CHAPTER I.
PART I

(A)

Savitri as an Epic

The Supreme master piece of yogi Sri Aurobindo is the epic 'Savitri', a legend and a symbol. In the epic field of Indo English Literature, it occupies a vital place as, it has skillful reproduction of fresh, spontaneous and racy literary qualities. It is the epic of growth and profound expression of nearly 35 years of Sri Aurobindo's yoga Sadhana which was revised and re-revised according to his spiritual realisation from time to time. This may be the reason for Savitri falling under the category of secondary epic but equally great as a primary epic. Sri Aurobindo himself says to his doctor, Nirod, "Savitri will take a long time. I have to go all over the old ground.... every time I find more and more imperfections" (341P=39).

Sreenivasa Iyengar in his Biography of Sri Aurobindo comments that one of the major preoccupations of Sri Aurobindo was with his work 'Savitri'.

The theme and the technique adopted by Sri Aurobindo in the epic stand unique when compared with the other epics. What is impossible has been achieved
by rendering epic texture to a mystical experience. Regarding the creation of mystical epic, Sri Aurobindo in the future poetry writes "It is sometimes asserted that the epic is solely proper to primitive ages when the freshness of life made a story of large and simple action of supreme interest to the youthful mind of humanity, the literary epic an artificial prolongation by an intellectual age and a genuine epic poetry no longer possible now or in the future. This is to mistake form and circumstance for the central reality. The epic, a great poetic story of men or world or gods, need not necessarily be a vigorous presentation of external action; the divinely appointed creation of Rome, the struggle of the principles of good and evil as presented in the great Indian poems, the pageant of the centuries or the journey of the seer through the three worlds beyond us are as fit themes as primitive war and adventure for the imagination of the epic creator. The epic of the soul most inwardly seen as they will be by an intuitive poetry, are his greatest possible subject, and it is this supreme kind that we shall expect from some profound and mighty voice of the
future. His indeed may be the song of the greatest flight that will reveal from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purpose of destiny in man and the universe" (53: P 376-79). And all his views on the epic poetry are fulfilled in his Savitri.

Sri Aurobindo follows all the classical conven- tions of an epic in his 'Savitri'. According to Aristotle, an epic has the following constituent elements or characteristics: fable, probable and marvellous theme, character, machinery, episodes, integrity, sentiments and grand style. When Savitri is judged on the basis of points, it stands as the best epic of its time.

Fable or story is the basis of the epic. The first business of an epic poet is to find a moral, which the fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. His epic is based on Truth, the world's desire. The supramental realisation of Sri Aurobindo has been accomplished in his composition of the epic Savitri. He says "I used Savitri as a means of ascention. I
began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level... In fact Savitri has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative"(518p-632).

The fable of his epic is perfect as it has unity of action, that is an action which is one, entire and great. He opens his poem with the symbol 'Dawn', the fated day on which Savitri is going to confront the death in its unity. This is the action he proposes to celebrate and caste the great action which precedes it. The epic bears the action of Aswapathy and Savitri who are the representatives of humanity. The evolvement of man beyond his mind and consciousness not only gets deepened but also gets enlarged and heightened. This action is represented by the journey of King Aswapathy and Savitri.

The second attribute of an epic is that the action should be entire, and complete requiring that nothing should be stated as going before it, intermixed
with it, or following it. In this aspect 'Savitri' shows its excellency. The action starts on the earth ascends to heaven (Aswapathy's ascent), and descends to earth (birth of Savitri), again it ascends to heaven (Savitri ascent) and descends to earth (Satyavan and Savitri coming back to the human world).

The third attribute of an epic is its greatness. In Savitri, the action is great since the most exalted personages of the universe find their place in the poem. Through the characters, Aswapathy and Savitri, Sri Aurobindo renders poetical form to his mystical experience. The action takes place in the heart of the inner boundless extension of Aswapathy and Savitri.

The theme of the epic, according to Aristotle must be probable and marvellous. In otherwords, the theme must be grant, elevated and marvellous but not unconvincing or improbable. It must be some theme of universal importance. The theme of epic Savitri is the finest, ever chosen for epic poetry. It is also managed by Sri Aurobindo with remarkable skill. He deals with the theme of how man outgrows his suffering from ignorance and pain, and himself growing into a supreme human being.
and gets to know the supramental reality. Savitri
is the epic of journey, the epic search. No other
poet in any language in the world has chosen and
carried out a theme more sublime and comprehensive
than Sri Aurobindo, the theme of love conquering the
death. An epic poem must have a universal appeal.
It must interest all people, of all times and all
nations. It should not belong to a particular
nation of time. In these aspects, Savitri stands
unique as it differs from other epics. The interest
of Savitri transcends the limits of a nation. Its
theme is not attributable to Hinduism alone. Its
interest is wider as its theme confronts with the
eternal problem of the whole humanity which is a matter
of deep interest to all mankind.

An epic introduces a multitude of characters
which must have novelty and variety. The principle characters
must have dignity and sublimity enough to be regarded as
the representatives of mankind. The character
Aswapathy, representative of humanity, is the Principle
of mind in man which struggles to reach beyond
its own limitations to achieve the light of full
knowledge. Savitri the character, is also a symbol
of psychic principle in man and the symbol carries the cosmic burden to lift nature and man to divine existence. She is the incarnation of the Divine Mother. Her husband, Satyavan, is the symbol of vital principle in man who struggles to win immortality.

In this great epic Savitri, the poet employs an elaborate spiritual machinery to produce the effect of the marvellous. The whole epic is Sri Aurobindo's expression of his great vision of the spirit. He has given the poetic mould to his pursuit of spirituality which is the foundation of Indian culture through the poem Savitri.

To understand the epic, Savitri, one has to understand the Indian culture. Sri Aurobindo says that in Indian literature "All the type of the mind reflected there is of familiar Indian character, constant through every change, religio-philosophic, religio-ethical, religio-social, with all the spiritual experiences behind it and supporting it though not prominently in the front; the imagination is of same kind that we have found in the act of the time; the frames of significant image, symbol and myth are those
which have come down from the past subjected to the modifications and new developments that get their full body in puranas, and they have a strong psychic suggestion *(343p-2)*. According to him, Indian literature is the ample record of the culture of the people. So it is quite natural that he has recorded the philosophy, the religion and the yoga of Indian mind. The work of any poet is influenced by the mentality of the nation to which he belongs the spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic tradition and the environment in which he creates his work.

**Integrity of design is one of the most important requisites of an epic.** In this long narrative poem running with 12 books, all the episodes are narrative and descriptive, and inter-woven with the main theme. They neither appear disjoined nor retarded in the main action.

When we analyse the design of the epic savitri, it does not begin with the beginning. It rather begins in the middle, the day on which Savitri is to confront the Death. This is in conformity with classical conventions because it gives an opportunity to the poet for retrospection and anticipation. Human sentiments find
a grand scope of expression in the poem. The whole poem is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions or feelings of the poet. The poem deals with the action of the mind. The sentiments ascribed to the persons in this epic are in harmony with their characters. All the sentiments of humanity find expression in the poem through the character as the poem deals with the problem of humanity and its mystery. The highest realms of mind are beautifully portrayed especially in the cantos titled the kingdom of subtle matter, realm of the being of life, world of little life, world of greater life and God heads of greater life, night and world of false hoods, kingdoms and Godhead of the greater mind, heavens of the ideal mind, self of mind and kingdom of greater knowledge.

For loftiness of conception and grandeur of style, this poem Savitri is certainly unmatched in the past as well as in the present. All the conventional features of an epic poem are to be found strictly preserved here.
Sri Aurobindo on his epic poem, 'Savitri':

In the great monumental work Savitri: a legend and a symbol, one can see all the aspects of Sri Aurobindo as a yogi, philosopher, mystic and poet. He has given a concrete form to all his abstract thoughts expressed in the life divine, in his magnum opus 'Savitri'. His epic is a unique one when placed among the world literature and it introduces us afresh to transcendental awareness. The epic can be studied from different points of views such as Indian epic, philosophical treatise, and spiritual dialogue. In order to understand the epic Savitri, it is very imperative to know at the outset what the epic Savitri itself signifies for Sri Aurobindo.

The main reason which could be sighted for the composition of the epic is that Sri Aurobindo wanted to give poetic texture to his vision. He started his work Savitri during his stay at Baroda (1893-1906). He wrote Savitri before he met the Mother Mirra Richard, and started revising his work only after his settlement at Pondicherry. The theme of the legendary Savitri and its implication casted a deep intimation on the mind.
of Sri Aurobindo that the epic 'Savitri' became his life sadhana, which underwent transformation and recastings with his attainment of the over-head planes of consciousness. It is his life long work which he continued to give finishing touches even till his last year of life.

Sri Aurobindo had certain aims in the composition of the Epic. Firstly, he planned to write an modern epic. Secondly, he wanted the poem to be a manual of yoga. Thirdly, he wanted Savitri to symbolise cosmic action. Fourthly he wanted it to be a poetry of overhead. Finally he wanted it to be in blank verse, a legend and a symbol, an experiment and an experience. The work fulfilled all his aims and he says in his letters,

"...it expresses or tries to express a total and many sided vision and experience of all the planes of being and their action upon each other. Savitri is an experiment in mystic poetry, spiritual poetry cast, into a symbolic figure... it is really a new attempt and cannot be hampered by old ideas of technique accept when they are assimilable" (51: P-906).
I was not seeking for originality but for truth and the effective poetical expression of my vision... what I am trying to do everywhere in the poem is to express exactly something seen, something felt or experienced... 'Savitri is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences... there must be a new extension of consciousness and aesthesis to appreciate a new kind of mystic poetry. Moreover if it is really new in kind, it may employ, a new technique... new in some or many of its elements' (341p-91).

The basis of the epic Savitri is Sri Aurobindo's yoga. What he experienced, what he saw, what he realised is rendered in verse form. It took fifty intermittent years for him to make the final draft of the epic Savitri. He says, "I made some eight or ten recasts of it originally under the old sufficient inspiration. Afterwards I am altogether rewriting it, concentrating on the first book and working on it over and over again with the hope that every line may be of a perfect perfection" (51p-132). Whenever he made a new version
from his previous verse, it was totally a reconstruction of the whole thing. He again says,

"There is a previous draft, the result of the many retouchings of which somebody told you; but in that form it would not have been a "magnum opus" at all. Besides, it would have been a legend and not a symbol. I, therefore, started recasting the whole thing; only the best passages and lines of the old draft will remain, altered so as to fit into the new frame"(65; P-155).

New version to the earlier draft was rendered whenever he got inspiration from higher planes of consciousness, and this made him not care much for the technique. He says, "If the inspiration is the right one, then I have not to bother about the technique... then or afterwards, for there comes through the perfect line with the perfect rhythm inextricably intertwined or rather fused into an inseparable and single unit"(56; P-57).

The poetry which has been written from overhead inspiration by Sri Aurobindo has "Word of power and light
that comes from the overmind inspiration" mantric words. For mantra, poetic words and poetic rhythms are chief characteristics. He says, "Its characteristics are a languages that conveys infinitely more than the mere surface sense of words seem to indicate, a rhythm that means even more than the language and is born out of the infinite and disappears into it, and the power to convey not merely the mental, vital or physical contents or indications or values of thinkings uttered, but its significance figure in some fundamental and original consciousness which is behind all these and greater." (16 P-72).

His mantric poetry was rendered through a distinct type of blank verse. To give the best expression to his mystical experience he gave ample attention to the use of blank verse for his epic. He employs choice of words of his own kind for his poetry. To attain the goal of giving a clear picture to his experience he uses technical terms in Savitri. This technical words convey his vision very clearly, for example words like oversoul, higher mind, overmind void, supermind, vital, being, mental being, and psychic being.

Through his epic Sri Aurobindo prophesies that one of the possible results of supermentalisation is
immortality (divine consciousness). So he introduces his theme of yoga into poetry. His yoga reflected through the yoga of Savitri, is a sure guide for one who is in search of the soul. Savitri who is the power of love attains immortality in upanishadic sense of the term. He says,

"Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state"

(54:p.63)

"But for such vast spiritual change to-be,
out of the mystic cavern in man's heart
The heavenly psyche must put off her vail,
And step into common nature's crowded rooms
And stand uncovered in that nature's front
And rule its thoughts and fill the body and life"

(54:p:64)

Savitri achieves this spiritualisation and lives in infinity. So we can conclude that epic savitri is Sri Aurobindo's vision translated into poetic reality.
Historical Authenticity and the Theme of the Epic 'Savitri':

The theme of the epic 'Savitri' has an Indian legendary background. From this background Sri Aurobindo drew inspiration for his work. The legendary part of the epic appeared in Vana-Parva of Mahabharata. The legendary story runs like this. Aswaphathy, the king of Madra, was childless. He took up a life of celibasy and undertook fasting in every sixth day of the week to get a child. This austerity was continued for eighteen years. The goddess, Savitri, appeared before him out of the sacrificial fire and blessed him with a boon of an issue as per his desire which would be fulfilled by Brahma, the God of creation.

With the spiritual grace of the Divine Mother, a daughter was born to Aswaphathy. The child, Savitri, showed more divine qualities than human qualities. Hence, Aswaphathy faced the great problem in finding a correct match for his daughter, and eventually, requested his daughter to select her life partner. Savitri set out with an old minister to select a suitable partner and met Satyavan, son of Dyumatsena, the blind king who was living in exile in the forest.
Savitri returned to her parents and disclosed her choice. The sage, Narada Muni, who was present with her parents at the time prophesied that Satyavan was fated to die after a year. This prophesy least disturbed Savitri. She refused to change her choice, married Satyavan and lived with him in the hermitage.

Savitri took up simple and hard-life as a preparation for the crisis she had to face. Before the fated day approached she took up complete fast for the last three days. On the fated day, she accompanied Satyavan to the forest to bring fuel, as she did not want her husband to face the ordeal alone. In the forest during his work, he experienced a sharp pain in his head and wished to lie down on his wife's lap. As he was resting, Savitri saw the Death God, Yama, standing before her and taking away the life of her husband.

Savitri started following the spirit of Satyavan captured by The Death God. She begun a dialogue with the Death God on his way and pleased him to an extent which made him grant her several boons, of which the last
one was to restore her husband's life. This is how legendry savitri triumphed over the Death and returned to the world with her husband.

Sri Aurobindo on the legendry theme:

This story which was narrated in the epic Mahabarata to bring out the virtue of conjugal fidelity, struck Sri Aurobindo as something much more profound. He turned the legend into a living symbol. The name of the characters in the legend gave him the clue. He explained the symbolic meanings of different characters as "Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the divine word, daughter of the sun, Goddess of the supreme truth who comes down and is born to save. Aswapathy, the Lord of horse, her human father, is the lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of the spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumathsena, Lord of shining hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine mind, here fallen blind losing its celestial kingdom of glory" (51: D-332).
The Theme of the epic:

The main theme of the epic is the vision of Sri Aurobindo who perceived in nature a struggle for an evolutionary leap towards eternal and answers the existential predicament of the modern age. Human consciousness which is influenced by pain and ignorance must manifest in nature its supra-consciousness.

Book I: (Five cantos)

The theme of the epic opens with the symbol—night which gradually turns into the symbol Dawn. The whole period of evolution is brought out in Book I. The problem of man is faced by the main character, Savitri, who is a possessor of human-divine qualities. She is faced with the central problem of man 'Earth Love and Doom'. the determinism of cosmic nature which seems to be unchangeable. To support herseself Savitri calls forth her spirit within her. The first two cantos of Book I deal with Savitri's qualities and the psychological preparation and the spiritual change she undergoes inorder to break down the narrow boundary of human consciousness and soar up to the
higher states of consciousness. Savitri represents the humanity which is yearning to overcome the perennial problem of human life and death by unveiling the spirit in the matter.

The last three cantos of Book I deal with the yoga of the king Aswapathy, father of Savitri and how he was able to gain the knowledge about secrets of human nature and to enter the realm of the spirit beyond. His consciousness gets widened without any limits, beyond space and time.

Book II (Fifteen Cantos)

In Book II, the book of the traveller of the worlds, Aswapathy's whole Yogic journey is described. Aswapathy sets forth to venture through the worlds. He sees himself as a sole figure on nature's giant stair. He starts his journey from the world of gross matter and firstly arrives at kingdom of subtle matter. In this world he sees the ideal forms, of all that are seen and heard by the physical eyes, being created. Next he lands on the realm of the Being of Life,
where he witnesses the glory and fall of life. Here life is trying to establish its glory upon the earth but it is questioned by a dark, ambiguous presence. As a result when life manifests on the earth, it is not able to recall its original state of happiness but it accepts the law of inconscience and gets subjected to joy, sorrow, struggle, desire etc.,

From this world, he enters into the kingdoms of little life where life-force follows a slow course of evolution and it is subconscious in its action. He views three types of creation here. The first one is the divine presence which pushes the lower vital force towards the course of evolution. In this creation, contraries form the base of life and itself faces with its contraries. The second one is the animal world which has creatures with dwarfish brain. And the human beings who are in this stage have animal sensations, hunting and enjoying the elements of the earth and they are not capable of pure mental working. The third type of creation has the capacity for pure thinking. Now the world is more organised and ordered but the life of man does not get awakened to the vast possibilities of the spirit and it does not know its origin and purpose.
Further Aswapathy is able to perceive all kinds of lower vital beings who have 'ignorant and dangerous wills but armed with power, half-animal, half-god in their mood, their shape'. These lower vital forces drive the human heart and condition man to crude earthiness, self-will, pettiness, little wretches and lusts. But there is a deeper self in man which is capable of a greater and higher vision. He has also the witness-soul which can attain 'truths unseen' only when man goes in for his deeper self and thus the purpose of human life is revealed. Now 'a door is cut in the mid wall of self' and higher forces come down to mankind and then transformation starts.

Then Aswapathy enters into the kingdoms and godheads of greater life, which is the world of higher vital forces. In this world there is consciousness lighted by the truth. It is a world nearer to heaven than earth. There is a cosmic stir in the beings of this world and life calls the highest light. It is a realm of hope and cheer, yet it is not the world of highest realisation.
Now Aswapathy descends into night and the world of falsehood and wants to know the reason behind the failure of this higher vital world to rise to the highest peace and bliss. So he sets forth his piercing glance into the darkness where he is able to see 'the fount of the world's lasting pain and the mouth of the black pit of ignorance'. He finds that it is a world of pretence, falsehood and deception. Truth and God are overcome by ego and falsehood. This region threatens him and he starts reciting the names of God to protect himself.

Still in the deepest pit of darkness, he perceives a region which can be called as hell, where life falls into the lowest depth of degradation, obscuration and deformation. This hell denies all true things because it represents the power of inconscience. All the chances of man's spiritual evolution are lost in this place. Further, he passes through this world challenging the forces living there.

He reaches the world of pain and finds men led towards tragic sorrows and jeolousy, hatred and lust. Though travelling through this dark region, he
sees a secret divine hand, an invisible hand of light guiding the being in this region. When he realises this inconscion ceases to be, and matter and spirit get integrated.

He arrives at the paradise of life God. It is a place that looks like 'the world-magician's glass'. The place is filled with constant music and all the unknown ecstasies can be experienced here. Only the vital principle is complete and full in itself but the joy of intellect is unaware. Hence he rises up from this place and reaches the kingdoms and Godheads of the little mind.

It is a place where knowledge and ignorance met, and there is no certainty and clarity. 'A dwarf three-bodied trinity' - the physical mind, the mind of desire and the reasoning mind, help the human spirit in the search for highest knowledge. Aswapathy sees above this human mind a region of bright light where two demons 'Life-thought' - and 'pure thought' mind' - look down on the whole scene. The combination of these two can break the limits of humanity and help him arrive at a supernal light.
He soars higher into the kingdoms and Godheads of the greater mind. It is a place of wisdom, happiness and joy at its height. In his meditative trance he views two heavens beyond the triple-realms, niches of the heavens of the ideal. On one side is the blue heavens of the ideal, and on the other side 'the lovely kingdoms of deathless Rose'. He does not wish to stay in this place and he soars up to a place where light and bliss join in common greatness, in the self of mind. Here silence listens to the cosmic voice. It appears to him that the hierarchy of the worlds pauses here. This place is bare, indifferent sky, blank and still, a sapphire firament of abstract thought, mind is in its perfect quietness and it is a place of blissful Nirvan but the reason for the cosmic existence is not known. He continues his journey and reaches the region of the world-soul.

Here he finds the self and the world existing in one reality. He discovers that he has come to the centre of creation. Moving still forward he sees the supreme power who guards the austere approach to the Alone. She is the supreme creatrix of the world. He outstretches to her, his folded hands of prayer' and at her feet he falls. At last he arrives at a lonely station of omniscience, 'the kingdom of the greater knowledge.
He wants to understand the voice that created the worlds. He finds in this place that there is no knowledge by thought because it is beyond thought. It is the knowledge by which the knower is known. Then with the neutral silence of his soul he is called to a vision that climbs beyond the reach of time. Now he is freed from the limitations of mind and time. He gets freed from the bondage of death and sleep and reaches the top of all that can be known. The heavens of light and the abyss of darkness revealed their truth to him. Thus he cans the secrets of the overmind and bears the rapture of the oversoul.

Book III (Four Cantos)

Aswapathy finds that the peace and silence which settled in him called him to reach for something impalpable and something beyond, which filled his whole being. So he ascends higher and higher and it seems to him that he has approached the sheer reality. Now he has to lay behind all his humanness and identify himself with that Nameless. The whole universe appears like a veil and behind that is seen the transcendent divine. The stark reality alone remains. It is a pure existence safe from thoughts and mood, 'silent cause occult, impenetrable, infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.
He stands on the verge of absolute silence and finds the presence of the Divine Mother. He yearns to bring down her presence and power into his heart, mind and body. So he stands preparing himself to receive this great power. He aims to make this earth 'an empire of the immanent divine'. He represents the whole humanity, widens out into a universal nature and realises the immortality of life.

Aswapathy passes into higher region where there is no duality of love and hate, good and evil, fate and chance, true and false. It is a region of perfect harmony. He remembers his own world, the woe-ridden humanity. He knows that he alone cannot change the law of chance and death. So he requests the Divine Mother's light and bliss to come down to the earth. His prayer is heard by her and a promise is made that 'one shall descend and break the iron law, change nature's doom by the lone spirit's power'. With this promise, he comes down to the mortal world and resumes his 'mighty rounds'.
Book IV (Four cantos)

The promise is fulfilled by the descent of Savitri, the incarnation of the Divine Mother, as Aswapathy's daughter. Not only because of Aswapathy's desire but also a "world desire compel her 'mortal birth'. She turns her light towards mortal life. This flame grows in its splendour and dwells along till her hour of fate comes. It comes in the wake of her father's request to venture through the world in order to find her life-partner, and Savitri starts her quest.

Book V (three cantos)

The destined meeting place comes and Savitri meets Satyavan, son of the blind king, Dyumatsen, in the hermitage. She bows and touches his feet. She decides to make her life his world for him to tread and to make her body a room for his delight. Satyavan also gathers her into his clasp. With his consent she returns to her father to reveal her choice.
Book VI (two cantos)

When Savitri arrives to her father's court to reveal her choice, the word of fate comes through the Narada muni who is seated there. 'Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her; this day returning Satyavan must die'. Hearing this, Savitri's mother who is very much perturbed asks Savitri to choose once again. To her Savitri replies that her heart has chosen once and it will not choose again. Her mother tries to persuade her by asking her to make reason her guide rather than passion. But Savitri is self-determined, and says that she is stronger than death and greater than her fate.

Now the disturbed mother raises the eternal question 'why pain at all in a world created by God?', wherefore are we here? what implies the vain toil of brief living things? Is not soul a fiction sensed in trance? To her the mystic sage reveals the truth of the soul and mystery behind the pain in the devine scheme. He says that pain is only a vast disguise concealing the eternal bliss. Narad asks the Queen not to go against her daughter's choice and leave her to her mighty self and fate.
Savitri enjoys her union with Satyavan. As days passed the fear of the imminent doom lays its hands upon Savitri's heart, 'Grief, fear became the food of mighty love'. One night as she was sitting behind her sleeping husband with grief stricken heart, she heard a call from her true being. It asked to reflect back for the reason why she came to the death-bound earth. Now Savitri falls into a mystic swoon. Savitri separates herself from the body and undertakes a mystic journey towards her inner depths.

In her journey she passes through the psychocosmic worlds of Subtle matter, instinctive life, idea, thought, reason, emotion, passion, imagination and deeper psyche. She arrives at a place where one can feel the silent nearness of the soul.

When Savitri begins her ascend towards her soul, the triple-soul forces in form of woman come one by one addressing her. First comes the Mother of seven sorrows who says that she is the secret soul of Savitri and she has come to share the suffering of the human world. To her Savitri assures that one day she will
return as a bringer of strength and then peace and joy will be for ever. Then the Mother of might comes and says that she is the secret soul of Savitri and she helps the unfortunate and saves the doomed. To her Savitri assures that one day she will return as a bringer of light. Next the Mother of light comes and repeats that she is the secret soul of Savitri. She says that she is the bringer of knowledge but it is appropriated by the ego of man and it is deformed. To her Savitri assures that one day she will return as a bringer of light.

Savitri continues her ascend, reaches a huge mystic cave and enters through the rock-doors with carved designs. She finds here her divine-soul of which she is the human counterpart. Her grown soul fuses with the over-soul. Entire human part of Savitri becomes harmonious and she attains the perfection which is the promise for all mankind. Now she comes down to the earthly soil and finds that her inner perfection influences everything around her.

She yearns to know the truth of the person behind the impersonal Absolute and meets the person who is real, free from time, name and form. 'A formless liberation' comes to her.
Thus Savitri is going about with her daily duties with the supreme mother's consciousness without others knowing about it. Now superconscience and infinity are her's and eternity looks out from her on Time.

Book VIII (one canto)

The fatal day of Satyavan's death dawns and she with her super conscient light prepares herself to face the crisis and to solve the issue, whether man shall live or die, suffer or enjoy. The Death god, Yama, comes before her when Satyavan experiences a sharp pain in his head while working in the forest, he quietly passes from her embrace.

Book IX (two cantos)

Savitri wakes up to her true self freeing herself from the heart string's clutch rises up with a godlike will to meet the Death. From the body of Satyavan, another luminous Satyavan arises and stands behind Savitri and the Death. Now she opposes the universal god Death. He with Satyavan moves away and she follows them. Thus the procession goes way beyond the earth. He, Yama, tries all his ways to
he
dissuade Savitri but falls in his attempts. He
tempts her with reasons to make her return to earth
but she insists on Satyavan's life for the fulfilment
of her mission on earth. A debate starts between
the Death and Savitri. He reminds her about her
mortal being and her love is only her passion. To
him Savitri replies, 'Oh the Death you reason out
things but I reason not,' and she further says, 'I
am, I see, I love, I see, I act, I will.' The
three continue their procession.

Book X (four cantos)

Savitri questions herself why life and consciousness
should have at all come to being and why all this
vain play of misery, pain and death. But she again gathers
her force and starts her battle with the Death.
He tries to persuade her by saying that this vague
world is only a dream world and it is not based upon
reality; Your love is nothing but your passion and
her aim to achieve immortality for perishable things will
be a vain. To him She says that the Death is looking
at the unfinished world and it is sure that man who
is in infant state shall grow in future and become perfect.
As her whole being is filled with love she affirms
that she has triumphed over him. To her, he says
that she is living in the world of imagination and he asks her to show her strength and freedom from laws. He demands her to ask anything for herself but he refuses to restore Satyavan as it is against hard laws. But she resists her persuasion and the three continues their journey once again.

He tempts her with his boons but She asks him to grant his boons to tired spirits. She says that she herself who house the Mighty Mother's violent force will not seek for a thing. Now he questions about her divinity asking her to show the living truth and then he will obey her.

When she starts her speech her mortality disappears and goodness self becomes visible. He makes his last reply and asks her whether she is the supreme mother, if so asks her to show her face. As a reply to his statement, a mighty transformation comes on her, 'The incarnation thrust aside her veil'. Then he disappears into the void leaving Satyavan and Savitri alone.
Savitri is left in the everlasting day. Permanently the sun of truth shines. She finds that only one omnipresent is working in the universe and death is transfigured into love. She hears a voice from her heart which says that Savitri and Satyavan will serve the dual law making their division as their means of happy oneness. Then the voice advises that she can ascend into blissful home and live there as gods. In reply to this voice, she says, she will not climb to the everlasting day as earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls; it is the heroic spirit's battlefield.

Savitri and Satyavan return to the earth. She explains to Satyavan that all now has changed but it is the same. Though she has finished her mission it is only a starting.
PART II

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SAVITRI: POETICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL AND YOGIC

The Mahakavya Savitri of our age has been studied as poem, Philosophical treatise and treatise of integral yoga. To understand this new kind of poem in its fulness three faculties of knowledge are essential. They are poetic, philosophic and yogic knowledge as the epic writer himself is a poet, philosopher and yogi. Approaches to the epic Savitri are done mainly from the point of view of these three faculties.

In the study of 'Mysticism in Indo-English Poetry' (Rameshwar Gupta, 1969) Sri Aurobindo's Savitri has been studied with special reference and more facts are explored from the epic. Especially the vision of eternity as portrayed in the epic and the treasures of rhythm, language and imagery used in Savitri, are studied. Sri Aurobindo has transmitted into English verse the mantric sonority and the cosmic tone and rhythm of the Vedic hymns. His rhythm is sound-significance filling out word-significance. It reverberates in the depths of its readers' soul. Through imagery and symbolism he renders a concrete shape to his abstract philosophy.
In the above approach the epic's significance among the world literature is brought out.

The study (D.S. Mishra, 1989), on 'Poetry and philosophy in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri' the theme of Savitri has thematically been interpreted in the light of Vedic and Upanishadic thoughts and structurally examined in relation to the tradition of western epics. The epic is viewed as an Upanishadic poem as its principle theme is the search for knowledge which liberates man from ignorance. And this is suggested by the two mystical journeys undertaken by Savitri and Aswapathy. The study answers to certain criticism on the epic. Homer's method of repetition, Virgil's technique of enlargement and Dante's art of harmoning philosophy and poetry are used in Savitri, but it is still a new kind of poetry which brings yoga and philosophy to bear poetic texture.

Prema Nanda Kumar (1962) has explored the significance of the epic as a legend and a symbol, 'over-head poetry' and 'cosmic epic'. The work has a comparative analysis between the legendry tale of Savitri appearing in Mahabrarta (Vyasa's upakhyana) and Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri. According to Prema Nandakumar, the nature of over-head poetry has been
vividly brought out in the epic Savitri with its new dimensions and elaborations, psychological explorations and spiritual intimations.

In a scholarly study on Epic of the eternal (Madhusudan Reddy, 1984) the epic Savitri is examined as a legend and a symbol. The significance of night ofnescience and the dawn of truth in the epic are studied. The yoga of Aswapathy is analysed at length. Aswapathy is studied as the traveller of the worlds and Savitri is studied as finder of the soul-force. In short the main action of the entire epic is analysed.

The inner spiritual drama unfolded in Savitri is concentrated in depth study 'Dawn to greater Dawn' (Sreenivasa Iyengar, 1975). The author of the epic Sri Aurobindo has been hailed as a yogi and poet. besides studying the legendary part of the story. The quintessence of the epic as a whole is brought out in the approach.

An excellent portrayal of the mysticism of Sri Aurobindo in his epic is presented in the 'Dialogue with death' (Rohit Mehta, 1971). Why Savitri is a symbol?
is justified, and close association of Savitri and Satyavan in the epic is brought to light. The mystic content of the epic is studied under various sub-titles such as 'A nameless movement', 'parable of the Dawn'.

In his scholarly work 'Evolution and the earthly destiny' (Nolini Kanta Gupta, 1976) the epic Savitri is studied as the word of Sri Aurobindo and as a cosmic answer to the cosmic question. The mystery of the earth which is solved by Aswapathy and Savitri is studied. How man refuses to the advent of divine grace as sketched in the epic is studied. The significance of the character 'Savitri' is also studied.

In the letter 'Sri Aurobindo's Savitri, the nature of epic and the expression of mysticism in English poetry' (K.D. Sethna), a contribution to the work Sri Aurobindo, A Garland of Tributes' (Arabinad Basu, 1972), the epic Savitri is compared with other western epics such as Paradise lost, Divine comedy. The technique used by Aurobindo in his epic is analysed. The problem is analysed whether Savitri is an epic narrative or an narrative epic.
In the study, 'Introducing Savitri' in a series of lectures by M.P. Pandit (1982), the quest of Aswapathy is highlighted and Savitri is studied in reference with the new Age. Savitri is approached as a poem which is a record of a vision, of an experience, of a realisation of a seer, of one who has scaled unusual heights of consciousness, who has sought to bridge the distance between earth and heaven, man and god, soul and nature. Further he is credited for his voluminous work, a commentary on the twelve books of the epic Savitri.

In another excellent approach to Savitri (A.P. Purani, 1952), the poem is studied as an epic which has got intense directness, vastness and comprehensiveness of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The epic is approached as a poetic expression and Savitri's modernism is brought to light.

In another interesting work 'Study in Depth' (Y.S.R. Chandran 1975), the yoga and the travel of Aswapathy are studied. The different places through which he travels are highlighted (73; p-212)
In his paper on 'some reflections on the mystical construction of Death in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri'
R.K. Singh, (1987) has approached the epic from the mythical aspect. The study highlights that in Savitri myth is the principle of construction of the language of argument and the grux-factor that dominates the entire process of structure. It is the fundamental way of apprehending the world. Further the archetypal bearings have also been studied (73: P-116)

The perusal of the various related literature available on the subject of Savitri has revealed the following distinct approaches; 1. The aesthetic beauty of the epic poem and its technical aspects such as symbol, imagery, metaphor and structure etc. 2. Philosophical and mystical discussion and interpretation. 3. Dealing with the epic as a manual of yoga.

All the different approaches are only different attempts to understand, appreciate and enjoy the different aspects of the beauty of the epic poem. As such they are all necessary and relevant. Yet it is the contention of the researcher that a psychological point of view would still help in unravelling the secrets of the epic poetry to the common man and the suffering humanity.
Scope and objectives of the present study

It is the basic contention of the researcher that the writings of Sri Aurobindo have a great psychological significance from the point of view of the development and integration of personality. Particularly, the epic poem Savitri is a record of the inner experiences of Sri Aurobindo in the course of his Sadhana. It is a fact that his Sadhana was not merely for his own progress and realisation but it is meant for the collective evolutionary progress and advancement of humanity as a whole.

It is a preparatory yoga done and perfected by Sri Aurobindo for others to follow with ease and comfort. Savitri is born out of Sri Aurobindo's direct rel evation of the Truth and the Highest consciousness. And it could be rightly conceived as a great treatise which could guide, regulate and direct the modern man in his search for freedom from suffering, decay and death.

One may wonder how a serious and metaphysical subject matters for psychological discussion as the science of psychology depends mainly on scientific experimentation and empirical facts. It is a truism
that the highest knowledge and greatest thoughts of our ancient seers were borne out by higher intuition and direct revelation of truth. Sri Aurobindo is one among such great seers who could see into the psyche of the human mind and human nature. He also experienced a great psychological truth in the course of his intensive spiritual Sadhana for the enlightenment of the whole humanity.

Modern psychology has now realised the need for including in its fold the subject matter based on such conscious explorations of experiences and empirical truths they produce as a result of such inner explorations. Hence subjects like yoga have now become part and parcel of psychology in as much as they contribute to the scientific progress. Viewed from this aspect, the whole subject matter of Savitri lends itself to scientific enquiry, discussion and interpretation, especially from the psychological point of view.

Every branch of knowledge has its own way of thinking and a scientific method of study. If men are a bundle of different traits which are entirely unrelated to each other then each discipline would
have a separate domain of its own and there would be no need for any cooperation or co-ordination among them. But this does not happen. Human life is a unified whole and human behaviour is not governed by a single factor but by multiplicity of factors.

So what is unique about the present study is that the researcher has kept in mind the specific nature of the subject matter for the research. Here the subject matter of the epic poem is Savitri who represents humanity, her struggles and aspirations are only those of humanity that she represents. Savitri’s goal is directed towards the ascension of human consciousness and the subsequent decent of supramental consciousness for effecting a change in the mental, the vital and the physical nature of an individual thereby resulting in a total transformation of human personality. Thus the poem under study is a literary piece and it represents nevertheless the universal truths that are often sought by different disciplines in their own way of approach.

Apart from its depth, the subject matter of Savitri is also comprehensive comprising of
literature, philosophy, religion, yoga and psychology. And it is felt that only an interdisciplinary approach will be able to comprehend the interrelated issues in the work for the benefit of the different disciplines involved.

A highly metaphysical subject like Savitri can be comprehended only by a broad based thinking free from scientific fallacy and rigidity. Further one should free oneself from the self-imposed narrow boundaries of knowledge and the object of enquiry in this regard should also be as laudable as the subject matter itself. The objective referred to here is to bring down the highest consciousness to penetrate the ordinary human mentality with a view to transform the same.

Objectives of the present study:

1. To study the psychological impact of various technical aspects of the poem such as symbol, image, structure and technique as used by Sri Aurobindo.

2. To make a psychological analysis and interpretation of the content of the epic poem.
3. To study the psychological process of transformation of human personality.

4. To outline the necessary conditions for the Collective transformation.

5. To indicate the importance of the epic poem for the upliftment of humanity.

Methodological issues and sources of the study:

One of the criticisms that a research of this kind may invite is that its methodology is subjective and does not make use of objective verification of facts as in the case of experimental research. Further some of the great empirical experience and truth do not lend themselves for the so called objective experimentation. Hence what is required of an investigation of the subject is one of impartial conduct of scientific enquiry by means of empathic understanding and temporary self-imposed flight into relatively higher levels of consciousness, with the sole objective of the pursuit of the highest knowledge of the self. Hence the methodology that has been used with reference to the present work is on par with the subject selected.
In the course of the research, care has been taken to keep constantly in mind the meaning of the various terms as used by Sri Aurobindo in his epic poem Savitri as well as in all his other writings and also the writings of others on Sri Aurobindo.

Great attention has also been paid to the continuity of thought on the various related issues as they are found in various cantos. Last but not the least, the psychological connotation of the terms as used in modern psychology is also kept in mind while making deliberations on the various concepts that the researcher has come across in this work.

Sources of the Study:

The following source materials served as the basis for the present study. The primary source for the present study is the epic 'Savitri: a legend and a symbol' by Sri Aurobindo. This epic constitutes of 12 books in 49 cantos which have 24,000 lines. The author has divided these 12 books into two volumes. There are three books in the first volume and nine books in the second volume. This epic stands as the solid basis for the present study.
The Secondary sources for the present study includes (a) All the works of Sri Aurobindo and his writings on Savitri in particular.

(b) All the works of the Mother from the point of view of light they throw on the epic.

(c) Works of other writers on Savitri and Sri Aurobindo.

(d) Related works on the various concepts and issues indicated in the epic.

Primary Source:

Vol 1.

Book One

Canto I  Dawn
Canto II  The Issue
Canto III  The yoga of the King: The yoga of the Soul's Release.
canto IV  The Secret knowledge
Canto V  The yoga of the King: The yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and greatness.

Book II  Book of the Traveller of the worlds.
canto I  The world-stair.
Canto II  The kingdom of subtle matter.
Canto III  The Glory and fall of Life.
Canto IV  The Kingdoms of the little life.
Canto V  Godheads of the little life.
Canto VI  The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life.
Canto VII  Descent into Night.
Canto VIII  World of falsehood, The Mother of Evil and the sons of the darkness.
Canto IX  The paradise of the life-gods.
Canto X  The kingdoms and Godheads of the little mind.
Canto XI  The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater mind.
Canto XII  The Heavens of the Ideal.
Canto XIII  In the self of mind.
Canto XIV  The World-soul.
Canto XV  The Kingdoms of the Greater knowledge.

Book Three  The Book of the Divine Mother.
Canto I  The pursuit of the unknowable.
Canto II  The Adoration of the Divine Mother.
Canto III  The House of the spirit and the New Creation.
Canto IV  

Book Four  The Book of Birth and Quest
Canto I  The Birth and Childhood of the flame
Canto II  The Growth of the Flame
Canto III  The call to the Quest
Canto IV  The Quest

Book Five  The Book of Love

Canto I  The Destined meeting place.
Canto II  Satyavan
Canto III  Satyavan and Savitri

Book Six  The Book of fate

Canto I  The word of fates.
Canto II  The way of fate and the problem of pain

Book Seven  The Book of Yoga

Canto I  The joy of union, the ordeal of the Fore knowledge of Death and the Heart's Grief.
Canto II  The parable of the search for the soul.
Canto III  The entry into the inner countries.
Canto IV  The triple soul-forces.
Canto V  The finding of the soul.
Canto V I  Nirvana and the discovery of the All negating absolute.
Canto VII

Book Eight  The Book of Death
Canto III  Death in the Forest.
Book Nine  The Book of Eternal night.
Canto  I  Towards the Black void.
Canto  II  The journey in Eternal Night and the Voice of the Darkness.

Book Ten  The Book of Double twilight.
Canto  I  The Dream twilight of the Ideal.
Canto  II  The Gospel of Death and variety of the Ideal.
Canto  III  The Debate of the Love and Death
Canto  IV  The dream twilight of the Earthly Real

Book Eleven  The Book of Everlasting Day.
Canto  I  The Eternal day: The Soul’s choice and the supreme consummation.

Book Twelve  Epilogue.
Canto  I  Return to Earth.