an experience.
Aswapati’s aim is not only to realize the Divine but to manifest the perfection of the Divine in the world. He was looking for a power that will enable him to do this as he was journeying through the various worlds. Now at the end of his journey, he realizes that such a power, namely the Supramental Consciousness, is not yet manifest in this cosmic formula. The question is from where shall he bring it down? It can only be brought down from the transcendental world. So after the Yoga of the Individual Divine of Book I and the Yoga of the Universal or Cosmic Divine of Book II, he now gets ready for the Yoga of the Transcendental Divine in Book III.

Reconstruction

Aswapati will now make a third Yogic climb into the realms above and seek out the ultimate power and plead for its descent into this world so that the desired transformation may be brought about. For a time his ascent is without pause but now he is confronted by ‘a tremendous choice’. The horizon of known forms ends. Now the time has come that all he had achieved so far must be left behind or transformed into the self of that which has no name.
Transcending every perishable support
And joining at last its mighty origin
The separate self must melt or be reborn
Into a Truth beyond the mind’s appeal. 47

Aswapati experiences extending before him a universe that defies
every attempt at comprehension:

Only a formless form of self was left,
A tenuous ghost of something that had been,
The last experience of a lapsing wave
Before it sinks into a bournelss sea, 48

But at last something responds to Aswapati’s passionate call. It is neither
form nor motion mind nor heart; only a Being which is formless,
featureless and mute, uncreated and unborn.

A silent Cause occult, impenetrable,-
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.49

Aswapati has cantered across the manifested worlds and has reached the
threshold of the White Radiance, the throne of the transcendent Divine;
he is before the great Unknowable who face him “with its dumb
tremendous calm”.50
The Adoration of the Divine Mother

It is a tremendous moment for Aswapati. Terrestrial trappings fall from him; separate identity is ended. The drop has been swallowed up by the ocean. But Aswapati is more than an individual. He is also King and the trustee of the earth’s and humanity’s future. An individual salvation cannot redeem the earth.

So he cannot lose himself in Nirvana. He must go beyond it.

As he stands poised on the edge of the being, desperately resisting and denying the finality of Nirvana, his faith is answered and an auspicious Presence draws close to him and, like a mother, clasps him, Nature and the World to her breast. She is the all-beautiful Mother of all godheads and all strengths, she is the link between earth and heaven. Aswapati is lifted out of himself, cleansed of all dross, and finds new doors of perception. He for the first time experiences the feeling of completeness. The knowledge invades and possesses him, strength streams into him, joy thrills him and-

Suffering was lost in her immortal smile.51
Aswapati experiences various miraculous aspects of the splendid existence of The Divine Mother. Nothing wrong could come in her encompassing area for it was filled with light and love. He is sure that it is her strength only which can change Time’s dragon base.

The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God;
She is the Force, the inevitable Word,…..
The Might of all that never yet came down.⁵²

Aswapati is overpowered as well as renewed. It is the end that makes the real beginning. He wants to fill him with her strength and purpose:

Only he longed to draw her presence and power
Into his heart and mind breathing frame;…..
Her healing touch of love and truth and joy
Into the darkness of the suffering world.⁵³

The House of the Spirit and the New Creation

Intent on achieving the conditions that will make possible world-transformation and a new creation, Aswapati retreats to the stillness of the soul and sits
Like an incarnate hope
Motionless on a pedestal of prayer.\textsuperscript{54}

He will not lose his links with the world and not even with the Inconscience. A total comprehension of all matter and life is the way to the goal he has set before him. From self-knowledge radiates world-knowledge.

In this tremendous universality
Not only his soul-nature and mind-sense
Included every soul and mind in his,
But even the life of flesh and nerve was changed
And grew one flesh and nerve with all that lives;\textsuperscript{55}

The world’s strivings and hopes are centered in him. Beyond the sense, feeling and thought Aswapati is comprehending everything and at the same time transcending everything. Aswapati’s culminating ascent and patient vigil amidst the desolate solitudes of the heights compels the descent and the response. It is as though he has received a fresh accession of strength and a new extension of vision. He clearly catches glimpses of the great possibility 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…

Aswapati is the witness to the splendour above, he is also the voice of supplication from below. He articulates earth’s prayer to the unknown, and listens for the answering footsteps-

…for the fiat of the word
That comes through the still self from the Supreme.

The Vision and the Boon

Now Aswapati feels that his heart has become the auditorium that is listening the soul. He looks inward and thrills at the sacred stir and approach. He feels that not only his mind, body, and senses but everything even outside are merged in ecstasy. Then the ‘Flame-pure, a mighty Face’ appears, the lips quiver, and the words come. Though Aswapati is the elect and transfigured, he is asked to leave the Inconscient alone:

How shalt thou speak for men whose hearts are dumb…
Awake not the immeasurable descent,
Speak not my secret name to hostile Time;
Man is too weak to bear the Infinite’s weight.
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.
It is said to him that Death must be unconquered still on earth, and the dramas played on the theatre of Time must still diet on suffering and pain. The time has not yet come to alter the law of Chance and Death. Man is condemned yet to be no more than “a link between demigod and the beast”. He must veer between the pulls of darkness and light, and play endlessly this inconclusive game.

Then he is told about the inevitable destiny of man in the due course of time. Caught between the slow but inevitable wheels of evolution, man will advance towards the perfection of the self and the world around him. Aswapati is advised to hope but not to force.

Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize….
All things shall change in God’s transfiguring hour.

But as Aswapati has glimpsed the great summits of future possibility, he is not ready to return empty-handed without any concrete conclusion which will be the solution of earthly problems.

A cry is wrung from Aswapati:

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….
The sterile plant of Hope must put forth an immediate Bud of promise so that the rich fruit may not be long withheld. Aswapati does not miss this golden moment and misses the promise of a hastened Dawn. Aswapati’s winged words fly up with their load of anguished memory and hope, of urgent prayer and entreaty:

O Wisdom- Splendour, Mother of the universe,…
Linger not long…..
Let thy infinity in one body live,
All- knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
All- love throbbing single in one human heart….  

Aswapati articulates his and the world’s paramount desire and sought the boon of divine advent. He wants the Mother herself to come down as a human being to lead the struggle against the Darkness and establish the reign of light, love and immortality. The Divine Mother now gives her wide consenting Voice to expectant Aswapati:

O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law,…
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will. 
The words cease, the splendour fades away, and the echoes of the promise fill the chambers of his soul and create new rhythm. Aswapati, having gained his heart’s immaculate desire, returns to the familiar ways of the world. But now his old routine is naturally changed and he is sustained by the splendid Vision and divine Promise. And thus Aswapati-

The Lord of Life resumed his mighty rounds
In the scant field of the ambiguous globe.\(^64\)

Thus Aswapati’s Yoga is for the self perfection and perfection of the world. Asawapati’s quest is so significant for the poet that he has devoted the first half of the epic (Part I) for its detailed description. Since his quest for perfection will lay the foundation for the descent of the divine power on earth in human form, and the poet is sure that this one man’s perfection can save the world, Sri Aurobindo has given it considerable space and priority in the epic.
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