CHAPTER II.
Introduction

Sri Aurobindo is found to be splendid and magnificent in portrayal of the epic characters Aswapathy, Savitri and Satyavan. He gives subtler and finer touches to his epic characters as they serve to picture out the central theme of the epic, 'love conquering the Death'. He employs remarkable skill in portraying the representatives of mankind, Aswapathy and Savitri, and recording his yoga Sadhana through his epic characters. Even the names of the epic characters bear a great significance to Sri Aurobindo. The name, Aswapathy symbolises life-energy; Savitri symbolises the creator or the creative splendour; Satyavan symbolises man carrying the divine soul. He skilfully inter-relates these epic characters and they together bring about solution to the problem of man, 'Earth, Love and doom'. The relationship of the characters is that Savitri is the daughter of Aswapathy and wife of Satyavan.
Sri Aurobindo significantly calls Aswapathy as the 'Lord of Life. The King, Aswapathy, is a colonist from immortality and the aspiring soul of man as manifested in life on the earth. He is a great seeker of the Divine while portraying Aswapathy, Sri Aurobindo aims at sketching man as the master of all the creative energies of Nature. Man has in him the greater potentialities and higher possibilities of spiritual life. But they are not able to recognise greater truths as they live limited-in their mental, vital and physical-existence. Aswapathy outgrows the limited planes of existence, enlarges his being and attains the higher levels of consciousness.

The portrayal of Aswapathy's travel through various worlds helps to get glimpses of the occult worlds. Throughout his travel he stands with the single aim of seeking higher knowledge. He is totally an integrated person and ceases to be merely human. He is the one selected by the cosmic worker to change the earth and bring about divine life on the earth.
While portraying Aswapathy, Sri Aurobindo symbolises himself as the great cosmic worker whose only aim was to bring down the supramental. Aswapathy's consciousness widens out into the cosmic. He travels over worlds heaped upon worlds and mounts from plane of matter up to the levels of higher mind. Further he is led to the worlds of greater knowledge. He opens his consciousness to the Divine and lives in the inner consciousness more and more. Through his yoga he brings the inmost psychic to the front, develops an yogic consciousness which universalised the being in all the planes and he comes aware of the cosmic being and cosmic forces. He remains in union with the divine on all the planes up to the overmind. With this act he remains as a typical representatives of humanity to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness.

During his travel, first he comes to the world of subtle material existence having crossed the boundaries of material cosmos. Though this world has divine perfection it is only a brilliant courtyard. Therefore, Aswapathy rises to other
higher and greater worlds. He reaches the world of life which is the plane of vital being. He wonders at the enormous flow of life energy and the consciousness on-earth to create a new race with the principle of the supramental consciousness governing the inner, and outer individual and collective life. He is the forerunner of knowledge. He is not affected by the ordinary entanglements of ignorance. He realises that the external being of man is not the whole of himself. Only after this realisation his spiritual growth starts and he comes to know the hidden celestial powers in man.

He liberates himself from ego, desire, conflict, dualities, suffering and pain. He gets awakened to the higher potentialities of his nature and aspires to grow into the likeness of spiritual being. He is utilised by the divine for a divine purpose and he has a vision of divine life on the earth. Hence forth he becomes a seer and comes to know his latent powers lying dormant in him. They are the powers of pure perception, intimate vision and spiritual experience. He is able to understand the motives, ideas and wishes of his fellow man and understand the evolutionary process.
He goes further into the domains of lower life world called the astral world. Here he tries to find the cause of the failure of the higher vital world. Then the goes to the next higher domain where he finds a great joy but the divine consciousness is not there. He explores further and goes down into the black void. Here he realises that divine grace can turn all suffering and pain into joy and ecstasy.

Aswapathy proceeds ahead and reaches another level of consciousness, self of mind. He finds it as a foundation and looks ahead into another realm the world-soul where he finds the psychic world. He moves still further and perceives a presence, a form but it is veiled. It is the Divine Mother, the creatrix.

Sri Aurobindo believes that object of his yoga is transformation which can be done only by a force infinitely greater than the seeker; and by being truly like a child in the hands of the Divine Mother. This thought is reflected when Aswapathy makes a 'vast surrender' when he meets
the Mother of all God heads and all strengths. He opens himself exclusively to the divine influence and rejects falsehood.

At the sight of the Divine Mother Aswapathy falls down, unconscious, at her feet. After sometime he wakes up to find himself in the worlds of greater knowledge and glory. It is the top of all that can be known where the heavens of light and the abyss of darkness reveal their truth to him. Hence forward Aswapathy communicates with the 'In communicable'. He is able to identify himself with the 'Nameless'. He yearns to take all this down to the earth so that earth's life would be entirely changed. This is one of the important characteristics of a yogi, Sri Aurobindo through his character, Aswapathy, thematically sets forth the aims and objects of yoga beautifully outlined by the Mother. She says,

*The general aim to be attained is the advent of a progressing universal harmony, and to individualise the states of Being that were never till now conscious in man and, by that, to put earth
in connection with one or more of the fountains
of universal force that are still sealed to it

The only way to become a conscious being,
to be oneself, is to unite with the divine self that
is in all. For that, we must, by the aid of concentra-
tion, isolate ourselves from external influences.
When you are with the divinity within, you are one
with all things in their depths.

Living among others, you should always
be a divine example, an occasion offered to them to
understand and to enter on the path of the life divine.
Nothing more you should not even have the desire to
make them progress; for that too would be something
arbitrary.

It is an invaluable possession for every living
being to have learnt to know himself and to master himself.
To know oneself means to know the motives of one’s actions
and reactions, the why and the how of all that happens
in oneself. To master oneself means to do what one has
decided to do, nothing but that, not to listen to or
follow impulses, desires or fancies.
Our goal is not to lose oneself in the Divine consciousness. The goal is to let the Divine consciousness penetrate into matter and transform it. (55: P. 35)

Henceforth Aswapathy prays to the Divine Mother with all his intensity to transform the earth, and hears a voice which asks him not to try to hasten the pace of nature. The knowledge which he has gained should be kept for himself and he must wait for the higher will. Aswapathy as a true representative of mankind cries out, how he can rest content with mortal days and how long must the human spirit suffer the pangs of ignorance and death.

Therefore he appeals to the Divine Mother in the highest intensity of his aspiration. "Incarnate the white passion of thy force, and to unlock the doors of fate by one Great act. Aswapathy gets a reply from the divine Mother that one will be born who will have the great potentiality to break the iron Law of Earth, Love, and doom, and change nature's doom by the Love spirit power. With this great promise he returns and resumes his labour on the earth."
Savitri, the divine child is born to Aswapathy and she grows up in all her splendours. When she grows up Aswapathy with foreknowledge hears a voice which addressed to the human being questioning man. How long man is going to tread the circling tracks of mind, around the little self and petty things? It further says that the man has at present divine potentialities hidden in him. In-fact the, earth looks up only to man for the fulfilment of her future and only few rise to her expectation. It is because man has lost contact with the inner soul and the inner voice. As a result the 'Gods are still too few in mortal forms'. When this voice is about to cease, Savitri comes near Aswapathy.

Now Aswapathy views his daughter with the inner vision and through the depths of the being. He sees the great and unknown spirit bearing his child. Then he addresses his daughter as a 'traveller of eternity' and asks her to depart, where love and destiny calls for charm and venture through the deep world to find her mate. He further says that with her mate Savitri will confront the heavens' question.

When savitri reveals her choice of mate, Aswapathy approves it and he is not perturbed when he sees a heavy shadow floating above the name Satyavan. He requests Narad not to disclose the truth as fore-knowledge brings the dire ordeal to mankind.
Savitri and Satyavan

In response to Aswapathy's prayer the Divine Mother comes down to the earth in the form of Savitri daughter of Aswapathy. She is born to bridge the gulf between man's mind and God's. Through this epic character, Savitri, Aurobindo makes his epic an epic of the eternal. He records both his experience and the Mother's experience and yoga Sadhana in the character Savitri.

Savitri is woven with great characteristics and potentialities to bring about a new evolution of the present man and the world. She is the Avatar or the divine manifestation who passes through great difficulties and sufferings because of the dark and anti-divine forces which have a hold upon the earth since the creation. The Divine Mother in her love for her children consents to put on herself the cloak in form of Savitri and bear to pass through the portals of the birth that is a depth, taking upon herself the pangs, sorrows and sufferings of the creation. Since it seemed that thus alone the earth would be lifted to the 'Light and joy', 'Truth and eternal life'. 
Savitri is the representative of the human race as well as the embodiment of the supreme grace. Even as a child Savitri shows great potentialities. She has a wider sight which helps her to be aware of the forms which are beyond the perception of common man. The power within her helps to mould her senses and she grasps heavenly brilliance. Her childish thoughts are also turned into magnificent patterns of deep truth.

When she grows up she stands as a silent warrior in her 'city of strength' calling the higher destiny down. Though she lives among men, her inner soul lives in communion with the divine planes of being. She has boundless knowledge greater than man's thought. She matters all the arts, sculpture, painting, music, poem, crafts and science. Though she finds her environment to be rich with philosophy, culture, painting, architecture, music, poetry, dance and craft, it seems inadequate to her wide self.

In Savitri the whole universe can take rest. This is a kind of love Savitri had which equalled the Mother universe. Savitri is always aware of the Universal
self in all beings and in all the living hearts and human forms she finds her soul's reflections, compliments, counterpart akin to this. Even as they remain divided from her by walls of body and mind, they are linked to her spirit. She tries to make all things unite one with God and the world. But to her call, only a few could respond as others were not able to hold the vision and the power of her. As Savitri knows their needs and wants, sorrow and pride, she strives to raise them from their depth and equal her. When she is thus taking part in the life movement, her greater self is not changed by the earthly influences. When she grows up Aswapathy realises that she has gained a new gift of vision and she is the manifestation with a mission. He asks her to set out and venture through the worlds to find her mate with her soul's guidance.

Aswapathy prophesies that after selecting her mate, she will 'confront Heaven's question' and ascend from nature, to divinity's heights. These words of Aswapathy act like a mantra on Savitri who gets awakened in her consciousness and turns to 'vastness not yet her own'.
She does not need outer guidance as the divine in her guides her aright. She is fully conscious of the higher workings on the heights of her being; her higher self knows everything and arranges every detail Sauitris' Self-determination:

Savitri meets Satyavan in the destined meeting place. She finds something quite different and intensely moved. Her soul opens wide its doors to that of Satyavan. The meeting of them is not an ordinary haphazard event but it is a culmination of long series of life. With their union 'an hour began, the matrix of new time'.

Savitri and Satyavan grow conscious of their past affinity and intimate relation. He unconsciously defines her mission when he is having a general conversation with her. He says,

"Thou hast come and all will surely change. My matter shall evade the Inconscients trance My body like my spirit shall be free It shall escape from Death and Ignorance."

Even the brief contact with her has reshaped his life. Further he says that he always has a vague feeling by which man is capable of attaining something great, something
that life is not and yet must be. With the coming of Savitri he says that strange new worlds spins to him and approaches him like a star from unknown heaven. Everything is changed with her presence; even air, soil and stream grow with the shadow of her. Savitri during her conversation with him comes to know about Dyumatsena, father of Satyavan, the blind exiled king. She returns to her father's abode and discloses her choice. The sage, Naradamuni, who is present with Aswapathy at the time reveals that Satyavan is fated to die after a period of twelve months.

In spite of the prophecy Savitri is firm and self-determined in her selection of the mate. The shocked mother of Savitri asks her to select once again her life partner and leave the fated head Satyavan. But all her persuasion is in vain and Savitri replies that once she has selected she will not select again; her heart has sealed its truth to Satyavan. She says even fate's law may change but not her spirits will. Her will is part of the eternal will; her strength is not the titan's but it is God's and her spirit has glimpsed the glory for which it came.
With her self-determination as basis, Savitri comes to live with him in the hermitage. She puts aside all that was once hers and welcomes the future. When she is living with him, a grief comes as a passionate stranger to her gate. She is grief stricken like any other common human being. She remains puzzled at the mystery of life. Still she continues her daily routine of work but her true being is veiled from her. She has complete control over her mind and heart, and does all the routine work of the household. She never expresses her grief or fear to any one and bears it all alone.

Savitri's human heart swaying from joy to terror implores more and more inwardly to give her lover as much as possible to him. She feels in her all the movements of human love, fear and grief due to her knowledge about the death of Satyavan. All these features show her human aspects.

But she does not remain still with her grief, she comes to know that her yearning to vanquish death alone is not enough and her work is left undone by her. Henceforth she undertakes an inner exploration having become conscious of her mission and the need for the heavenly psyche to step into common nature and to lead humanity to its greater destiny.
Savitri pushes aside all the considerations of time, life and death, and sets in to find her soul. She explores deeper and deeper into herself, and meets the triple soul-forces on her way in search of the soul. She moves from them assuming a promise that she will come back with the Divine and then life can attain perfection.

Savitri finds her soul and the first perfection stage is reached at last. She continues her yoga and attains a formless liberation. Now the super conscient is her native air, infinity is her movement's natural space and eternity works out from her on time.

Savitri and the Death:

Savitri accompanies Satyavan on the fated day of death of the forest. She is portrayed as a very obedient daughter-in-law who gets the permission of mother-in-law to go with Satyavan. She speaks to her with great care so as not to allow her to perceive dire fore knowledge of the grief to come.
When the fated hour comes, Satyavan feels the violent and hungry hounds of pain. He calls her out and asks her to guard him with her hands from evil fate. He thinks that if she touches him even death may pass away. She tries to soothe him and comes to know the presence of the Death, who takes away Satyavan.

Savitri, who differs from the women folk, does not weep and clasps the lifeless form of Satyavan. She remembers everything of her past and a higher power descends into her. She lays down Satyavan's body and rises up to meet the dreadful Death God.

She collects herself to encounter the Death in his own domain. She stands firm with absolute resolution before the Death God asking him to give back her Satyavan. Undaunted, she journeys through the eternal night following Satyavan's spirit and the Death. She starts a dialogue with him. He asks her to go back to the earth. She tells him that she is walking with him conscious of her immortality and she will not bow to his sweet temptations of boons. Further she says that she is immortal in her mortality. Her soul can meet the stone eyes of Law and Fate with its
living fire. If he refuses to give back Satyavan she will pursue him wherever he takes Satyavan’s soul.

He, trying to dominate her, cries out that he has created all being and he can also destroy them; He has stamped life with his impression; He compels man to sin so that he may punish them; He goads man to desire and, then, scourges them with grief and desire.

Savitri is not shattered by this scorn and she meets scorn with scorn. She declares that her God is will and He only will triumph. Her God is love and He can remake the universe. To her scorn, he says that Gods are only his imaginations and moods reflected in man. He says there is neither love in One, nor Time, nor Space. To this Savitri proclaims that “I am, I Love, I see, I act, I will” and her coming to life is a wave from God himself.

To this, the Gospel of the Death explains that love is nothing but passion of man’s yearning cells. It is only a sacred legend and immortal myth; it is brief and frail, It can become victim of treason and wrath.
Only death saves man from this predicament. Hence he asks her why she is asking back Satyavan and also asks her to renunciation her passionate nature in the bosom, profound of nothingness and be at rest.

Now Savitri talks to this dark power about her mission. She says, her love is not a creeping of the flesh; it has come to her from God and only to God it will return. One day she will behold her great sweet world by putting off the dire disguises of the Gods and unveil from terror and disrobe from sin. She says, she cherishes 'God the fire' and not 'God the dream'.

He answers her that immortality will be a punishment to the imperfect man. All wisdom, knowledge love, has no basis except in matter, the inconscient. Hence everything that man is not, depends upon matter. Only the calm long night, death, will silence man's heart in everlasting sleep.

Now Savitri as a true representative of humanity taunts the Death that it is the saddest who takes delight in the sorrow of the world. She talks about the creation and evolution of the earth. How God covered his face in matter and the timeless took its ground in emptiness so that the spirit might adventure into Time and how man could see the vast descending might of God.
Savitri says, she has already triumphed the
Death within her as her whole being is filled with
love and her love eternal sits throned on 'God's
calm'. She further says, she is the woman with
the force of God, and her will is greater than
the laws of the Death. Her love is the heavenly seal
of the supreme, her humanity is only a mask of God.

She stands as the mother of universe when
she says that her heart's strength can carry the grief
of the whole universe and never falter from its luminous
track. The Baffled Death tempts her with boons but
she does not yield. She stands firm claiming nothing
but Satyavan. She says, can she who house the mighty
mother's violent force seek for such a peace in the
boon. She makes clear to him about her mission. 'I am
a deputy of the aspiring world, My spirit's liberty I
ask for all'. Now the Death questions her what is
truth? who can find her form amidst so many sense-images,
guesses of the mind, and incertitudes of knowledge?
He asks her to show the body of the living truth, then,
he will obey and worship her and give back her Satyavan.
When Savitri starts answering this question, her mortality disappears and her Goddess self grows visible. A mighty transformation comes on her and she tells him that he is her shadow and instrument; it is she who gave awful shape of dread to death so that the soul of man would struggle for light.

She asks him to leave way to her incarnate force and release the soul of the world called Satyavan. But he still resists and the two oppose each other, face to face. Savitri's divine power,

"Light like a burning tongue licked up his thoughts,
Light was luminous torture in his heart,
Light coursed, a splendid agony, through his nerves;
His darkness muttered perishing in her blaze
Then the dire universal shadow disappeared
Vanishing into the void from which it came" (534; 66).

Thus she conquers him in his own domain and wins immortality to the human nature. Now she is surrounded by Gods ever lasting day, her soul is close to the infinite and all are filled with the immanence of one divine. Her vision soars realm after realm and finds the place of Gods and seers. She comes to know that the creator of the world and the universe to be the same and it is whom she faced as the Death and Night.
A voice rises from her heart which tries to persuade her to climb to the 'ever lasting day' but she refuses and claims Satyavan's self which the earth needs. Here again she stands as typical representative of humanity, and she says that the earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls and it is the heroic spirits battlefield. And at last the final sanction is given by the supreme who says that Savitri is his spirits' power and can show the route to immortality to the souls of man. Then the earthly life will become the life divine, the end of death and the death of ignorance.

Now Savitri and Satyavan return to the earth and he cries out to her with wonder whether it is all a dream. He asks her what change has taken place in her. She says, all now is changed yet all is still the same. Thus she has not only conquered the Death but got the kingdom and eyesight restored to her father-in-law Bryumatsena. She has done her task but it is only a beginning. Now the moon nurses a greater dawn of life divine on the earth. Thus throughout the whole epic, Savitri is portrayed as an embodiment of love, representative of humanity and woman with great potentiality who is able to conquer the Death and win immortality to the whole of mankind.